The Treasury of David

Charles H. Spurgeon

Psalms 1-50

Edited by

Dr. Stanford E. Murrell
Preface

My preface shall at least possess the virtue of brevity, as I find it difficult to impart to it any other. The delightful study of the Psalms has yielded me boundless profit and ever-growing pleasure; common gratitude constrains me to communicate to others a portion of the benefit, with the prayer that it may induce them to search further for themselves.

That I have nothing better of my own to offer upon this peerless book is to me matter of deepest regret; that I have anything whatever to present is subject for devout gratitude to the Lord of grace. I have done my best, but, conscious of many defects, I heartily wish I could have done far better.

The Exposition here given is my own. I consulted a few authors before penning it, to aid me in interpretation and arouse my thoughts; but, still I can claim originality for my comments, at least so I honestly think. Whether they are better or worse for that, I know not; at least I know I have sought heavenly guidance while writing them, and therefore I look for a blessing on the printing of them.

The collection of quotations was an after-thought. In fact, matter grew upon me which I thought too good to throw away. It seemed to me that it might prove serviceable to others, if I reserved portions of my reading upon the various Psalms; those reserves soon acquired considerable bulk, so much so that even in this volume only specimens are given and not the bulk.

One thing the reader will please clearly to understand, and I beg him to bear it in mind; I am far from endorsing all I have quoted. I am neither responsible for the scholarship or orthodoxy of the writers. The names are given that each author may bear his own burden; and a variety of writers have been quoted that the thoughts of many minds might be before the reader. Still I trust nothing evil has been admitted; if it be so it is an oversight.

The research expended on this volume would have occupied far too much of my time, had not my friend and amanuensis Mr. John L. Keys, most diligently aided me in investigations at the British Museum, Dr. William’s Library, and other treasuries of theological lore. With his help I have ransacked books by the hundred, often without finding a memorable line as a reward, but at other times with the most satisfactory result. Readers little know how great labour the finding of but one pertinent extract may involve; labour certainly I have not spared: my earnest prayer is that some measure of good may come of it to my brethren in the ministry and to the church at large…

Should this first volume meet with the approbation of the judicious, I shall hope by God’s grace to continue the work as rapidly as I can consistently with the research demanded and my incessant pastoral duties. Another volume will follow in all probability in twelve months' time, if life be spared and strength be given.
It may be added, that although the comments were the work of my health, the rest of the volume is the product of my sickness. When protracted illness and weakness laid me aside from daily preaching, I resorted to my pen as an available means of doing good. I would have preached had I been able, but as my Master denied me the privilege of thus serving him, I gladly availed myself of the other method of bearing testimony for his name. O that he may give me fruit in this field also, and his shall be all the praise.

Charles H. Spurgeon

*Clapham, December, 1869.*
PSALM 1

TITLE. This Psalm may be regarded as

THE PREFACE PSALM, having in it a notification of the contents of the entire Book. It is the psalmists's desire to teach us the way to blessedness, and to warn us of the sure destruction of sinners. This, then, is the matter of the first Psalm, which may be looked upon, in some respects, as the text upon which the whole of the Psalms make up a divine sermon.

DIVISION. This Psalm consists of two parts: in the first (from verse 1 to the end of the 3rd) David sets out wherein the felicity and blessedness of a godly man consisteth, what his exercises are, and what blessings he shall receive from the Lord. In the second part (from verse 4 to the end) he contrasts the state and character of the ungodly, reveals the future, and describes, in telling language, his ultimate doom.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Five Books of the Psalms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Book</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>First</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Second</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Third</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fourth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fifth</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Seven Authors of the Psalms</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>WRITER</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>David</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Asaph</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Heman, the Ezrahite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ethan, the Ezrahite</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Moses</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Solomon</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>S.E.M.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

1 Blessed is the man that walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor standeth in the way of sinners, nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful.
1: 1 Blessed. See how this Book of Psalms opens with a benediction, even as did the famous Sermon of our Lord upon the Mount! The word translated “blessed” is a very expressive one. The original word is plural, and it is a controverted matter whether it is an adjective or a substantive. Hence we may learn the multiplicity of the blessings which shall rest upon the man whom God hath justified, and the perfection and greatness of the blessedness he shall enjoy. We might read it, "Oh, the blessednesses!" and we may well regard it (as Henry Ainsworth, d. 1622 does) as a joyful acclamation of the gracious man's felicity. May the like benediction rest on us! Here the gracious man is described both negatively (verse 1) and positively (verse 2).

He is a man who does not walk in the counsel of the ungodly. He takes wiser counsel, and walks in the commandments of the Lord his God. To him the ways of piety are paths of peace and pleasantness. His footsteps are ordered by the Word of God, and not by the cunning and wicked devices of carnal men. It is a rich sign of inward grace when the outward walk is changed, and when ungodliness is put far from our actions.

Note next, he standeth not in the way of sinners. His company is of a choicer sort than it was. Although a sinner himself, he is now a blood-washed sinner, quickened by the Holy Spirit, and renewed in heart. Standing by the rich grace of God in the congregation of the righteous, he dares not herd with the multitude that do evil. Again it is said,

"nor sitteth in the seat of the scornful."

He finds no rest in the atheist's scoffings. Let others make a mock of sin, of eternity, of hell and heaven, and of the Eternal God; this man has learned better philosophy than that of the infidel, and has too much sense of God's presence to endure to hear His name blasphemed. The seat of the scorner may be very lofty, but it is very near to the gate of hell; let us flee from it, for it shall soon be empty, and destruction shall swallow up the man who sits therein. Mark the gradation in the first verse:

- He walketh not in the counsel of the ungodly.
- Nor standeth in the way of sinners,
- Nor sitteth in the seat of scornful.

When men are living in sin they go from bad to worse. At first they merely walk in the counsel of the careless and ungodly, who forget God—the evil is rather practical than habitual—but after that, they become habituated to evil, and they stand in the way of open sinners who willfully violate God's commandments; and if let alone, they go one step further, and become themselves pestilent teachers and tempters of others, and thus they sit in the seat of the scornful. They have taken their degree in vice, and as true Doctors of Damnation they are installed, and are looked up to by others as Masters in Belial. But the blessed man, the man to whom all the blessings of God belong, can hold no communion with such characters as these. He keeps himself pure from these lepers; he puts away evil things from him as garments spotted by the flesh; he comes out from among the wicked, and goes without the camp, bearing the reproach of Christ. O for grace to be thus separate from sinners.
2 But his delight is in the law of the LORD; and in his law doth he meditate day and night.

1:2 And now mark his positive character. "His delight is in the law of the Lord." He is not under the law as a curse and condemnation, but he is in it, and he delights to be in it as his rule of life; he delights, moreover, to meditate in it, to read it by day, and think upon it by night. He takes a text and carries it with him all day long; and in the night-watches, when sleep forsakes his eyelids, he museth upon the Word of God. In the day of his prosperity he sings psalms out of the Word of God, and in the night of his affliction he comforts himself with promises out of the same book.

The law of the Lord is the daily bread of the true believer. And yet, in David's day, how small was the volume of inspiration, for they had scarcely anything save the first five books of Moses! How much more, then, should we prize the whole written Word which it is our privilege to have in all our houses! But, alas, what ill treatment is given to this angel from heaven! We are not all Berean searchers of the Scriptures [Acts 17:10-13]. How few among us can lay claim to the benediction of the text! Perhaps some of you can claim a sort of negative purity, because you do not walk in the way of the ungodly; but let me ask you—Is your delight in the law of God? Do you study God's Word? Do you make it the man of your right hand—your best companion and hourly guide? If not, this blessing belongeth not to you.

3 And he shall be like a tree planted by the rivers of water, that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; his leaf also shall not wither; and whatsoever he doeth shall prosper.

1:3 And he shall be like a tree planted—not a wild tree, but "a tree planted," chosen, considered as property, cultivated and secured from the last terrible uprooting, for "every plant which my heavenly Father hath not planted, shall be rooted up:" Matthew 15:13.

by the rivers of water; so that even if one river should fail, he hath another. The rivers of pardon and the rivers of grace, the rivers of the promise and the rivers of communion with Christ, are never failing sources of supply. He is "like a tree planted by the rivers of water,

that bringeth forth his fruit in his season; not unseasonable graces, like untimely figs, which are never full-flavored. But the man who delights in God's Word, being taught by it, bringeth forth patience in the time of suffering, faith in the day of trial, and holy joy in the hour of prosperity. Fruitfulness is an essential quality of a gracious man, and that fruitfulness should be seasonable.

His leaf also shall not wither; his faintest word shall be everlasting; his little deeds of love shall be had in remembrance. Not simply shall his fruit be preserved, but his leaf also. He shall neither lose his beauty nor his fruitfulness.
And whatsoever he doeth shall prosper. Blessed is the man who hath such a promise as this. But we must not always estimate the fulfillment of a promise by our own eyesight. How often, my brethren, if we judge by feeble sense, may we come to the mournful conclusion of Jacob, "All these things are against me!"

For though we know our interest in the promise, yet we are so tried and troubled, that sight sees the very reverse of what that promise foretells. But to the eye of faith this word is sure, and by it we perceive that our works are prospered, even when everything seems to go against us. It is not outward prosperity that the Christian most desires and values; it is soul prosperity that he longs for. We often, like Jehoshaphat, make ships to go to Tarshish [in Spain] for gold, but they are broken at Ezion-geber; but even here there is a true prospering, for it is often for the soul's health that we would be poor, bereaved, and persecuted. Our worst things are often our best things. As there is a curse wrapped up in the wicked man's mercies, so there is a blessing concealed in the righteous man's crosses, losses, and sorrows. The trials of the saint are a divine husbandry, by which he grows and brings forth-abundant fruit.

4 The ungodly are not so: but are like the chaff which the wind driveth away.

Not so the ungodly, not so. And we are hereby to understand that whatever good thing is said of the righteous is not true in the case of the ungodly. Oh! How terrible is it to have a double negative put upon the promises! And yet this is just the condition of the ungodly. Mark the use of the term "ungodly," for, as we have seen in the opening of the Psalm, these are the beginners in evil, and are the least offensive of sinners. Oh! If such is the sad state of those who quietly continue in their morality, and neglect their God, what must be the condition of open sinners and shameless infidels? The first sentence is a negative description of the ungodly, and the second is the positive picture. Here is their character —

they are like chaff, intrinsically worthless, dead, unserviceable, without substance, and easily carried away. Here, also, mark their doom, —

the wind driveth away; death shall hurry them with its terrible blast into the fire in which they shall be utterly consumed.

5 Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment, nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous.

Therefore the ungodly shall not stand in the judgment. They shall stand there to be judged, but not to be acquitted. Fear shall lay hold upon them there; they shall not stand their ground; they shall flee away; they shall not stand in their own defense; for they shall blush and be covered with eternal contempt. Well may the saints long for heaven, for no evil men shall dwell there,
nor sinners in the congregation of the righteous. All our congregations upon earth are mixed. Every Church hath one devil in it. The tares grow in the same furrows as the wheat. There is no floor, which is as yet thoroughly purged from chaff. Sinners mix with saints, as dross mingles with gold. God's precious diamonds still lie in the same field with pebbles. Righteous Lots are this side heaven continually vexed by the men of Sodom.
Let us rejoice then, that in "the general assembly and church of the firstborn" above, there shall by no means be admitted a single unrenewed soul. Sinners cannot live in heaven. They would be out of their element. Sooner could a fish live upon a tree than the wicked in Paradise. Heaven would be an intolerable hell to an impenitent man, even if he could be allowed to enter; but such a privilege shall never be granted to the man who perseveres in his iniquities. May God grant that we may have a name and a place in his courts above!

6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous: but the way of the ungodly shall perish.

1:6 For the LORD knoweth the way of the righteous. Or, as the Hebrew hath it yet more fully, "The Lord is knowing the way of the righteous." He is constantly looking on their way, and though it may be often in mist and darkness, yet the Lord knoweth it. If it be in the clouds and tempest of affliction, he understandeth it. He numbereth the hairs of our head; he will not suffer any evil to befall us. "He knoweth the way that I take: when He hath tried me, I shall come forth as gold" (Job 23:10).

But the way of the ungodly shall perish. Not only shall they perish themselves, but their way shall perish too. The righteous carves his name upon the rock, but the wicked writes his remembrance in the sand. The righteous man ploughs the furrows of earth, and sows a harvest here, which shall never be fully reaped till he enters the enjoyments of eternity; but as for the wicked, he ploughs the sea, and though there may seem to be a shining trail behind his keel, yet the waves shall pass over it, and the place that knew him shall know him no more for ever. The very "way" of the ungodly shall perish. If it exist in remembrance, it shall be in the remembrance of the bad; for the Lord will cause the name of the wicked to rot, to become a stench in the nostrils of the good, and to be only known to the wicked themselves by its putridity. May the Lord cleanse our hearts and our ways that we may escape the doom of the ungodly, and enjoy the blessedness of the righteous!
PSALM 2

TITLE. We shall not greatly err in our summary of this sublime Psalm if we call it

THE PSALM OF MESSIAH THE PRINCE; for it sets forth, as in a wondrous vision, the tumult
of the people against the Lord's anointed, the determinate purpose of God to exalt his own Son,
and the ultimate reign of that Son over all his enemies. Let us read it with the eye of faith,
beholding, as in a glass, the final triumph of our Lord Jesus Christ over all his enemies. Robert
Lowth (1710-1787) has the following remarks upon this Psalm:

"The establishment of David upon his throne, notwithstanding the opposition made to it by his
enemies, is the subject of the Psalm. David sustains in it a twofold character, literal and
allegorical. If we read over the Psalm, first with an eye to the literal David, the meaning is
obvious, and put beyond all dispute by the sacred history. There is indeed an uncommon glow in
the expression and sublimity in the figures, and the diction is now and then exaggerated, as it
were on purpose to intimate, and lead us to the contemplation of higher and more important
matters concealed within. In compliance with this admonition, if we take another survey of the
Psalm as relative to the person and concerns of the spiritual David, a noble series of events
immediately rises to view, and the meaning becomes more evident, as well as more exalted. The
coloring which may perhaps seem too bold and glaring for the king of Israel, will no longer
appear so when laid upon his great Antitype. After we have thus attentively considered the
subjects apart, let us look at them together, and we shall behold the full beauty and majesty of
this most charming poem. We shall perceive the two senses very distinct from each other, yet
conspiring in perfect harmony, and bearing a wonderful resemblance in every feature and
lineament, while the analogy between them is so exactly preserved, that either may pass for the
original from whence the other was copied. New light is continually cast upon the phraseology,
fresh weight and dignity are added to the sentiments, till, gradually ascending from things below
to things above, from human affairs to those that are Divine, they bear the great important theme
upwards with them, and at length place it in the height and brightness of heaven."

DIVISION. This Psalm will be best understood if it be viewed as a four-fold picture. (In verses
1, 2, 3) the Nations are raging; (4 to 6) the Lord in heaven derides them; (7 to 9) the Son
proclaims the decree; and (from 10 to end) advice is given to the kings to yield obedience to the
Lord's anointed. This division is not only suggested by the sense, but is warranted by the poetic
form of the Psalm, which naturally falls into four stanzas of three verses each.

1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing?

2:1 Why do the heathen rage, and the people imagine a vain thing? We have, in these first
three verses, a description of the hatred of human nature against the Christ of God. No better
comment is needed upon it than the apostolic song in Acts 4:27, 28: "For of a truth against thy
holy child Jesus, whom thou hast anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles,
and the people of Israel, were gathered together, for to do whatsoever thy hand and thy counsel
determined before to be done." The Psalm begins abruptly with an angry interrogation; and well
it may: it is surely but little to be wondered at, that the sight of creatures in arms against their
God should amaze the psalmist's mind.
We see the heathen raging, roaring like the sea, tossed to and fro with restless waves, as the ocean in a storm; and then we mark the people in their hearts imagining a vain thing against God. Where there is much rage there is generally some folly, and in this case there is an excess of it.

2 The kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers take counsel together, against the LORD, and against his anointed, saying,

2:2 Note, that the commotion is not caused by the people only, but their leaders foment the rebellion.

The kings of the earth set themselves. In determined malice they arrayed themselves in opposition against God. It was not temporary rage, but deep seated hate, for they set themselves resolutely to withstand the Prince of Peace.

And the rulers take counsel together. They go about their warfare craftily, not with foolish haste, but deliberately. They use all the skill which art can give. Like Pharaoh, they cry, "Let us deal wisely with them." O that men were half as careful in God's service to serve him wisely, as his enemies are to attack his kingdom craftily. Sinners have their wits about them, and yet saints are dull. But what say they? what is the meaning of this commotion?

3 Let us break their bands asunder, and cast away their cords from us.

2:3 Let us break their bands asunder. "Let us be free to commit all manner of abominations. Let us be our own gods. Let us rid ourselves of all restraint." Gathering impudence by the traitorous proposition of rebellion, they add -- let us cast away; as if it were an easy matter.

let us fling off their cords from us. What! O ye kings, do ye think yourselves Samsons? and are the bands of Omnipotence but as green withs before you? Do you dream that you shall snap to pieces and destroy the mandates of God -- the decrees of the Most High -- as if they were but tow? and do ye say, "Let us cast away their cords from us?" Yes! There are monarchs who have spoken thus, and there are still rebels upon thrones. However mad the resolution to revolt from God, it is one in which man has persevered ever since his creation, and he continues in it to this very day. The glorious reign of Jesus in the latter day will not be consummated, until a terrible struggle has convulsed the nations. His coming will be as a refiner's fire, and like fuller's soap, and the day thereof shall burn as an oven. Earth loves not her rightful monarch, but clings to the usurper's sway: the terrible conflicts of the last days will illustrate both the world's love of sin and Jehovah's power to give the kingdom to his only Begotten. To a graceless neck the yoke of Christ is intolerable, but to the saved sinner it is easy and light. We may judge ourselves by this, do we love that yoke, or do we wish to cast it from us?

4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision.
2:4 He that sitteth in the heavens shall laugh: the Lord shall have them in derision. Let us now turn our eyes from the wicked counsel-chamber and raging tumult of man, to the secret place of the majesty of the Most High. What doth God say? What will the King do unto the men who reject his only-begotten Son, the Heir of all things? Mark the quiet dignity of the Omnipotent One, and the contempt which he pours upon the princes and their raging people. He has not taken the trouble to rise up and do battle with them—he despises them, he knows how absurd, how irrational, how futile are their attempts against him—he therefore laughs at them.

5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure.

2:5 Then shall he speak unto them in his wrath, and vex them in his sore displeasure. After he has laughed he shall speak; he needs not smite; the breath of his lips is enough. At the moment when their power is at its height, and their fury most violent, then shall his Word go forth against them. And what is it that he says? – it is a very galling sentence – Yet, says he, "despite your malice, despite your tumultuous gatherings, despite the wisdom of your counsels, despite the craft of your lawgivers, yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion." Is not that a grand exclamation! He has already done that which the enemy seeks to prevent. While they are proposing, he has disposed the matter. Jehovah's will is done, and man's will frets and raves in vain. God's Anointed is appointed, and shall not be disappointed. Look back through all the ages of infidelity, hearken to the high and hard things which men have spoken against the Most High, listen to the rolling thunder of earth's volleys against the Majesty of heaven, and then think that God is saying all the while, "Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion."

6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion.

2:6 Yet have I set my king upon my holy hill of Zion. Yet Jesus reigns, yet he sees the travail of his soul, and "his unsuffering kingdom yet shall come" when he shall take unto himself his great power, and reign from the river unto the ends of the earth. Even now he reigns in Zion, and our glad lips sound forth the praises of the Prince of Peace. Greater conflicts may here be foretold, but we may be confident that victory will be given to our Lord and King. Glorious triumphs are yet to come; hasten them, we pray thee, O Lord! It is Zion's glory and joy that her King is in her, guarding her from foes, and filling her with good things. Jesus sits upon the throne of grace, and the throne of power in the midst of his church. In him is Zion's best safeguard; let her citizens be glad in him.

"Thy walls are strength, and at thy gates
A guard of heavenly warriors waits;
Nor shall thy deep foundations move,
Fixed on his counsels and his love.
Thy foes in vain designs engage;
Against his throne in vain they rage,
Like rising waves, with angry roar,
That dash and die upon the shore."
7 I will declare the decree: the LORD hath said unto me, Thou art my Son; this day have I begotten thee.

2:7 This Psalm wears something of a dramatic form, for now another person is introduced as speaking. We have looked into the council-chamber of the wicked, and to the throne of God, and now we behold the Anointed declaring his rights of sovereignty, and warning the traitors of their doom. God has laughed at the counsel and ravings of the wicked, and now Christ the Anointed himself comes forward, as the Risen Redeemer, "declared to be the Son of God with power, according to the spirit of holiness, by the resurrection from the dead." Romans 1: 4. Looking into the angry faces of the rebellious kings, the Anointed One seems to say, "If this sufficeth not to make you silent,

**I will declare the decree.** Now this decree is directly in conflict with the device of man, for its tenor is the establishment of the very dominion against which the nations are raving.

**Thou art my Son.** Here is a noble proof of the glorious Divinity of our Immanuel. "For unto which of the angels said he at any time, Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?" What a mercy to have a Divine Redeemer in whom to rest our confidence!

**This day have I begotten thee.** If this refers to the Godhead of our Lord, let us not attempt to fathom it, for it is a great truth, a truth reverently to be received, but not irreverently to be scanned. It may be added, that if this relates to the Begotten One in his human nature, we must here also rejoice in the mystery, but not attempt to violate its sanctity by intrusive prying into the secrets of the Eternal God. The things which are revealed are enough, without venturing into vain speculations. In attempting to define the Trinity, or unveil the essence of Divinity, many men have lost themselves: here great ships have foundered. What have we to do in such a sea with our frail skiffs?

8 Ask of me, and I shall give thee the heathen for thine inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for thy possession.

2:8 **Ask of me.** It was a custom among great kings, to give to favored ones whatever they might ask (Esther 5:6; Matthew 14:7.) So Jesus hath but to ask and have. Here he declares that his very enemies are his inheritance. To their face he declares this decree, and "Lo! Here," cries the Anointed One, as he holds aloft in that once pierced hand the scepter of his power, "He hath given me this, not only the right to be a king, but the power to conquer."

9 Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron; thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel.

2:9 **Thou shalt break them with a rod of iron.** Yes! Jehovah hath given to his Anointed a rod of iron with which he shall break rebellious nations in pieces, and, despite their imperial strength, they shall be but as potters' vessels, easily dashed into shivers, when the rod of iron is in the hand of the omnipotent Son of God.
thou shalt dash them in pieces like a potter's vessel. Those who will not bend must break. Potters' vessels are not to be restored if dashed in pieces, and the ruin of sinners will be hopeless if Jesus shall smite them.

"Ye sinners seek his grace,
Whose wrath ye cannot bear;
Fly to the shelter of his cross,
And find salvation there."

Note

The word for "rod" is the same used in Psalms 23:4. The Eastern shepherds would use a club to protect the sheep from wild animals. The thought is to act towards the nations as a shepherd would act toward wild animals trying to harm the sheep. The Messiah, as the Good Shepherd will protect His people progressively through time. Psalms 2:9 is quoted three times in the New Testament: Revelation 2:27; 12:5; 19:15. S.E. M.

10 Be wise now therefore, O ye kings: be instructed, ye judges of the earth.

2:10 The scene again changes, and counsel is given to those who have taken counsel to rebel. They are exhorted to obey, and give the kiss of homage and affection to him whom they have hated.

Be wise.—It is always wise to be willing to be instructed, especially when such instruction tends to the salvation of the soul.

Be wise now, therefore; delay no longer, but let good reason weigh with you. Your warfare cannot succeed, therefore desist and yield cheerfully to him who will make you bow if you refuse his yoke. O how wise, how infinitely wise is obedience to Jesus, and how dreadful is the folly of those who continue to be his enemies!

11 Serve the LORD with fear, and rejoice with trembling.

2:11 Serve the LORD with fear. Let reverence and humility be mingled with your service. He is a great God, and ye are but puny creatures; bend ye, therefore, in lowly worship, and let a filial fear mingle with all your obedience to the great Father of the Ages.

Rejoice with trembling.—There must ever be a holy fear mixed with the Christian's joy. This is a sacred compound, yielding a sweet smell, and we must see to it that we burn no other upon the altar. Fear, without joy, is torment; and joy, without holy fear, would be presumption.

12 Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little. Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.
2:12 **Kiss the Son, lest he be angry, and ye perish from the way, when his wrath is kindled but a little.** Mark the solemn argument for reconciliation and obedience. It is an awful thing to **perish** in the midst of sin, in the very **way** of rebellion; and yet how easily could **his wrath** destroy us suddenly. It needs not that his anger should be heated seven times hotter; let the fuel kindle **but a little**, and we are consumed. O sinner! Take heed of the terrors of the Lord; for "**our God is a consuming fire.**"

Note the benediction with which the Psalm closes:

**Blessed are all they that put their trust in him.** Have we a share in this blessedness? Do we trust in **him**? Our faith may be slender as a spider's thread; but if it were real, we are in our measure blessed. The more we trust, the more fully shall we know this blessedness. We may therefore close the Psalm with the prayer of the apostles: —"**Lord, increase our faith.**"

**Conclusion**

The first Psalm was a contrast between the righteous man and the sinner; the second Psalm is a contrast between the tumultuous disobedience of the ungodly world and the sure exaltation of the righteous Son of God. In the first Psalm, we saw the wicked driven away like chaff; in the second Psalm we see them broken in pieces like a potter's vessel. In the first Psalm, we beheld the righteous like a tree planted by the rivers of water; and here, we contemplate Christ the Covenant Head of the righteous, made better than a tree planted by the rivers of water, for he is made king of all the islands, and all the heathen bow before him and kiss the dust; while he himself gives a blessing to all those who put their trust in him. The two Psalms are worthy of the very deepest attention; they are, in fact, the preface to the entire Book of Psalms, and were by some of the ancients, joined into one. They are, however, two Psalms; for Paul speaks of this as the second Psalm. (Acts 13:33). The first shows us the character and lot of the righteous; and the next teaches us that the Psalms are Messianic, and speak of Christ the Messiah -- the Prince who shall reign from the river even unto the ends of the earth. That they have both a far reaching prophetic outlook we are well assured, but we do not feel competent to open up that matter, and must leave it to abler hands.
PSALM 3

A Tale of Two Psalms

The first Psalm was a contrast between the righteous man and the sinner; the second Psalm is a contrast between the tumultuous disobedience of the ungodly world and the sure exaltation of the righteous Son of God. In the first Psalm, we saw the wicked driven away like chaff; in the second Psalm we see them broken in pieces like a potter's vessel. In the first Psalm, we beheld the righteous like a tree planted by the rivers of water; and here, we contemplate Christ the Covenant Head of the righteous, made better than a tree planted by the rivers of water, for he is made king of all the islands, and all the heathen bow before him and kiss the dust; while he himself gives a blessing to all those who put their trust in him. The two Psalms are worthy of the very deepest attention; they are, in fact, the preface to the entire Book of Psalms, and were by some of the ancients, joined into one. They are, however, two Psalms; for Paul speaks of this as the second Psalm (Acts 13:33). The first shows us the character and lot of the righteous; and the next teaches us that the Psalms are Messianic, and speak of Christ the Messiah—the Prince who shall reign from the river even unto the ends of the earth. That they have both a far-reaching prophetic outlook we are well assured, but we do not feel competent to open up that matter, and must leave it to abler hands.

A Psalm of David when he Fled from Absalom his Son

TITLE. "A Psalm of David, when he fled from Absalom his Son." You will remember the sad story of David's flight from his own palace, when in the dead of the night, he forded the brook Kedron, and went with a few faithful followers to hide himself for awhile from the fury of his rebellious son. Remember that David in this was a type of the Lord Jesus Christ. He, too, fled; he, too, passed over the brook Kedron when his own people were in rebellion against him, and with a feeble band of followers he went to the garden of Gethsemane. He, too, drank of the brook by the way, and therefore doth he lift up the head. By very many expositors this is entitled

THE MORNING HYMN. May we ever wake with holy confidence in our hearts, and a song upon our lips!

DIVISION. This Psalm may be divided into four parts of two verses each. Indeed, many of the Psalms cannot be well understood unless we attentively regard the parts into which they should be divided. They are not continuous descriptions of one scene, but a set of pictures of many kindred subjects. As in our modern sermons, we divide our discourse into different heads, so is it in these Psalms. There is always unity, but it is the unity of a bundle of arrows, and not of a single solitary shaft. Let us now look at the Psalm before us. In the first two verses you have David making a complaint to God concerning his enemies; he then declares his confidence in the Lord (Psalm 3:3, 4), sings of his safety in sleep (Psalm 3:5, 6), and strengthens himself for future conflict (Psalm 7, 8).
1 LORD, how are they increased that trouble me! Many are they that rise up against me.

3:1 The poor broken-hearted father complains of the multitude of his enemies: and if you turn to 2 Samuel 15:12, you will find it written that "the conspiracy was strong; for the people increased continually with Absalom," while the troops of David constantly diminished!

Lord how are they increased that trouble me! Here is a note of exclamation to express the wonder of woe that amazed and perplexed the fugitive father. Alas! I see no limit to my misery, for my troubles are enlarged! There was enough at first to sink me very low; but lo! My enemies multiply. When Absalom, my darling, is in rebellion against me, it is enough to break my heart; but lo! Ahithophel hath forsaken me, my faithful counsellors have turned their backs on me; lo! My generals and soldiers have deserted my standard. "How are they increased that trouble me!" Troubles always come in flocks. Sorrow hath a numerous family.

Many are they that rise up against me. Their hosts are far superior to mine! Their numbers are too great for my reckoning! Let us here recall to our memory the innumerable host which beset our Divine Redeemer. The legions of our sins, the armies of fiends, the crowd of bodily pains, the host of spiritual sorrows, and all the allies of death and hell, set themselves in battle against the Son of Man. O how precious to know and believe that he has routed their hosts, and trodden them down in his anger! They who would have troubled us he has removed into captivity, and those who would have risen up against us he has laid low. The dragon lost his sting when he dashed it into the soul of Jesus.

2 Many there be which say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Selah.

3:2 David complains before his loving God of the worst weapon of his enemies' attacks, and the bitterest drop of his distresses. "Oh!" saith David,

Many there be that say of my soul, There is no help for him in God. Some of his distrustful friends said this sorrowfully, but his enemies exultingly boasted of it, and longed to see their words proved by his total destruction. This was the unkindest cut of all, when they declared that his God had forsaken him. Yet David knew in his own conscience that he had given them some ground for this exclamation, for he had committed sin against God in the very light of day. Then they flung his crime with Bathsheba into his face, and they said, "Go up, thou bloody man; God hath forsaken thee and left thee." Shimei cursed him, and swore at him to his very face, for he was bold because of his backers, since multitudes of the men of Belial thought of David in like fashion. Doubtless, David felt this infernal suggestion to be staggering to his faith. If all the trials which come from heaven, all the temptations which ascend from hell, and all the crosses which arise from earth, could be mixed and pressed together, they would not make a trial so terrible as that which is contained in this verse. It is the most bitter of all afflictions to be led to fear that there is no help for us in God. And yet remember our most blessed Saviour had to endure this in the deepest degree when he cried, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" He knew full well what is was to walk in darkness and to see no light. This was the curse of the curse. This was the wormwood mingled with the gall.
To be deserted of his Father was worse than to be the despised of men. Surely we should love him who suffered this bitterest of temptations and trials for our sake. It will be a delightful and instructive exercise for the loving heart to mark the Lord in his agonies as here portrayed, for there is here, and in very many other Psalms, far more of David's Lord than of David himself.

**Selah.** This is a musical pause; the precise meaning of which is not known. Some think it simply a rest, a pause in the music; others say it means, "Lift up the strain—sing more loudly—pitch the tune upon a higher key—there is nobler matter to come, therefore retune your harps." Harp-strings soon get out of order and need to be screwed up again to their proper tightness, and certainly our heart-strings are evermore getting out of tune, let "Selah" teach us to pray

"O may my heart in tune be found
Like David's harp of solemn sound."

At least we may learn that wherever we see "Selah," we should look upon it as a note of observation. Let us read the passage which precedes and succeeds it with greater earnestness, for surely there is always something excellent where we are required to rest and pause and meditate, or when we are required to lift up our hearts in grateful song. "SELAH."

3 But thou, O LORD, art a shield for me; my glory, and the lifter up of mine head.

3:3 Here David avows his confidence in God.

**Thou, O Lord, art a shield for me.** The word in the original signifies more than a shield; it means a buckler round about, a protection which shall surround a man entirely, a shield above, beneath, around, without and within. Oh! what a shield is God for his people! He wards off the fiery darts of Satan from beneath, and the storms of trials from above, while, at the same instant, he speaks peace to the tempest within the breast. Thou art

**my glory.** David knew that though he was driven from his capital in contempt and scorn, he should yet return in triumph, and by faith he looks upon God as honoring and glorifying him. O for grace to see our future glory amid present shame! Indeed, there is a present glory in our afflictions, if we could but discern it; for it is no mean thing to have fellowship with Christ in his sufferings. David was honored when he made the ascent of Olivet, weeping, with his head covered; for he was in all this made like unto his Lord. May we learn, in this respect, to glory in tribulations also!

**And the lifter up of mine head**—thou shalt yet exalt me. Though I hang my head in sorrow, I shall very soon lift it up in joy and thanksgiving. What a divine trio of mercies is contained in this verse! —Defense for the defenseless, glory for the despised, and joy for the comfortless. Verily we may well say, "there is none like the God of Jeshurun."

4 I cried unto the LORD with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. Selah.
3:4. I cried unto the Lord with my voice. Why doth he say, "with my voice?" Surely, silent prayers are heard. Yes, but good men often find that, even in secret, they pray better aloud than they do when they utter no vocal sound. Perhaps, moreover, David would think thus: — "My cruel enemies clamor against me; they lift up their voices, and, behold, I lift up mine, and my cry outsoars them all. They clamor, but the cry of my voice in great distress pierces the very skies, and is louder and stronger than all their tumult; for there is one in the sanctuary who hearkens to me from the seventh heaven,

‘and he hath, heard me out of his holy hill’. Answers to prayers are sweet cordials for the soul. We need not fear a frowning world while we rejoice in a prayer-hearing God. Here stands another

Selah. Rest awhile, O tried believer, and change the strain to a softer air.

5 I laid me down and slept; I awaked; for the LORD sustained me.

3:5 I laid me down and slept. David's faith enabled him to lie down; anxiety would certainly have kept him on tiptoe, watching for an enemy. Yea, he was able to sleep, to sleep in the midst of trouble, surrounded by foes. "So he giveth his beloved sleep." There is a sleep of presumption; God deliver us from it! There is a sleep of holy confidence; God help us so to close our eyes! But David says he awaked also. Some sleep the sleep of death; but he, though exposed to many enemies, reclined his head on the bosom of his God, slept happily beneath the wing of Providence in sweet security, and then awoke in safety.

For the Lord sustained me. The sweet influence of the Pleiades of promise shone upon the sleeper, and he awoke conscious that the Lord had preserved him. An excellent divine has well remarked—"This quietude of a man's heart by faith in God, is a higher sort of work than the natural resolution of manly courage, for it is the gracious operation of God's Holy Spirit upholding a man above nature, and therefore the Lord must have all the glory of it."

Special Note

Pleiades has reference to a visible cluster of stars in the constellation Taurus that includes six stars in the form of a very small dipper. God has a spiritual Pleiades or cluster of promises for His children to appropriate by faith S. E.M. .

6 I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about.

3:6 Buckling on his harness for the day's battle, our hero sings,

I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about. Observe that David does not attempt to under-estimate the number or wisdom of his enemies. He reckons them at tens of thousands, and he views them as cunning huntsmen chasing him with cruel skill. Yet he trembles not, but looking his foeman in the face he is ready for the battle. There
may be no way of escape; they may hem me in as the deer are surrounded by a circle of hunters; they may surround me on every side, but in the name of God I will dash through them; or, if I remain in the midst of them, yet shall they not hurt me; I shall be free in my very prison. But David is too wise to venture to the battle without prayer; he therefore betakes himself to his knees, and cries aloud to Jehovah.

7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone; thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly.

3:7 Arise, O LORD; save me, O my God: for thou hast smitten all mine enemies upon the cheek bone. David’s only hope is in his God, but that is so strong a confidence, that he feels the Lord hath but to arise and he is saved. It is enough for the Lord to stand up, and all is well. He compares his enemies to wild beasts, and he declares that God hath broken their jaws, so that they could not injure him;

Thou hast broken the teeth of the ungodly. Or else he alludes to the peculiar temptations to which he was then exposed. They had spoken against him; God, therefore, has smitten them upon the cheekbone. They seemed as if they would devour him with their mouths; God hath broken their teeth, and let them say what they will, their toothless jaws shall not be able to devour him. Rejoice, O believer, thou hast to do with a dragon whose head is broken, and with enemies whose teeth are dashed from their jaws!

8 Salvation belongeth unto the LORD: thy blessing is upon thy people. Selah.

3:8 This verse contains the sum and substance of Calvinistic doctrine. Search Scripture through, and you must, if you read it with a candid mind, be persuaded that the doctrine of salvation by grace alone is the great doctrine of the word of God:

Salvation belongeth unto the Lord. This is a point concerning which we are daily fighting. Our opponents say, "Salvation belongeth to the free will of man; if not to man's merit, yet at least to man's will;" but we hold and teach that salvation from first to last, in every iota of it, belongs to the Most High God. It is God that chooses his people. He calls them by his grace; he quickens them by his Spirit, and keeps them by his power. It is not of man, neither by man; "not of him that willeth, nor of him that runneth, but of God that showeth mercy." May we all learn this truth experimentally, for our proud flesh and blood will never permit us to learn it in any other way. In the last sentence the peculiarity and specialty of salvation are plainly stated:

Thy blessing is upon thy people. Neither upon Egypt, nor upon Tyre, nor upon Nineveh; thy blessing is upon thy chosen, thy blood-bought, thine everlastingly beloved people.

Selah: lift up your hearts, and pause, and meditate upon this doctrine. "Thy blessing is upon thy people." Divine, discriminating, distinguishing, eternal, infinite, immutable love, is a subject for constant adoration. Pause, my soul, at this Selah, and consider thine own interest in the salvation of God; and if by humble faith thou art enabled to see Jesus as thine by his own free gift of himself to thee, if this greatest of all blessings be upon thee, rise up and sing—
"Rise, my soul! Adore and wonder!
Ask, 'O why such love to me?'
Grace hath put me in the number
   Of the Savior’s family:
      Hallelujah!
Thanks, eternal thanks, to thee!"
PSALM 4

To the Chief Musician on Neginoth: A Psalm of David

NEGINAH (neg'-i-nah), NEGINOTH (neg'-i-noth), appears in the titles of Psa. 6,54,67,76 and refers to stringed instruments (S.E.M.).

TITLE. This Psalm is apparently intended to accompany the third, and make a pair with it. If the last may be entitled

THE MORNING PSALM, this from its matter is equally deserving of the title of

THE EVENING HYMN. May the choice words of the 8th verse be our sweet song of rest as we retire to our repose!

"Thus with my thoughts composed to peace, I'll give mine eyes to sleep; Thy hand in safety keeps my days, And will my slumbers keep."

The Inspired title runs thus: "To the chief Musician on Neginoth, a Psalm of David." The chief musician was the master or director of the sacred music of the sanctuary. Concerning this person carefully read 1 Chronicles 6:31, 32; 15:16-22; 25: 1, 7. In these passages will be found much that is interesting to the lover of sacred song, and very much that will throw a light upon the mode of praising God in the temple. Some of the titles of the Psalms are, we doubt not, derived from the names of certain renowned singers, who composed the music to which they were set. On Neginoth, that is, on stringed instruments, or hand instruments, which were played on with the hand alone, as harps and cymbals. The joy of the Jewish church was so great that they needed music to set forth the delightful feelings of their souls.

Our holy mirth is none the less overflowing because we prefer to express it in a more spiritual manner, as becometh a more spiritual dispensation. In allusion to these instruments to be played on with the hand, Nazianzen says, "Lord, I am an instrument for thee to touch." Let us lay ourselves open to the Spirit's touch, so shall we make melody. May we be full of faith and love, and we shall be living instruments of music.

Note. Saint Gregory Nazianzen (329 - January 25, 389), also known as Saint Gregory the Theologian, was a fourth century Christian bishop of Constantinople (S.E.M.).

Robert Hawker (1753-1827) says: "The Septuagint read the word which we have rendered in our translation chief musician Lamenetz, instead of Lamenetzoth, the meaning of which is unto the end. From whence the Greek and Latin fathers imagined, that all psalms which bear this inscription refer to the Messiah, the great end. If so, this Psalm is addressed to Christ; and well it may, for it is all of Christ, and spoken by Christ, and hath respect only to his people as being one with Christ. The Lord the Spirit give the reader to see this, and he will find it most blessed".
DIVISION. In the first verse David pleads with God for help. In the second he expostulates with his enemies, and continues to address them to the end of verse 5. Then from verse 6 to the close he delightfully contrasts his own satisfaction and safety with the disquietude of the ungodly in their best estate. The Psalm was most probably written upon the same occasion as the preceding, and is another choice flower from the garden of affliction. Happy is it for us that David was tried, or probably we should never have heard these sweet sonnets of faith.

1 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness: thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress; have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer.

4:1 Hear me when I call, O God of my righteousness. This is another instance of David's common habit of pleading past mercies as a ground for present favour. Here he reviews his Ebenezers and takes comfort from them. It is not to be imagined that he who has helped us in six troubles will leave us in the seventh. God does nothing by halves, and he will never cease to help us until we cease to need. The manna shall fall every morning until we cross the Jordan. Observe, that David speaks first to God and then to men. Surely we should all speak the more boldly to men if we had more constant converse with God. He who dares to face his Maker will not tremble before the sons of men. The name by which the Lord is here addressed, "God of my righteousness," deserves notice, since it is not used in any other part of Scripture. It means, Thou art the author, the witness, the maintainer, the judge, and the rewarer of my righteousness; to thee I appeal from the calumnies and harsh judgments of men. Herein is wisdom, let us imitate it and always take our suit, not to the petty courts of human opinion, but into the superior court, the King's Bench of heaven.

Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress. A figure taken from an army enclosed in a defile, and hardly pressed by the surrounding enemy. God hath dashed down the rocks and given me room; he hath broken the barriers and set me in a large place. Or, we may understand it thus: — "God hath enlarged my heart with joy and comfort, when I was like a man imprisoned by grief and sorrow." God is a never-failing comforter.

Have mercy upon me. Though thou mayest justly permit my enemies to destroy me, on account of my many and great sins, yet I flee to thy mercy, and I beseech thee hear my prayer, and bring thy servant out of his troubles. The best of men need mercy as truly as the worst of men. All the deliverances of saints, as well as the pardons of sinners, are the free gifts of heavenly grace.

Note

Ebenezer, (eb'en-e'zer; "stone of the help") refers to a stone set up by Samuel after a defeat of the Philistines to remember the heavenly "help" received on the occasion from Jehovah (1 Samuel 7:12). Every Christian has a spiritual “Ebenezer” occasion of receiving heavenly help from the Lord. S.E.M.

2 O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? Selah.
4:2 O ye sons of men, how long will ye turn my glory into shame? In this second division of the Psalm, we are led from the closet of prayer into the field of conflict. Remark the undaunted courage of the man of God. He allows that his enemies are great men (for such is the import of the Hebrew words translated—sons of men), but still he believes them to be foolish men, and therefore chides them, as though they were but children.

How long will ye love vanity, and seek after leasing? He tells them that they love vanity, and seek after leasing, that is, lying, empty fancies, vain conceits, wicked fabrications. He asks them how long they mean to make his honour a jest, and his fame a mockery? A little of such mirth is too much, why need they continue to indulge in it? Had they not been long enough upon the watch for his halting? Had not repeated disappointments convinced them that the Lord's anointed was not to be overcome by all their calumnies? Did they mean to jest their souls into hell, and go on with their laughter until swift vengeance should turn their merriment into howling? In the contemplation of their perverse continuance in their vain and lying pursuits, the Psalmist solemnly pauses and inserts a

Selah. Surely we too may stop awhile, and meditate upon the deep-seated folly of the wicked, their continuance in evil, and their sure destruction; and we may learn to admire that grace which has made us to differ, and taught us to love truth, and seek after righteousness.

3 But know that the LORD hath set apart him that is godly for himself: the LORD will hear when I call unto him.

4:3 But know. Fools will not learn, and therefore they must again and again be told the same thing, especially when it is such a bitter truth which is to be taught them, viz.: —the fact that the godly are the chosen of God, and are, by distinguishing grace, set apart and separated from among men. Election is a doctrine which unrenewed men cannot endure, but nevertheless, it is a glorious and well-attested truth, and one which should comfort the tempted believer. Election is the guarantee of complete salvation, and an argument for success at the throne of grace. He who chose us for himself will surely hear our prayer. The Lord's elect shall not be condemned, nor shall their cry be unheard. David was king by divine decree, and we are the Lord's people in the same manner: let us tell our enemies to their faces, that they fight against God and destiny, when they strive to overthrow our souls. O beloved, when you are on your knees, the fact of your being set apart as God's own peculiar treasure, should give you courage and inspire you with fervency and faith. "Shall not God avenge his own elect, which cry day and night unto him?" Since he chose to love us he cannot but choose to hear us.

4 Stand in awe, and sin not: commune with your own heart upon your bed, and be still. Selah.

4:4 Tremble and sin not. How many reverse this counsel and sin but tremble not. O that man would take the advice of this verse and commune with their own hearts. Surely a want of thought must be one reason why men are so mad as to despite Christ and hate their own mercies. O that for once their passions would be quiet and let them be still, that so in solemn silence they might review the past, and meditate upon their inevitable doom. Surely a thinking man might have enough sense to discover the vanity of sin and the worthlessness of the world.
Stay, rash sinner, stay, ere thou take the last leap. Go to thy bed and think upon thy ways. Ask counsel of thy pillow, and let the quietude of night instruct thee! Throw not away thy soul for nought! Let reason speak! Let the clamorous world be still awhile, and let thy poor soul plead with thee to bethink thyself before thou seal its fate, and ruin it for ever!

Selah. O sinner! Pause while I question thee awhile in the words of a sacred poet, —

"Sinner, is thy heart at rest? Is thy bosom void of fear? Art thou not by guilt oppress'd? Speaks not conscience in thine ear? Can this world afford thee bliss? Can it chase away thy gloom?

Flattering, false, and vain it is; Tremble at the worldling's doom! Think, O sinner, on thy end, See the judgment-day appear, Thither must thy spirit wend, There thy righteous sentence hear.

Wretched, ruin'd, helpless soul, To a Savior's blood apply; He alone can make thee whole, Fly to Jesus, sinner, fly!"

5 Offer the sacrifices of righteousness, and put your trust in the LORD.

4:5 Provided that the rebels had obeyed the voice of the last verse, they would now be crying, — "What shall we do to be saved?" And in the present verse, they are pointed to the sacrifice, and exhorted to trust in the Lord. When the Jew offered sacrifice Righteously, that is, in a spiritual manner, he thereby set forth the Redeemer, the great sin-atoning Lamb; there is, therefore, the full gospel in this exhortation of the Psalmist. O sinners, flee ye to the sacrifice of Calvary, and there put your whole confidence and trust, for he who died for men is the LORD JEHOVAH.

6 There be many that say, Who will shew us any good? LORD, lift thou up the light of thy countenance upon us.

4:6 We have now entered upon the third division of the Psalm, in which the faith of the afflicted one finds utterance in sweet expressions of contentment and peace. Error! Bookmark not defined. There were many, even among David's own followers, who wanted to see rather than to believe. Alas! this is the tendency of us all! Even the regenerate sometimes groan after the sense and sight of prosperity, and are sad when darkness covers all good from view. As for worldlings, this is their unceasing cry.
Who will shew us any good? Never satisfied, their gaping mouths are turned in every direction, their empty hearts are ready to drink in any fine delusion which impostors may invent; and when these fail, they soon yield to despair, and declare that there is no good thing in either heaven or earth. The true believer is a man of a very different mould. His face is not downward like the beasts', but upward like the angels'. He drinks not from the muddy pools of Mammon, but from the fountain of life above. The light of God's countenance is enough for him. This is his riches, his honour, his health, his ambition, his ease. Give him this, and he will ask no more. This is joy unspeakable, and full of glory. Oh, for more of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, that our fellowship with the Father and with his Son Jesus Christ may be constant and abiding!

7 Thou hast put gladness in my heart, more than in the time that their corn and their wine increased.

4:7 "It is better," said one, "to feel God's favour one hour in our repenting souls, that to sit whole ages under the warmest sunshine that this world affordeth." Christ in the heart is better than corn in the barn, or wine in the vat. Corn and wine are but fruits of the world, but the light of God's countenance is the ripe fruit of heaven. "Thou art with me," is a far more blessed cry than "Harvest home." Let my granary be empty, I am yet full of blessings if Jesus Christ smiles upon me; but if I have all the world, I am poor without him. We should not fail to remark that this verse is the saying of the righteous man, in opposition to the saying of the many. How quickly doth the tongue betray the character! "Speak, that I may see thee!" said Socrates to a fair boy. The metal of a bell is best known by its sound. Birds reveal their nature by their song. Owls cannot sing the carol of the lark, nor can the nightingale hoot like the owl. Let us, then, weigh and watch our words, lest our speech should prove us to be foreigners, and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel.

8 I will both lay me down in peace, and sleep: for thou, LORD, only makest me dwell in safety.

4:8 I will both lay me down. Sweet Evening Hymn! I shall not sit up to watch through fear, but I will lie down; and then I will not lie awake listening to every rustling sound, but I will lie down in peace and sleep, for I have nought to fear. He that hath the wings of God above him needs no other curtain. Better than bolts or bars is the protection of the Lord. Armed men kept the bed of Solomon, but we do not believe that he slept more soundly than his father, whose bed was the hard ground, and who was haunted by bloodthirsty foes. Note the word "only", which means that God alone was his keeper, and that though alone, without man's help, he was even then in good keeping, for he was "alone with God." A quiet conscience is a good bedfellow. How many of our sleepless hours might be traced to our untrusting and disordered minds. They slumber sweetly whom faith rocks to sleep. No pillow so soft as a promise; no coverlet so warm as an assured interest in Christ. O Lord, give us this calm repose on thee, that like David we may lie down in peace, and sleep each night while we live; and joyfully may we lie down in the appointed season, to sleep in death, to rest in God! Dr. Robert Hawker's (1753-1827) reflection upon this Psalm is worthy to be prayed over and fed upon with sacred delight. We cannot help transcribing it.
"Reader! let us never lose sight of the Lord Jesus while reading this Psalm. He is the Lord our righteousness; and therefore, in all our approaches to the mercy seat, let us go there in a language corresponding to this which calls Jesus the Lord our righteousness. While men of the world, from the world are seeking their chief good, let us desire his favour which infinitely transcends corn and wine, and all the good things which perish in the using. Yes, Lord, thy favour is better than life itself. Thou causest them that love thee to inherit substance, and fillest all their treasure. Oh! Thou gracious God and Father, hast thou in such a wonderful manner set apart one in our nature for thyself? Hast thou indeed chosen one out of the people? Hast thou beheld him in the purity of his nature, —as one in every point Godly? Hast thou given him as the covenant of the people? And hast thou declared thyself well pleased in him? Oh! Then, well may my soul be well pleased in him also. Now do I know that my God and Father will hear me when I call upon him in Jesus' name, and when I look up to him for acceptance for Jesus' sake! Yes, my heart is fixed. O Lord, my heart is fixed; Jesus is my hope and righteousness; the Lord will hear me when I call. And henceforth will I both lay me down in peace and sleep securely in Jesus, accepted in the Beloved; for this is the rest 'wherewith the Lord causeth the weary to rest, and this is the refreshing'”.

PSALM 5

To the chief Musician upon Nehiloth,
A Psalm of David

TITLE. "To the Chief Musician upon Nehiloth, a Psalm of David." The Hebrew word Nehiloth is taken from another word, signifying "to perforate;" "to bore through," whence it comes to mean a pipe or a flute; so that this song was probably intended to be sung with an accompaniment of wind instruments, such as the horn, the trumpet, flute, or cornet. However, it is proper to remark that we are not sure of the interpretation of these ancient titles, for the Septuagint translates it, "For him who shall obtain inheritance," and Aben Ezra [Jewish scholar and writer; born in Toledo, Spain 1092-1093; died Jan. 28, 1167] thinks it denotes some old and well-known melody to which this Psalm was to be played. The best scholars confess that great darkness hangs over the precise interpretation of the title; nor is this much to be regretted, for it furnishes an internal evidence of the great antiquity of the Book. Throughout the first, second, third, and forth Psalms, you will have noticed that the subject is a contrast between the position, the character, and the prospects of the righteous and of the wicked. In this Psalm you will note the same. The Psalmist carries out a contrast between himself made righteous by God's grace, and the wicked who opposed him. To the devout mind there is here presented a precious view of the Lord Jesus, of whom it is said that in the days of his flesh, he offered up prayers and supplications with strong crying and tears.

DIVISION. The Psalm should be divided into two parts, from the first to the seventh verse and then from the eighth to the twelfth. In the first part of the Psalm David most vehemently beseeches the Lord to hearken to his prayer, and in the second part he retraces the same ground.

1 Give ear to my words, O LORD, consider my meditation.

5:1 Give ear to my words, O LORD. There are two sorts of prayers—those expressed in words, and the unuttered longings which abide as silent meditations. Words are not the essence but the garments of prayer. Moses at the Red Sea cried to God, though he said nothing. Yet the use of language may prevent distraction of mind, may assist the powers of the soul, and may excite devotion. David, we observe, uses both modes of prayer, and craves for the one a hearing, and for the other a consideration. What an expressive word!

Consider my meditation. If I have asked that which is right, give it to me; if I have omitted to ask that which I most needed, fill up the vacancy in my prayer. Consider my meditation." Let thy holy soul consider it as presented through my all-glorious Mediator: then regard thou it in thy wisdom, weigh it in the scales, judge thou of my sincerity, and of the true state of my necessities, and answer me in due time for thy mercy's sake! There may be prevailing intercession where there are no words; and alas! there may be words where there is no true
supplication. Let us cultivate the spirit of prayer which is even better than the habit of prayer. There may be seeming prayer where there is little devotion. We should begin to pray before we kneel down, and we should not cease when we rise up.

2 Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God: for unto thee will I pray.

5:2 *The voice of my cry.* In another Psalm we find the expression, "The voice of my weeping." Weeping has a voice—a melting, plaintive tone, an ear-piercing shrillness, which reaches the very heart of God; and *crying* hath a voice—a soul-moving eloquence; coming from our heart it reaches God's heart. Ah! My brothers and sisters, sometimes we cannot put our prayers into words: they are nothing but a *cry*: but the Lord can comprehend the meaning, for he hears a voice in our cry. To a loving father his children's cries are music, and they have a magic influence which his heart cannot resist.

*My King, and my God.* Observe carefully these little pronouns, "my King, and my God." They are the pith and marrow of the plea. Here is a grand argument why God should answer prayer—because he is our King and our God. We are not aliens to him: he is the King of our country. Kings are expected to hear the appeals of their own people. We are not strangers to him; we are his worshippers, and he is our God: ours by covenant, by promise, by oath, by blood.

*For unto thee will I pray.* Here David expresses his declaration that he will seek to God, and to God alone. God is to be the only object of worship: the only resource of our soul in times of need. Leave broken cisterns to the godless, and let the godly drink from the Divine fountain alone. "Unto thee will I pray." He makes a resolution, that as long as he lived he would pray. He would never cease to supplicate, even though the answer should not come.

3 My voice shalt thou hear in the morning, O LORD; in the morning will I direct my prayer unto thee, and will look up.

5:3 Observe, this is not so much a prayer as a resolution,

*My voice shalt thou hear;* I will not be dumb, I will not be silent, I will not withhold my speech, I will cry to thee for the fire that dwells within compels me to pray." We can sooner die than live without prayer. None of God's children are possessed with a dumb devil.

*In the morning.* This is the fittest time for intercourse with God. An hour in the morning is worth two in the evening. While the dew is on the grass, let grace drop upon the soul. Let us give to God the mornings of our days and the morning of our lives. Prayer should be the key of the day and the lock of the night. Devotion should be both the morning star and the evening star. If we merely read our English version, and want an explanation of these two sentences, we find it in the figure of an archer,
I will direct my prayer unto thee, I will put my prayer upon the bow, I will direct it towards heaven, and then when I have shot up my arrow,

I will look up to see where it has gone. But the Hebrew has a still fuller meaning than this—I will direct my prayer.” It is the word that is used for the laying in order of the wood and the pieces of the victim upon the altar, and it is used also for the putting of the shewbread upon the table. It means just this:

"I will arrange my prayer before thee;” I will lay it out upon the altar in the morning, just as the priest lays out the morning sacrifice. I will arrange my prayer; or, as old Master John Trapp (1611-1669) has it,

"I will marshal up my prayers;” I will put them in order, call up all my powers, and bid them stand in their proper places, that I may pray with all my might, and pray acceptably.

"And will look up,” or, as the Hebrew might better be translated,

"I will look out,' I will look out for the answer; after I have prayed, I will expect that the blessing shall come.” It is a word that is used in another place where we read of those who watched for the morning. So will I watch for thine answer, O my Lord! I will spread out my prayer like the victim on the altar, and I will look up, and expect to receive the answer by fire from heaven to consume the sacrifice. Two questions are suggested by the last part of this verse.

Do we not miss very much of the sweetness and efficacy of prayer by a want of careful meditation before it, and of hopeful expectation after it? We too often rush into the presence of God without forethought or humility. We are like men who present themselves before a king without a petition, and what wonder is it that we often miss the end of prayer? We should be careful to keep the stream of meditation always running; for this is the water to drive the mill of prayer. It is idle to pull up the floodgates of a dry brook, and then hope to see the wheel revolve. Prayer without fervency is like hunting with a dead dog, and prayer without preparation is hawking with a blind falcon.

Prayer is the work of the Holy Spirit, but he works by means. God made man, but he used the dust of the earth as a material: the Holy Ghost is the author of prayer, but he employs the thoughts of a fervent soul as the gold with which to fashion the vessel. Let not our prayers and praises be the flashes of a hot and hasty brain, but the steady burning of a well-kindled fire. But, furthermore, do we not forget to watch the result of our supplications? We are like the ostrich, which lays her eggs and looks not for her young. We sow the seed, and are too idle to seek a harvest. How can we expect the Lord to open the windows of his grace, and pour us out a blessing, if we will not open the windows of expectation and look up for the promised favour? Let holy preparation link hands with patient expectation, and we shall have far larger answers to our prayers.

4 For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee.
5:4 And now the Psalmist having thus expressed his resolution to pray, you hear him putting up his prayer. He is pleading against his cruel and wicked enemies. He uses a most mighty argument. He begs of God to put them away from him, because they were displeasing to God himself.

"For thou art not a God that hath pleasure in wickedness: neither shall evil dwell with thee." "When I pray against my tempters," says David, "I pray against the very things which thou thyself abhorrest."

Thou hatest evil: Lord, I beseech thee, deliver me from it! Let us learn here the solemn truth of the hatred which a righteous God must bear toward sin.

He has no pleasure in wickedness, however wittily, grandly, and proudly it may array itself. Its glitter has no charm for him. Men may bow before successful villainy, and forget the wickedness of the battle in the gaudiness of the triumph, but the Lord of Holiness is not such-an-one as we are.

"Neither shall evil dwell with thee." He will not afford it the meanest shelter. Neither on earth nor in heaven shall evil share the mansion of God. Oh, how foolish are we if we attempt to entertain two guests so hostile to one another as Christ Jesus and the devil! Rest assured, Christ will not live in the parlor of our hearts if we entertain the devil in the cellar of our thoughts.

5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight: thou hatest all workers of iniquity.

5:5 The foolish shall not stand in thy sight. Sinners are fools written large. A little sin is a great folly, and the greatest of all folly is great sin. Such sinful fools as these must be banished from the court of heaven. Earthly kings were wont to have fools in their trains, but the only wise God will have no fools in his palace above.

"Thou hatest all workers of iniquity." It is not a little dislike, but a thorough hatred which God bears to workers of iniquity. To be hated of God is an awful thing. O let us be very faithful in warning the wicked around us, for it will be a terrible thing for them to fall into the hands of an angry God!

6 Thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing: the LORD will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.

5:6 Observe, that evil speakers must be punished as well as evil workers, for thou shalt destroy them that speak leasing. All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. A man may lie without danger of the law of man, but he will not escape the law of God. Liars have short wings, their flight shall soon be over, and they shall fall into the fiery floods of destruction.
**The Lord will abhor the bloody and deceitful man.** Bloody men shall be made drunk with their own blood, and they who began by deceiving others shall end with being deceived themselves. Our old proverb saith, "Bloody and deceitful men dig their own graves." The voice of the people is in this instance the voice of God. How forcible is the word *abhorr*! Does it not show us how powerful and deep-seated is the hatred of the Lord against the workers of iniquity?

7 But as for me, I will come into thy house in the multitude of thy mercy: and in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple.

5:7 With this verse the first part of the Psalm ends. The Psalmist has bent his knee in prayer; he has described before God, as an argument for his deliverance, the character and the fate of the wicked; and now he contrasts this with the condition of the righteous.

**But as for me, I will come into thy house.** I will not stand at a distance, I will come into thy sanctuary, just as a child comes into his father's house. But I will not come there by my own merits; no, I have a multitude of sins, and therefore I will come **in the multitude of thy mercy.** I will approach thee with confidence because of thy immeasurable grace. God's judgments are all numbered, but his mercies are innumerable; he gives his wrath by weight, but without weight his mercy.

**And in thy fear will I worship toward thy holy temple,**—towards the temple of thy holiness. The temple was not built on earth at that time; it was but a tabernacle; but David was wont to turn his eyes spiritually to that temple of God's holiness where between the wings of the Cherubim Jehovah dwells in light ineffable. Daniel opened his window toward Jerusalem, but we open our hearts toward heaven.

8 Lead me, O LORD, in thy righteousness because of mine enemies; make thy way straight before my face.

5: 8 Now we come to the second part, in which the Psalmist repeats his arguments, and goes over the same ground again.

**Lead me, O Lord,** as a little child is led by its father, as a blind man is guided by his friend. It is safe and pleasant walking when God leads the way.

**In thy righteousness,** not in *my* righteousness, for that is imperfect, but in *thine*, for thou art righteousness itself.

**Make thy way,** not *my* way, **straight before my face.** Brethren, when we have learned to give up our own way, and long to walk in God's way, it is a happy sign of grace; and it is no small mercy to see the way of God with clear vision straight before our face. Errors about duty may lead us into a sea of sins, before we know where we are.

9 For *there is* no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness; their throat is an open sepulchre; they flatter with their tongue.
5:9 **For there is no faithfulness in their mouth; their inward part is very wickedness.** This description of depraved man has been copied by the Apostle Paul, and, together with some other quotations, he has placed it in the second chapter of Romans, as being an accurate description of the whole human race, not of David's enemies only, but of all men by nature. Note that remarkable figure,

*Their throat is an open sepulchre, a sepulchre* full of loathsomeness, of miasma, of pestilence and death. But, worse than that, it is an *open* sepulchre, with all its evil gases issuing forth, to spread death and destruction all around. So, with the throat of the wicked, it would be a great mercy if it could always be closed. If we could seal in continual silence the mouth of the wicked it would be like a sepulchre shut up, and would not produce much mischief. But, *"their throat is an open sepulchre,"* consequently all the wickedness of their heart exhales, and comes forth. How dangerous is an open sepulchre; men in their journeys might easily stumble therein, and find themselves among the dead. Ah! Take heed of the wicked man, for there is nothing that he will not say to ruin you; he will long to destroy your character, and bury you in the hideous sepulchre of his own wicked throat. One sweet thought here, however. At the resurrection there will be a resurrection not only of bodies, but characters. This should be a great comfort to a man who has been abused and slandered. *"Then shall the righteous shine forth as the sun."* The world may think you vile, and bury your character; but if you have been upright, in the day when the graves shall give up their dead, this open sepulchre of the sinner's throat shall be compelled to give up your heavenly character, and you shall come forth and be honored in the sight of men.

*They flatter with their tongue.* Or, as we might read it, *"They have an oily tongue, a smooth tongue."* A smooth tongue is a great evil; many have been bewitched by it. There be many human anteaters that with their long tongues covered with oily words entice and entrap the unwary and make their gain thereby. When the wolf licks the lamb, he is preparing to wet his teeth in its blood.

10 Destroy thou them, O God; let them fall by their own counsels; cast them out in the multitude of their transgressions; for they have rebelled against thee.

5:10 **Against thee:** not against *me*. If they were *my* enemies I would forgive them, but I cannot forgive *thine*. We are to forgive *our* enemies, but God's enemies it is not in our power to forgive. These expressions have often been noticed by men of over refinement as being harsh, and grating on the ear. *"Oh!"* say they, *"they are vindictive and revengeful."* Let us remember that they might be translated as prophecies, not as wishes; but we do not care to avail ourselves of this method of escape. We have never heard of a reader of the *Bible* who, after perusing these passages, was made revengeful by reading them, and it is but fair to test the nature of a writing by its effects. When we hear a judge condemning a murderer, however severe his sentence, we do not feel that we should be justified in condemning others for any private injury done to us. The Psalmist here speaks as a judge, *ex officio*; he speaks as God's mouth, and in condemning the wicked he gives us no excuse whatever for uttering anything in the way of malediction upon those who have caused us personal offence. The most shameful way of cursing another is by pretending to bless him.
We were all somewhat amused by noticing the toothless malice of that wretched old priest of Rome, when he foolishly cursed the Emperor of France with his blessing. He was blessing him in form and cursing him in reality. Now, in direct contrast we put this healthy commendation of David, which is intended to be a blessing by warning the sinner of the impending curse. O impenitent man, be it known unto thee that all thy godly friends will give their solemn assent to the awful sentence of the Lord, which he shall pronounce upon thee in the day of doom! Our verdict shall applaud the condemning curse which the Judge of all the earth shall thunder against the godless. In the following verse we once more find the contrast which has marked the preceding Psalms.

11 But let all those that put their trust in thee rejoice: let them ever shout for joy, because thou defendest them: let them also that love thy name be joyful in thee.

5:11 Joy is the privilege of the believer. When sinners are destroyed our rejoicing shall be full. They laugh first and weep ever after; we weep now, but shall rejoice eternally. When they howl we shall shout, and as they must groan for ever, so shall we

ever shout for joy. This holy bliss of ours has a firm foundation, for, O Lord, we are

joyful in thee. The eternal God is the wellspring of our bliss. We love God, and therefore we delight in him. Our heart is at ease in our God. We fare sumptuously every day because we feed on him. We have music in the house, music in the heart, and music in heaven, for the Lord Jehovah is our strength and our song; he also is become our salvation.

12 For thou, LORD, wilt bless the righteous; with favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield.

5:12 Jehovah has ordained his people the heirs of blessedness and nothing shall rob them of their inheritance. With all the fullness of his power he will bless them, and all his attributes shall unite to satiate them with divine contentment. Nor is this merely for the present, but the blessing reaches into the long and unknown future.

Thou, Lord, wilt bless the righteous. This is a promise of infinite length, of unbounded breadth, and of unutterable preciousness. As for the defense, which the believer needs in this land of battles, it is here promised to him in the fullest measure. There were vast shields used by the ancients as extensive as a man's whole person, which would surround him entirely. So says David,

With favour wilt thou compass him as with a shield. According to Henry Ainsworth (d. 1622) there is here also the idea of being crowned, so that we wear a royal helmet, which is at once our glory and defense. O Lord, ever give to us this gracious coronation!
Psalm 6

To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith,
A Psalm of David

NEGINAH (neg'-i-nah), NEGINOTH (neg'-i-noth), appears in the titles of Psa. 4,54,67,76 and refers to stringed instruments.

SHEMINITH (shem'-i-ith), is a musical referring to an eight stringed instrument that was to be played (1 Chron. 15:21; Psalm 12) S.E.M.

TITLE. This Psalm is commonly known as the first of the PENITENTIAL PSALMS, (The other six are 32, 38, 51, 102, 130, 143) and certainly its language well becomes the lip of a penitent, for it expresses at once the sorrow, (verses 3, 6, 7), the humiliation (verses 2 and 4), and the hatred of sin (verse 8), which are the unfailing marks of the contrite spirit when it turns to God. O Holy Spirit, beget in us the true repentance which needeth not to be repented of.

The title of this Psalm is "To the chief Musician on Neginoth upon Sheminith (1 Chronicle 15:21), A Psalm of David," that is, to the chief musician with stringed instruments, upon the eighth, probably the octave. Some think it refers to the bass or tenor key, which would certainly be well adapted to this mournful ode. But we are not able to understand these old musical terms, and even the term "Selah," still remains untranslated. This, however, should be no difficulty in our way. We probably lose but very little by our ignorance, and it may serve to confirm our faith. It is a proof of the high antiquity of these Psalms that they contain words, the meaning of which is lost even to the best scholars of the Hebrew language. Surely these are but incidental (accidental I might almost say, if I did not believe them to be designed by God), proofs of their being, what they profess to be, the ancient writings of King David of olden times.

DIVISION. You will observe that the Psalm is readily divided into two parts. First, there is the Psalmist's plea in his great distress, reaching from the first to the end of the seventh verse. Then you have, from the eighth to the end, quite a different theme. The Psalmist has changed his note. He leaves the minor key, and betakes himself to sublimer strains. He tunes his note to the high key of confidence, and declares that God hath heard his prayer, and hath delivered him out of all his troubles.

1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thine anger, neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

6:1 Having read through the first division, in order to see it as a whole, we will now look at it verse by verse.

O Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger. The Psalmist is very conscious that he deserves to be rebuked, and he feels, moreover, that the rebuke in some form or other must come upon him, if not for condemnation, yet for conviction and sanctification. "Corn is cleaned with wind, and the soul with chastenings." It were folly to pray against the golden hand which
enriches us by its blows. He does not ask that the rebuke may be totally withheld, for he might thus lose a blessing in disguise; but, "Lord, rebuke me not in thine anger." If thou remindest me of my sin, it is good; but, oh, remind me not of it as one incensed against me, lest thy servant's heart should sink in despair. Thus saith Jeremiah, "O Lord, correct me, but with judgment; not in thine anger, lest thou bring me to nothing." I know that I must be chastened, and though I shrink from the rod yet do I feel that it will be for my benefit; but, oh, my God,

chasten me not in thy hot displeasure, lest the rod become a sword, and lest in smiting, thou shouldest also kill. So may we pray that the chastisements of our gracious God, if they may not be entirely removed, may at least be sweetened by the consciousness that they are "not in anger, but in his dear covenant love."

2 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; for I am weak: O LORD, heal me; for my bones are vexed.

6:2 Have mercy upon me, O Lord; for I am weak. Though I deserve destruction, yet let thy mercy pity my frailty. This is the right way to plead with God if we would prevail. Urge not your goodness or your greatness, but plead your sin and your littleness. Cry, "I am weak," therefore, O Lord, give me strength and crush me not. Send not forth the fury of thy tempest against so weak a vessel. Temper the wind to the shorn lamb. Be tender and pitiful to a poor withering flower, and break it not from its stem. Surely this is the plea that a sick man would urge to move the pity of his fellow if he were striving with him, "Deal gently with me, for I am weak." A sense of sin had so spoiled the Psalmist's pride, so taken away his vaunted strength, that he found himself weak to obey the law, weak through the sorrow that was in him, too weak, perhaps, to lay hold on the promise. "I am weak." The original may be read, "I am one who droops," or withered like a blighted plant. Ah! Beloved, we know what this means, for we, too, have seen our glory stained, and our beauty like a faded flower.

O Lord, heal me; for my bones are vexed. Here he prays for healing, not merely the mitigation of the ills he endured, but their entire removal, and the curing of the wounds which had arisen therefrom. His bones were "shaken," as the Hebrew has it. His terror had become so great that his very bones shook; not only did his flesh quiver, but the bones, the solid pillars of the house of manhood, were made to tremble.

"My bones are shaken." Ah, when the soul has a sense of sin, it is enough to make the bones shake; it is enough to make a man's hair stand up on end to see the flames of hell beneath him, an angry God above him, and danger and doubt surrounding him. Well might he say,

"My bones are shaken." Lest, however, we should imagine that it was merely bodily sickness—although bodily sickness might be the outward sign—the Psalmist goes on to say,

3 My soul is also sore vexed: but thou, O LORD, how long?

6:3 My soul is also sore vexed. Soul-trouble is the very soul of trouble. It matters not that the bones shake if the soul be firm, but when the soul itself is also sore vexed this is agony indeed.
But thou, O Lord, how long? This sentence ends abruptly, for words failed, and grief drowned the little comfort which dawned upon him. The Psalmist had still, however, some hope; but that hope was only in his God. He therefore cries, "O Lord, how long?" The coming of Christ into the soul in his priestly robes of grace is the grand hope of the penitent soul; and, indeed, in some form or other, Christ's appearance is, and ever has been, the hope of the saints. John Calvin's favorite exclamation was,

"Domine usquequo"—"O Lord, how long?" Nor could his sharpest pains, during a life of anguish, force from him any other word. Surely this is the cry of the saints under the altar, "O Lord, how long?" And this should be the cry of the saints waiting for the millennial glories, "Why are his chariots so long in coming; Lord, how long?" Those of us who have passed through conviction of sin knew what it was to count our minutes hours, and our hours years, while mercy delayed its coming. We watched for the dawn of grace, as they that watch for the morning. Earnestly did our anxious spirits ask, "O Lord, how long?"

4 Return, O LORD, deliver my soul: oh save me for thy mercies' sake.

6:4 Return, O Lord; deliver my soul. As God's absence was the main cause of his misery, so his return would be enough to deliver him from his trouble.

Oh save me for thy mercies' sake. He knows where to look, and what arm to lay hold upon. He does not lay hold on God's left hand of justice, but on his right hand of mercy. He knew his iniquity too well to think of merit, or appeal to anything but the grace of God. "For thy mercies' sake." What a plea that is! How prevalent it is with God! If we turn to justice, what plea can we urge? but if we turn to mercy we may still cry, notwithstanding the greatness of our guilt, "Save me for thy mercies' sake." Error! Bookmark not defined. Observe how frequently David here pleads the name of Jehovah, which is always intended where the word LORD is given in capitals. Five times in four verses we here meet with it. Is not this a proof that the glorious name is full of consolation to the tempted saint? Eternity, Infinity, Immutability, Self-existence, are all in the name Jehovah, and all are full of comfort.

5 For in death there is no remembrance of thee: in the grave who shall give thee thanks?

6:5 And now David was in great fear of death—death temporal, and perhaps death eternal. Read the passage as you will, the following verse is full of power.

For in death there is no remembrance of thee; in the grave who shall give thee thanks? Churchyards are silent places; the vaults of the sepulchre echo not with songs. Damp earth covers dumb mouths. "O Lord!" saith he, "if thou wilt spare me I will praise thee. If I die, then must my mortal praise at least be suspended; and if I perish in hell, then thou wilt never have any thanksgiving from me. Songs of gratitude cannot rise from the flaming pit of hell. True, thou wilt doubtless be glorified, even in my eternal condemnation, but then O Lord, I cannot glorify thee voluntarily; and among the sons of men, there will be one heart the less to bless thee."
Ah! Poor trembling sinners, may the Lord help you to use this forcible argument! It is for God's glory that a sinner should be saved. When we seek pardon, we are not asking God to do that which will stain his banner, or put a blot on his escutcheon. He delighteth in mercy. It is his peculiar, darling attribute. Mercy honors God. Do not we ourselves say, "Mercy blesseth him that gives, and him that takes?" And surely, in some diviner sense, this is true of God, who, when he gives mercy, glorifies himself.

6 I am weary with my groaning; all the night make I my bed to swim; I water my couch with my tears.

6:6 The Psalmist gives a fearful description of his long agony:

*I am weary with my groaning.* He has groaned till his throat was hoarse; he had cried for mercy till prayer became a labour. God's people may groan, but they may not grumble. Yea, they must groan, being burdened, or they will never shout in the day of deliverance. The next sentence, we think, is not accurately translated. It should be,

*I shall make my bed to swim every night* (when nature needs rest, and when I am most alone with my God). That is to say, my grief is fearful even now, but if God do not soon save me, it will not stay of itself, but will increase, until my tears will be so many, that my bed itself shall swim. A description rather of what he feared would be, than of what had actually taken place. May not our foreboding of future woe become arguments which faith may urge when seeking present mercy?

7 Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all mine enemies.

6:7 *I water my couch with my tears. Mine eye is consumed because of grief; it waxeth old because of all my enemies.* As an old man's eye grows dim with years, so, says David, my eye is grown red and feeble through weeping. Conviction sometimes has such an effect upon the body, that even the outward organs are made to suffer. May not this explain some of the convulsions and hysterical attacks which have been experienced under convictions in the revivals in Ireland? Is it surprising that some souls be smitten to the earth, and begin to cry aloud; when we find that David himself made his bed to swim, and grew old while he was under the heavy hand of God? Ah! Brethren, it is no light matter to feel one's self a sinner, condemned at the bar of God. The language of this Psalm is not strained and forced, but perfectly natural to one in so sad a plight.

8 Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity; for the LORD hath heard the voice of my weeping.

6:8 Hitherto, all has been mournful and disconsolate, but now—

"Your harps, ye trembling saints,
Down from the willows take."
Ye must have your times of weeping, but let them be short. Get ye up, get ye up, from your
dunghills! Cast aside your sackcloth and ashes! Weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh
in the morning. David has found peace, and rising from his knees he begins to sweep his house
of the wicked.

**Depart from me, all ye workers of iniquity.** The best remedy for us against an evil man is a long
space between us both. "Get ye gone; I can have no fellowship with you." Repentance is a
practical thing. It is not enough to bemoan the desecration of the temple of the heart, we must
scourge out the buyers and sellers, and overturn the tables of the money changers. A pardoned
sinner will hate the sins which cost the Saviour his blood. Grace and sin are quarrelsome
neighbors, and one or the other must go to the wall.

**For the Lord hath hear the voice of my weeping.** What a fine Hebraism, and what grand poetry
it is in English! "He hath heard the voice of my weeping." Is there a voice in weeping? Does
weeping speak? In what language doth it utter its meaning? Why, in that universal tongue which
is known and understood in all the earth, and even in heaven above. When a man weeps, whether
he be a Jew or Gentile, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free, it has the same meaning in it. Weeping
is the eloquence of sorrow. It is an unstemming orator, needing no interpreter, but understood
of all. Is it not sweet to believe that our tears are understood even when words fail? Let us learn
to think of tears as liquid prayers, and of weeping as a constant dropping of importunate
intercession which will wear its way right surely into the very heart of mercy, despite the stony
difficulties which obstruct the way. My God, I will "weep" when I cannot plead, for thou hearest
the voice of my weeping.

9 The LORD hath heard my supplication; the LORD will receive my prayer.

**6:9 The Lord hath heard my supplication.** The Holy Spirit had wrought into the Psalmist's
mind the confidence that his prayer was heard. This is frequently the privilege of the saints.
Praying the prayer of faith, they are often infallibly assured that they have prevailed with God.
We read of Martin Luther that, having on one occasion wrestled hard with God in prayer, he
came leaping out of his closet crying, "Vicimus, vicimus;" that is, "We have conquered, we have
prevailed with God." Assured confidence is no idle dream, for when the Holy Ghost bestows it
upon us, we know its reality, and could not doubt it, even though all men should deride our
boldness.

**The Lord will receive my prayer.** Here is past experience used for future encouragement. He
hath, he will. Note this, O believer, and imitate its reasoning.

10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed: let them return and be
ashamed suddenly.

**6:10 Let all mine enemies be ashamed and sore vexed.** This is rather a prophecy than an
imprecation, it may be read in the future, "All my enemies shall be ashamed and sore vexed."

**Let them return and be ashamed suddenly.** They shall return and be ashamed instantaneously,
—in a
moment; —their doom shall come upon them suddenly. Death's day is doom's day, and both are sure and may be sudden. The Romans were wont to say, "The feet of the avenging Deity are shod with wool." With noiseless footsteps vengeance nears its victim, and sudden and overwhelming shall be its destroying stroke. If this were an imprecation, we must remember that the language of the old dispensation is not that of the new. We pray for our enemies, not against them. God have mercy on them, and bring them into the right way. Thus the Psalm, like those which preceded it, shews the different estates of the godly and the wicked. O Lord, let us be numbered with thy people, both now and forever!
Psalm 7

Shaggier of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the words of Cush the Benjamite.

SHIGGAION (shig-gah'-yon), SHIGIONOTH (shig-i'-o-noth), refers to a musical term of uncertain meaning. It may refer to the type of wildly emotional, enthusiastic song or hymn (Psa. 7 title).

BENJAMITE (ben'-ja-mite), refers to a descendant of Benjamin the son of Jacob (1 Sam. 9:21; 22:7) S.E.M.

TITLE. "Shiggaion of David, which he sang unto the Lord, concerning the word of Cush the Benjamite."—"Shiggaion of David." As far as we can gather from the observations of learned men, and from a comparison of this Psalm with the only other Shiggaion in the Word of God, (Habakkuk 3:1), this title seems to mean "variable songs," with which also the idea of solace and pleasure is associated. Truly our life-psalm is composed of variable verses; one stanza rolls along with the sublime meter of triumph, but another limps with the broken rhythm of complaint. There is much bass in the saint's music here below. Our experience is as variable as the weather in England. From the title we learn the occasion of the composition of this song. It appears probable that Cush the Benjamite had accused David to Saul of treasonable conspiracy against his royal authority. This the king would be ready enough to credit, both from his jealousy of David, and from the relation which most probably existed between himself, the son of Kish, and this Cush, or Kish, the Benjamite. He who is near the throne can do more injury to a subject than an ordinary slanderer. This may be called the SONG OF THE SLANDERED SAINT. Even this sorest of evils may furnish occasion for a Psalm. What a blessing it would be if we could turn even the most disastrous event into a theme for song, and so turn the tables upon our great enemy. Let us learn a lesson from Martin Luther (1483-1546), who once said, "David made Psalms; we also will make Psalms, and sing them as well as we can to the honour of our Lord, and to spite and mock the devil."

DIVISION. In the first and second verses the danger is stated, and prayer offered. Then the Psalmist most solemnly avows his innocence. (Psalm 6:3, 4, 5). The Lord is pleaded with to arise to judgment (Psalm 6:6, 7). The Lord, sitting upon his throne, hears the renewed appeal of the Slandered Supplicant (Psalm 6:8, 9). The Lord clears his servant, and threatens the wicked (Psalm 6:10, 11, 12, 13). The slanderer is seen in vision bringing a curse upon his own head, (Psalm 6:14, 15, 16), while David retires from trial singing a hymn of praise to his righteous God. We have here a noble sermon upon that text: "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."
1 O LORD my God, in thee do I put my trust: save me from all them that persecute me, and deliver me:

7:1 David appears before God to plead with him against the Accuser, who had charged him with treason and treachery. The case is here opened with an avowal of confidence in God. Whatever may be the emergency of our condition we shall never find it amiss to retain our reliance upon our God.

O Lord my God, mine by a special covenant, sealed by Jesus' blood, and ratified in my own soul by a sense of union to thee;

in thee, and in thee only,

do I put my trust, even now in my sore distress. I shake, but my rock moves not. It is never right to distrust God, and never vain to trust him. And now, with both divine relationship and holy trust to strengthen him, David utters the burden of his desire—

save me from all them that persecute me. His pursuers were very many, and any one of them cruel enough to devour him; he cries, therefore, for salvation from them all. We should never think our prayers complete until we ask for preservation from all sin, and all enemies.

And deliver me, extricate me from their snares, acquit me of their accusations, give a true and just deliverance in this trial of my injured character. See how clearly his case is stated; let us see to it, that we know what we would have when we are come to the throne of mercy. Pause a little while before you pray, that you may not offer the sacrifice of fools. Get a distinct idea of your need, and then you can pray with the more fluency of fervency.

2 Lest he tear my soul like a lion, rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver.

7: 2. Lest he tear my soul. Here is the plea of fear co-working with the plea of faith. There was one among David's foes mightier that the rest, who had both dignity, strength, and ferocity, and was, therefore,

like a lion. From this foe he urgently seeks deliverance. Perhaps this was Saul, his royal enemy; but in our own case there is one who goes about like a lion, seeking whom he may devour, concerning whom we should ever cry, "Deliver us from the Evil One." Notice the vigor of the description—

 rending it in pieces, while there is none to deliver. It is a picture from the shepherd-life of David. When the fierce lion had pounced upon the defenseless lamb, and had made it his prey, he would rend the victim in pieces, break all the bones, and devour all, because no shepherd was near to protect the lamb or rescue it from the ravenous beast. This is a soul-moving portrait of a saint delivered over to the will of Satan. This will make the bowels of Jehovah yearn.
A father cannot be silent when a child is in such peril. No, he will not endure the thought of his darling in the jaws of a lion, he will arise and deliver his persecuted one. Our God is very pitiful, and he will surely rescue his people from so desperate a destruction. It will be well for us here to remember that this is a description of the danger to which the Psalmist was exposed from slanderous tongues. Verily this is not an overdrawn picture, for the wounds of a sword will heal, but the wounds of the tongue cut deeper than the flesh, and are not soon cured. Slander leaves a slur, even if it be wholly disproved. Common fame, although notoriously a common liar, has very many believers. Once let an ill word get into men's mouths, and it is not easy to get it fully out again. The Italians say that good repute is like the cypress, once cut it never puts forth leaf again; this is not true if our character be cut by a stranger's hand, but even then it will not soon regain its former verdure. Oh, 'tis a meanness most detestable to stab a good man in his reputation, but diabolical hatred observes no nobility in its mode of warfare. We must be ready for this trial, for it will surely come upon us. If God was slandered in Eden, we shall surely be maligned in this land of sinners. Gird up your loins, ye children of the resurrection, for this fiery trial awaits you all.

3 O LORD my God, if I have done this; if there be iniquity in my hands;

7:3 The second part of this wandering hymn contains a protestation of innocence, and an invocation of wrath upon his own head, if he were not clear from the evil imputed to him. So far from hiding treasonable intentions in his hands, or ungratefully requiting the peaceful deeds of a friend, he had even suffered his enemy to escape when he had him completely in his power.

4 If I have rewarded evil unto him that was at peace with me; (yea, I have delivered him that without cause is mine enemy:)

7:4 Twice had he spared Saul's life; once in the cave of Adullam, and again when he found him sleeping in the midst of his slumbering camp: he could, therefore, with a clear conscience, make his appeal to heaven. He needs not fear the curse whose soul is clear of guilt.

5 Let the enemy persecute my soul, and take it; yea, let him tread down my life upon the earth, and lay mine honour in the dust. Selah.

7:5 Yet is the imprecation a most solemn one, and only justifiable through the extremity of the occasion, and the nature of the dispensation under which the Psalmist lived. We are commanded by our Lord Jesus to let our yea be yea, and our nay, nay: "for whatsoever is more than this cometh of evil." If we cannot be believed on our word, we are surely not to be trusted on our oath; for to a true Christian his simple word is as binding as another man's oath. Especially beware, O unconverted men! of trifling with solemn imprecations. Remember the woman at Devizes, who wished she might die if she had not paid her share in a joint purchase, and who fell dead there and then with the money in her hand.

Error! Bookmark not defined. Selah. David enhances the solemnity of this appeal to the dread tribunal of God by the use of the usual pause.
From these verses we may learn that no innocence can shield a man from the calumnies of the wicked. David had been scrupulously careful to avoid any appearance of rebellion against Saul, whom he constantly styled “the Lord's anointed;” but all this could not protect him from lying tongues. As the shadow follows the substance, so envy pursues goodness. It is only at the tree laden with fruit that men throw stones. If we would live without being slandered we must wait till we get to heaven. Let us be very heedful not to believe the flying rumors, which are always harassing gracious men. If there are no believers in lies there will be but a dull market in falsehood, and good men’s characters will be safe. Ill will never spoke well. Sinners have an ill will to saints, and therefore, be sure they will not speak well of them.

6 Arise, O LORD, in thine anger, lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies: and awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded.

7:6. We now listen to a fresh prayer, based upon the avowal which he has just made. We cannot pray too often, and when our heart is true, we shall turn to God in prayer as naturally as the needle to its pole.

_Arise, O Lord, in thine anger._ His sorrow makes him view the Lord as a judge who had left the judgment-seat and retired into his rest. Faith would move the Lord to avenge the quarrel of his saints.

_Lift up thyself because of the rage of mine enemies_—a still stronger figure to express his anxiety that the Lord would assume his authority and mount the throne. Stand up, O God, rise thou above them all, and let thy justice tower above their villainies.

_Awake for me to the judgment that thou hast commanded._ This is a bolder utterance still, for it implies sleep as well as inactivity, and can only be applied to God in a very limited sense. He never slumbers, yet doth he often seem to do so; for the wicked prevail, and the saints are trodden in the dust. God’s silence is the patience of longsuffering, and if wearsome to the saints, they should bear it cheerfully in the hope that sinners may thereby be led to repentance.

7 So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about: for their sakes therefore return thou on high.

7:7  _So shall the congregation of the people compass thee about._ Thy saints shall crowd to thy tribunal with their complaints, or shall surround it with their solemn homage:

_for their sakes therefore return thou on high._ As when a judge travels at the assizes, all men take their cases to his court that they may be heard, so will the righteous gather to their Lord. Here he fortifies himself in prayer by pleading that if the Lord will mount the throne of judgment, multitudes of the saints would be blessed as well as himself. If I be too base to be remembered, yet,

_for their sakes,_ for the love thou bearest to thy chosen people, come forth from thy secret pavilion, and sit in the gate dispensing justice among the people. When my suit includes the desires of all the righteous it shall surely
8 The LORD shall judge the people: judge me, O LORD, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.

7:8 If I am not mistaken, David has now seen in the eye of his mind the Lord ascending to his judgment-seat, and beholding him seated there in royal state, he draws near to him to urge his suit anew. In the last two verses he besought Jehovah to arise, and now that he is arisen, he prepares to mingle with "the congregation of the people" who compass the Lord about. The royal heralds proclaim the opening of the court with the solemn words,

*The Lord shall judge the people.* Our petitioner rises at once, and cries with earnestness and humility,

*Judge me, O Lord, according to my righteousness, and according to mine integrity that is in me.* His hand is on an honest heart, and his cry is to a righteous Judge.

9 Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just: for the righteous God trieth the hearts and reins.

7:9 He sees a smile of complacency upon the face of the King, and in the name of all the assembled congregation he cries aloud,

*Oh let the wickedness of the wicked come to an end; but establish the just.*

Is not this the universal longing of the whole company of the elect? When shall we be delivered from the filthy conversation of these men of Sodom? When shall we escape from the filthiness of Mesech and the blackness of the tents of Kedar? What a solemn and weighty truth is contained in the last sentence of the ninth verse! How deep is the divine knowledge! —"He trieth." How strict, how accurate, how intimate his search!

—he trieth the hearts, the secret thoughts, "and reins," the inward affections. "All things are naked and opened to the eyes of him with whom we have to do."

10 My defense is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.

7:10 The judge has heard the cause, has cleared the guiltless, and uttered his voice against the persecutors. Let us draw near, and learn the results of the great assize. Yonder is the slandered one with his harp in hand, hymning the justice of his Lord, and rejoicing aloud in his own deliverance.

*My defense is of God, which saveth the upright in heart.* Oh, how good to have a true and upright heart. Crooked sinners, with all their craftiness, are foiled by the upright in heart. God defends the right.
Filth will not long abide on the pure white garments of the saints, but shall be brushed off by divine providence, to the vexation of the men by whose base hands it was thrown upon the godly. When God shall try our cause, our sun has risen, and the sun of the wicked is set for ever. Truth, like oil, is ever above, no power of our enemies can drown it; we shall refute their slanders in the day when the trumpet wakes the dead, and we shall shine in honour when lying lips are put to silence. O believer, fear not all that thy foes can do or say against thee, for the tree which God plants no winds can hurt.

11 God judgeth the righteous, and God is angry with the wicked every day.

7:11 God judgeth the righteous, he hath not given thee up to be condemned by the lips of persecutors. Thine enemies cannot sit on God's throne, nor blot thy name out of his book. Let them alone, then, for God will find time for his revenge.

Error! Bookmark not defined. God is angry with the wicked every day. He not only detests sin, but is angry with those who continue to indulge in it. We have no insensible and stolid God to deal with; he can be angry, nay, he is angry to day and every day with you, ye ungodly and impenitent sinners. The best day that ever dawns on a sinner brings a curse with it. Sinners may have many feast days, but no safe days. From the beginning of the year even to its ending, there is not an hour in which God's oven is not hot, and burning in readiness for the wicked, who shall be as stubble.

12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword; he hath bent his bow, and made it ready.

7:12 If he turn not, he will whet his sword. What blows are those which will be dealt by that long uplifted arm! God's sword has been sharpening upon the revolving stone of our daily wickedness, and if we will not repent, it will speedily cut us in pieces. Turn or burn is the sinner's only alternative. He hath bent his bow and made it ready.

13 He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death; he ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors.

7:13 Even now the thirsty arrow longs to wet itself with the blood of the persecutor. The bow is bent, the aim is taken, the arrow is fitted to the string, and what, O sinner, if the arrow should be let fly at thee even now! Remember, God's arrows never miss the mark, and are, every one of them, instruments of death. Judgment may tarry, but it will not come too late. The Greek proverb saith, "The mill of God grinds late, but grinds to powder."

14 Behold, he travaileth with iniquity, and hath conceived mischief, and brought forth falsehood.

7:14 In three graphic pictures we see the slanderer's history. A woman in travail furnishes the first metaphor.
He travaileth with iniquity. He is full of it, pained until he can carry it out, he longs to work his will, he is full of pangs until his evil intent is executed.

He hath conceived mischief. This is the original of his base design. The devil has had doings with him, and the virus of evil is in him. And now behold the progeny of this unhallowed conception. The child is worthy of its father, his name of old was, "the father of lies," and the birth doth not belie the parent, for

he brought forth falsehood. Thus, one figure is carried out to perfection; the Psalmist now illustrates his meaning by another, taken from the stratagems of the hunter.

15 He made a pit, and digged it, and is fallen into the ditch which he made.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>7:15 He made a pit, and digged it. He was cunning in his plans, and industrious in his labors. He stooped to the dirty work of digging. He did not fear to soil his own hands, he was willing to work in a ditch if others might fall therein. What mean things men will do to wreak revenge on the godly. They hunt for good men, as if they were brute beasts; nay, they will not give them the fair chase afforded to the hare or the fox, but must secretly entrap them, because they can neither run them down nor shoot them down. Our enemies will not meet us to the face, for they fear us as much as they pretend to despise us. But let us look on to the end of the scene. The verse says, he is fallen into the ditch which he made. Ah! There he is, let us laugh at his disappointment. Lo! he is himself the beast, he has hunted his own soul, and the chase has brought him a goodly victim. Aha, aha, so should it ever be. Come-hither and make merry with this entrapped hunter, this biter who has bitten himself. Give him no pity, for it will be wasted on such a wretch. He is but rightly and richly rewarded by being paid in his own coin. He cast forth evil from his mouth, and it has fallen into his bosom. Aha, aha, so should it ever be. Come-hither and make merry with this entrapped hunter, this biter who has bitten himself. Give him no pity, for it will be wasted on such a wretch. He is but rightly and richly rewarded by being paid in his own coin. He cast forth evil from his mouth, and it has fallen into his bosom. He has set his own house on fire with the torch, which he lit to burn a neighbor. He sent forth a foul bird, and it has come back to its nest.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

16 His mischief shall return upon his own head, and his violent dealing shall come down upon his own pate.

| 7:16 The rod which he lifted on high, has smitten his own back. He shot an arrow upward, and it has returned upon his own head. He hurled a stone at another and it has come down upon his own pate. Curses are like young chickens, they always come home to roost. Ashes always fly back in the face of him that throws them. "As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him." (Psalm 109:17). How often has this been the case in the histories of both ancient and modern times. Men have burned their own fingers when they were hoping to brand their neighbor. And if this does not happen now, it will hereafter. The Lord has caused dogs to lick the blood of Ahab in the midst of the vineyard of Naboth. Sooner or later the evil deeds of persecutors have always leaped back into their arms. So it will be in the last great day, when |
Satan's fiery darts shall all be quivered in his own heart, and all his followers shall reap the harvest which they themselves have sown.

17 I will praise the LORD according to his righteousness: and will sing praise to the name of the LORD most high.

7:17 We conclude with the joyful contrast. In this all these Psalms are agreed; they all exhibit the blessedness of the righteous, and make its colors the more glowing by contrast with the miseries of the wicked. The bright jewel sparkles in a black foil. Praise is the occupation of the godly, their eternal work, and their present pleasure. Singing is the fitting embodiment for praise, and therefore do the saints make melody before the Lord Most High. The slandered one is now a singer: his harp was unstrung for a very little season, and now we leave him sweeping its harmonious chords, and flying on their music to the third heaven of adoring praise.
Psalm 8

To the chief Musician upon Gittith,
A Psalm of David

GITTITH (ghit'-tith), may refer to a musical instrument used by the people of Gath and other at the festivals of the wine vintage (Psa. 81,84). S.E.M.

TITLE. "To the Chief Musician upon Gittith, a Psalm of David." We are not clear upon the meaning of the word Gittith. Some think it refers to Gath, and may refer to a tune commonly sung there, or an instrument of music there invented, or a song of Obed-edom the Gittite, in whose house the ark rested, or, better still, a song sung over Goliath of Gath. Others, tracing the Hebrew to its root, conceive it to mean a song for the winepress, a joyful hymn for the treader of grapes. The term Gittith is applied to two other Psalms, (81 and 84) both of which, being of a joyous character, it may be concluded, that where we find that word in the title, we may look for a hymn of delight. We may style this Psalm the Song of the Astronomer: let us go abroad and sing it beneath the starry heavens at eventide, for it is very probable that in such a position, it first occurred to the poet's mind. Dr. Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847) says, "There is much in the scenery of a nocturnal sky; to lift the soul to pious contemplation. That moon, and these stars, what are they? They are detached from the world, and they lift us above it. We feel withdrawn from the earth, and rise in lofty abstraction from this little theatre of human passions and human anxieties. The mind abandons itself to reverie, and is transferred in the ecstasy of its thought to distant and unexplored regions. It sees nature in the simplicity of her great elements, and it sees the God of nature invested with the high attributes of wisdom and majesty."

DIVISION. The first and last verses are a sweet song of admiration, in which the excellence of the name of God is extolled. The intermediate verses are made up of holy wonder at the Lord's greatness in creation, and at his condescension towards man. Matthew Poole (1624-1679), in his annotations, has well said, "It is a great question among interpreters, whether this Psalm speaks of man in general, and of the honour which God puts upon him in his creation; or only of the man Christ Jesus. Possibly both may be reconciled and put together, and the controversy if rightly stated, may be ended, for the scope and business of this Psalm seems plainly to be this: to display and celebrate the great love and kindness of God to mankind, not only in his creation, but especially in his redemption by Jesus Christ, whom, as he was man, he advanced to the honour and dominion here mentioned, that he might carry on his great and glorious work. So Christ is the principal subject of this Psalm, and it is interpreted of him, both by our Lord himself (Matthew 21:16), and by his holy apostle (1 Corinthians 15:27; Hebrews 2:6,7)."

1 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth! Who hast set thy glory above the heavens.
Unable to express the glory of God, the Psalmist utters a note of exclamation. O Jehovah our Lord! We need not wonder at this, for no heart can measure, no tongue can utter, the half of the greatness of Jehovah. The whole creation is full of his glory and radiant with the excellency of his power; his goodness and his wisdom are manifested on every hand. The countless myriads of terrestrial beings, from man the head, to the creeping worm at the foot, are all supported and nourished by the Divine bounty. The solid fabric of the universe leans upon his eternal arm. Universally is he present, and everywhere is his name excellent. God worketh ever and everywhere. There is no place where God is not. The miracles of his power await us on all sides. Traverse the silent valleys where the rocks enclose you on either side, rising like the battlements of heaven till you can see but a strip of the blue sky far overhead; you may be the only traveler who has passed through that glen; the bird may start up affrighted, and the moss may tremble beneath the first tread of human foot; but God is there in a thousand wonders, upholding yon rocky barriers, filling the flowercups with their perfume, and refreshing the lonely pines with the breath of his mouth. Descend, if you will, into the lowest depths of the ocean. Where undisturbed the water sleeps, and the very sand is motionless in unbroken quiet, but the glory of the Lord is there, revealing its excellence in the silent palace of the sea. Borrow the wings of the morning and fly to the uttermost parts of the sea, but God is there.

Mount to the highest heaven, or dive into the deepest hell, and God is in both hymned in everlasting song, or justified in terrible vengeance. Everywhere, and in every place, God dwells and is manifestly at work. Nor on earth alone is Jehovah extolled, for his brightness shines forth in the firmament above the earth. His glory exceeds the glory of the starry heavens; above the region of the stars he hath set fast his everlasting throne, and there he dwells in light ineffable. Let us adore him “who alone spreadeth out the heavens, and treadeth upon the waves of the sea; who maketh Arcturus, Orion, and Pleiades, and the chambers of the south.” (Job 9:8, 9). We can scarcely find more fitting words than those of Nehemiah, “Thou, even thou, art Lord alone; thou hast made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth, and all things that are therein, the seas, and all that is therein, and thou preservest them all; and the host of heaven worshippeth thee.” Returning to the text we are led to observe that this Psalm is addressed to God, because none but the Lord himself can fully know his own glory. The believing heart is ravished with what it sees, but God only knows the glory of God. What a sweetness lies in the little word our, how much is God's glory endeared to us when we consider our interest in him as our Lord.

**How excellent is thy name!** No words can express that excellency; and therefore it is left as a note of exclamation. The very name of Jehovah is excellent, what must his person be. Note the fact that even the heavens cannot contain his glory, it is set above the heavens, since it is and ever must be too great for the creature to express. When wandering among the Alps, we felt that the Lord was infinitely greater than all his grandest works, and under that feeling we roughly wrote these few lines: —

```
“Yet in all these how great soe'er they be
    We see not Him.
The glass is all too dense
    And dark, or else our earthborn eyes too dim.
```
Yon Alps, that lift their heads
above the clouds
And hold familiar converse
with the stars,
Are dust, at which the balance
trembleth not,
Compared with His divine immensity.

The snow-crown’d summits
fail to set Him forth,
Who dwelleth in Eternity, and bears
Alone, the name of High and Lofty One.
Depths unfathomed are too
shallow to express
The wisdom and the knowledge
of the Lord.

The mirror of the creatures has no space
To bear the image of the Infinite.
’Tis true the Lord hath fairly
writ his name,
And set his seal upon creation's brow.
But as the skilful potter much excels
The vessel which he fashions
on the wheel,
E'en so, but in proportion greater far,
Jehovah’s self transcends
his noblest works.

Earth's ponderous wheels would break, her axles snap,
If freighted with the load of Deity.

Space is too narrow for the
Eternal’s rest,
And time too short a footstool
for his throne.

E’en avalanche and thunder
lack a voice,
To utter the full volume of his praise.
How then can I declare him?

Where are words
With which my glowing tongue
may speak his name?
Silent I bow, and humbly I adore.”
2 Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings hast thou ordained strength because of thine enemies, that thou mightest still the enemy and the avenger.

8:2 Nor only in the heavens above is the Lord seen, but the earth beneath is telling forth his majesty. In the sky, the massive orbs, rolling in their stupendous grandeur, are witnesses of his power in great things, while here below, the lisping utterances of babes are the manifestations of his strength in little ones. How often will children tell us of a God whom we have forgotten! How doth their simple prattle refute those learned fools who deny the being of God! Many men have been made to hold their tongues, while sucklings have borne witness to the glory of the God of heaven. It is singular how clearly the history of the church expounds this verse. Did not the children cry "Hosanna!" in the temple, when proud Pharisees were silent and contumacious? and did not the Saviour quote these very words as a justification of their infantile cries? Early church history records many amazing instances of the testimony of children for the truth of God, but perhaps more modern instances will be the most interesting. George Fox tells us, in the Book of Martyrs, that when Mr. Lawrence was burnt in Colchester [a town and the main settlement of the Essex borough of Colchester in the East of England], he was carried to the fire in a chair, because through the cruelty of the Papists, he could not stand upright, several young children came about the fire, and cried as well as they could speak,

"Lord, strengthen thy servant, and keep thy promise." God answered their prayer, for Mr. Lawrence died as firmly and calmly as any one could wish to breathe his last. When one of the Popish chaplains told Mr. Wishart, the great Scotch martyr, that he had a devil in him, a child that stood by cried out,

"A devil cannot speak such words as yonder man speaketh." One more instance is still nearer to our time. In a postscript to one of his letters, in which he details his persecution when first preaching in Moorfields, George Whitfield says,

"I cannot help adding that several little boys and girls, who were fond of sitting round me on the pulpit while I preached, and handed to me people's notes—though they were often pelted with eggs, dirt, &c., thrown at me—never once gave way; but on the contrary, every time I was struck, turned up their little weeping eyes, and seemed to wish they could receive the blows for me. God make them, in their growing years, great and living martyrs for him who, out of the mouths of babes and sucklings, perfects praise!"

He who delights in the songs of angels is pleased to honour himself in the eyes of his enemies by the praises of little children. What a contrast between the glory above the heavens, and the mouths of babes and sucklings! yet by both the name of God is made excellent.

3 When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers, the moon and the stars, which thou hast ordained;
At the close of that excellent little manual entitled "The Solar System," written by Dr. Dick, we find an eloquent passage which beautifully expounds the text: —A survey of the solar system has a tendency to moderate the pride of man and to promote humility. Pride is one of the distinguishing characteristics of puny man, and has been one of the chief causes of all the contentions, wars, devastations, systems of slavery, and ambitious projects which have desolated and demoralized our sinful world. Yet there is no disposition more incongruous to the character and circumstances of man. Perhaps there are no rational beings throughout the universe among whom pride would appear more unseemly or incompatible than in man, considering the situation in which he is placed. He is exposed to numerous degradations and calamities, to the rage of storms and tempests, the devastations of earthquakes and volcanoes, the fury of whirlwinds, and the tempestuous billows of the ocean, to the ravages of the sword, famine, pestilence, and numerous diseases; and at length he must sink into the grave, and his body must become the companion of worms! The most dignified and haughty of the sons of men are liable to these and similar degradations as well as the meanest of the human family. Yet, in such circumstances, man—that puny worm of the dust, whose knowledge is so limited, and whose follies are so numerous and glaring—has the effrontery to strut in all the haughtiness of pride and to glory in his shame.

What is man, that thou art mindful of him? And the son of man, that thou visitest him?

When other arguments and motives produce little effect on certain minds, no considerations seem likely to have a more powerful tendency to counteract this deplorable propensity in human beings, than those which are borrowed from the objects connected with astronomy. They show us what an insignificant being—what a mere atom, indeed, man appears amidst the immensity of creation! Though he is an object of the paternal care and mercy of the Most High, yet he is but as a grain of sand to the whole earth, when compared to the countless myriads of beings that people the amplitudes of creation. What is the whole of this globe on which we dwell compared with the solar system, which contains a mass of matter ten thousand times greater? What is it in comparison of the hundred millions of suns and worlds which by the telescope have been descried throughout the starry regions? What, then, is a kingdom, a province, or a baronial territory, of which we are as proud as if we were the lords of the universe and for which we engage in so much devastation and carnage? What are they, when set in competition with the glories of the sky? Could we take our station on the lofty pinnacles of heaven, and look down on this scarcely distinguishable speck of earth, we should be ready to exclaim with Seneca [c.3 BC-AD 65, Roman philosopher, dramatist, and statesman], "Is it to this little spot that the great designs and vast desires of men are confined? Is it for this there is so much disturbance of nations, so much carnage, and so many ruinous wars?"

Oh, the folly of deceived men, to imagine great kingdoms in the compass of an atom, to raise armies to decide a point of earth with the sword!" Dr. Thomas Chalmers (1780-1847), in his Astronomical Discourses, very truthfully says, "We gave you but a feeble image of our comparative insignificance, when we said that the glories of an extended forest would suffer no more from the fall of a single leaf, than the glories of this extended universe would suffer though the globe we tread upon, 'and all that it inherits, should dissolve.'"
5 For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels, and hast crowned him with glory and honour.

6 Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; thou hast put all things under his feet:

7 All sheep and oxen, yea, and the beasts of the field;

8 The fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the seas.

8:5-8 These verses may set forth man's position among the creatures before he fell; but as they are, by the apostle Paul, appropriated to man as represented by the Lord Jesus, it is best to give most weight to that meaning. In order of dignity, man stood next to the angels, and a little lower than they; in the Lord Jesus this was accomplished, for he was made a little lower than the angels by the suffering of death. Man in Eden had the full command of all creatures, and they came before him to receive their names as an act of homage to him as the vice-regent of God to them. Jesus in his glory, is now Lord, not only of all living, but of all created things, and, with the exception of him who put all things under him, Jesus is Lord of all, and his elect, in him, are raised to a dominion wider than that of the first Adam, as shall be more clearly seen at his coming. Well might the Psalmist wonder at the singular exaltation of man in the scale of being, when he marked his utter nothingness in comparison with the starry universe.

Thou madest him a little lower than the angels—a little lower in nature, since they are immortal, and but a little, because time is short; and when that is over, saints are no longer lower than the angels. The margin reads it, "A little while inferior to." Thou crownest him. The dominion that God has bestowed on man is a great glory and honour to him; for all dominion is honour, and the highest is that which wears the crown. A full list is given of the subjugated creatures, to show that all the dominion lost by sin is restored in Christ Jesus. Let none of us permit the possession of any earthly creature to be a snare to us, but let us remember that we are to reign over them, and not to allow them to reign over us. Under our feet we must keep the world, and we must shun that base spirit which is content to let worldly cares and pleasures sway the empire of the immortal soul.

8:6-8. The Six Spheres of Man's Dominion

1. All sheep.
2. All oxen.
3. All beasts of the field.
4. All the fowls of the air.
5. All the fish of the sea.
6. All that passes through the sea. S.E.M.

9 O LORD our Lord, how excellent is thy name in all the earth!
8:9 Here, like a good composer, the poet returns to his key-note, falling back, as it were, into his first state of wondering adoration. What he started with as a proposition in the first verse, he closes with as a well-proven conclusion. O for grace to walk worthy of that excellent name which has been named upon us, and which we are pledged to magnify!
Psalm 9

MUTH-LABBEN (muth-lab'-ben; death of the son), is the translation for a phrase in the title of Psalm 9. S.E.M.

TITLE. To the Chief Musician upon Muth-labben, a Psalm of David. The meaning of this title is very doubtful. It may refer to the tune to which the Psalm was to be sung, so Daniel Wilcocks (1676-1733) and others think; or it may refer to a musical instrument now unknown, but common in those days; or it may have a reference to Ben, who is mentioned in 1 Chronicles 15:18, as one of the Levitical singers. If either of these conjectures should be correct, the title of Muth-Labben has no teaching for us, except it is meant to show us how careful David was that in the worship of God, all things should be done according to due order. From a considerable company of learned witnesses we gather that the title will bear a meaning far more instructive, without being fancifully forced: it signifies a Psalm concerning the death of the Son. The Chaldee has,

"concerning the death of the Champion who went out between the camps," referring to Goliath of Gath, or some other Philistine, on account of whose death many suppose this Psalm to have been written in after years by David. Believing that out of a thousand guesses this is at least as consistent with the sense of the Psalm as any other, we prefer it; and the more especially so because it enables us to refer it mystically to the victory of the Son of God over the champion of evil, even to enemy of souls (Psalm 9:6). We have here before us most evidently a triumphal hymn; may it strengthen the faith of the militant believer and stimulate the courage of the timid saint, as he sees here

THE CONQUEROR, on whose vesture and thigh is the name written, King of kings and Lord of lords.

ORDER. Horatius Bonar (1847) remarks, "The position of the Psalms in their relation to each other is often remarkable. It is questioned whether the present arrangement of them was the order to which they were given forth to Israel, or whether some later compiler, perhaps Ezra, was inspired to attend to this matter, as well as to other points connected with the canon." Without attempting to decide this point, it is enough to remark that we have proof that the order of the Psalms is as ancient as the completing of the canon, and if so, it seems obvious that the Holy Spirit wished this book to come down to us in its present order. We make these remarks, in order to invite attention to the fact, that as the eighth caught up the last line of the seventh, this ninth Psalm opens with an apparent reference to the eighth:

"I will praise thee, O Lord, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvelous works. I will be glad and rejoice in thee" (Compare Song 1:4; Revelation 19:7).

"I will sing to THY NAME, O thou Most High." Psalm 9:1, 2. As if "The Name," so highly praised in the former Psalm, were still ringing in the ear of the sweet singer of Israel. And in verse 10, he returns to it, celebrating their confidence who "know" that "name" as if its fragrance still breathed in the atmosphere around.
DIVISION. The strain so continually changes, that it is difficult to give an outline of it methodically arranged: we give the best we can make. From Psalm 9: 1-6 is a song of jubilant thanksgiving; from 7 to 12, there is a continued declaration of faith as to the future. Prayer closes the first great division of the Psalm in verses 13 and 14. The second portion of this triumphal ode, although much shorter, is parallel in all its parts to the first portion, and is a sort of rehearsal of it. Observe the song for past judgments, verses 15, 16; the declaration of trust in future justice, 17, 18; and the closing prayer, 19, 20. Let us celebrate the conquests of the Redeemer as we read this Psalm, and it cannot but be a delightful task if the Holy Ghost be with us.

1 I will praise thee, O LORD, with my whole heart; I will shew forth all thy marvelous works.

9:1 With a holy resolution the songster begins his hymn;

*I will praise thee, O Lord.* It sometimes needs all our determination to face the foe, and bless the Lord in the teeth of his enemies; vowing that whoever else may be silent we will bless his name; here, however, the overthrow of the foe is viewed as complete, and the song flows with sacred fulness of delight. It is our duty to praise the Lord; let us perform it as a privilege. Observe that David's praise is all given to the Lord. Praise is to be offered to God alone; we may be grateful to the intermediate agent, but our thanks must have long wings and mount aloft to heaven.

*With my whole heart.* Half heart is no heart. *I will show forth.* There is true praise to the thankful telling forth to others of our heavenly Father's dealings with us; this is one of the themes upon which the godly should speak often to one another, and it will not be casting pearls before swine if we make even the ungodly hear of the loving-kindness of the Lord to us.

*All thy marvelous works.* Gratitude for one mercy refreshes the memory as to thousands of others. One silver link in the chain draws up a long series of tender remembrances. Here is eternal work for us, for there can be no end to the showing forth of all his deeds of love. If we consider our own sinfulness and nothingness, we must feel that every work of preservation, forgiveness, conversion, deliverance, sanctification, etc., which the Lord has wrought for us, or in us is a marvelous work. Even in heaven, divine loving-kindness will doubtless be as much a theme of surprise as of rapture.

2 I will be glad and rejoice in thee: I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.

9:2 Gladness and joy are the appropriate spirit in which to praise the goodness of the Lord. Birds extol the Creator in notes of overflowing joy, the cattle low forth his praise with tumult of happiness, and the fish leap up in his worship with excess of delight. Moloch may be worshipped with shrieks of pain, and Juggernaut may be honored by dying groans and inhuman yells, but he whose name is Love is best pleased with the holy mirth, and sanctified gladness of his
people. Daily rejoicing is an ornament to the Christian character, and a suitable robe for God's chioristers to wear. God loveth a cheerful giver, whether it be the gold of his purse or the gold of his mouth which he presents upon his altar.

**I will sing praise to thy name, O thou most High.** Songs are the fitting expression of inward thankfulness, and it were well if we indulge ourselves and honored our Lord with more of them. Mr. Bennet Philip Power (1862) has well said, "The sailors give a cheery cry as they weigh anchor, the ploughman whistles in the morning as he drives his team; the milkmaid sings her rustic song as she sets about her early task; when soldiers are leaving friends behind them, they do not march out to the tune of the 'Dead March in Saul,' but to the quick notes of some lively air. A praising spirit would do for us all that their songs and music do for them; and if only we could determine to praise the Lord, we should surmount many a difficulty which our low spirits never would have been equal to, and we should do double the work which can be done if the heart be languid in its beating, if we be crushed and trodden down in soul. As the evil spirit in Saul yielded in olden time to the influence of the harp of the son of Jesse, so would the spirit of melancholy often take flight from us, if only we would take up the song of praise.”

3 When mine enemies are turned back, they shall fall and perish at thy presence.

- **9:3** God's presence is evermore sufficient to work the defeat of our most furious foes, and their ruin is so complete when the Lord takes them in hand, that even flight cannot save them, they fall to rise no more when he pursues them. We must be careful, like David, to give all the glory to him whose presence gives the victory. If we have here the exultings of our conquering Captain, let us make the triumphs of the Redeemer the triumphs of the redeemed, and rejoice with him at the total discomfiture of all his foes.

4 For thou hast maintained my right and my cause; thou satest in the throne judging right.

- **9:4** One of our nobility has for his motto, "I will maintain it;" but the Christian has a better and more humble one,

**Thou hast maintained it.** "God and my right," are united by my faith: while God lives my right shall never be taken from me. If we seek to maintain the cause and honour of our Lord we may suffer reproach and misrepresentation, but it is a rich comfort to remember that he who sits on the throne knows our hearts, and will not leave us to the ignorant and ungenerous judgment of erring man.

5 Thou hast rebuked the heathen, thou hast destroyed the wicked, thou hast put out their name for ever and ever.
9:5 God rebukes before he destroys, but when he once comes to blows with the wicked he ceases not until he has dashed them in pieces so small that their very name is forgotten, and like a noisome snuff their remembrance is put out for ever and ever. How often the word "thou" occurs in this and the former verse, to show us that the grateful strain mounts up directly to the Lord as doth the smoke from the altar when the air is still. My soul send up all the music of all thy powers to him who has been and is thy sure deliverance.

6 O thou enemy, destructions are come to a perpetual end: and thou hast destroyed cities; their memorial is perished with them.

9:6 Here the Psalmist exults over the fallen foe. He bends as it were, over his prostrate form, and insults his once vaunted strength. He plucks the boaster's song out of his mouth, and sings it for him in derision. After this fashion doth our Glorious Redeemer ask of death, "Where is thy sting?" and of the grave, "Where is thy victory?" The spoiler is spoiled, and he who made captive is led into captivity himself. Let the daughters of Jerusalem go forth to meet their King, and praise him with timbrel and harp. In the light of the past the future is not doubtful. Since the same Almighty God fills the throne of power, we can with unhesitating confidence, exult in our security for all time to come.

7 But the LORD shall endure for ever: he hath prepared his throne for judgment.

9:7 The enduring existence and unchanging dominion of our Jehovah, are the firm foundations of our joy. The enemy and his destructions shall come to a perpetual end, but God and his throne shall endure for ever. The eternity of divine sovereignty yields unfailing consolation. By the throne being prepared for judgment, are we not to understand the swiftness of divine justice. In heaven's court suitors are not worn out with long delays. Term-time lasts all the year round in the court of King's Bench above. Thousands may come at once to the throne of the Judge of all the earth, but neither plaintiff nor defendant shall have to complain that he is not prepared to give their cause a fair hearing.

8 And he shall judge the world in righteousness, he shall minister judgment to the people in uprightness.

9:8 Whatever earthly courts may do, heaven's throne ministers judgment in uprightness. Partiality and respect of persons are things unknown in the dealings of the Holy One of Israel. How the prospect of appearing before the impartial tribunal of the Great King should act as a check to us when tempted to sin, and as a comfort when we are slandered or oppressed.

9 The LORD also will be a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in times of trouble.
He who gives no quarter to the wicked in the Day of Judgment, is the defense and refuge of his saints in the day of trouble. There are many forms of oppression; both from man and from Satan oppression comes to us; and for all its forms, a refuge is provided in the Lord Jehovah. There were cities of refuge under the law, God is our refuge-city under the gospel. As the ships when vexed with tempest make for harbor, so do the oppressed hasten to the wings of a just and gracious God. He is a high tower so impregnable, that the hosts of hell cannot carry it by storm, and from its lofty heights faith looks down with scorn upon her enemies.

And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee: for thou, LORD, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.

Ignorance is worst when it amounts to ignorance of God, and knowledge is best when it exercises itself upon the name of God. This most excellent knowledge leads to the most excellent grace of faith. O, to learn more of the attributes and character of God. Unbelief, that hooting night bird, cannot live in the light of divine knowledge, it flies before the sun of God's great and gracious name. If we read this verse literally, there is, no doubt, a glorious fullness of assurance in the names of God. By knowing his name is also meant an experimental acquaintance with the attributes of God, which are every one of them anchors to hold the soul from drifting in seasons of peril. The Lord may hide his face for a season from his people, but he never has utterly, finally, really, or angrily forsaken them that seek him. Let the poor seekers draw comfort from this fact, and let the finders rejoice yet more exceedingly, for what must be the Lord's faithfulness to those who find if he is so gracious to those who seek.

"O hope of every contrite heart, 
O joy of all the meek, 
To those who fall how kind thou art, 
How good to those who seek.

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."

Sing praises to the LORD, which dwelleth in Zion: declare among the people his doings.

Being full of gratitude himself, our inspired author is eager to excite others to join the strain, and praise God in the same manner as he himself vowed to do in the first and second verses. The heavenly spirit of praise is gloriously contagious, and he that hath it is never content unless he can excite all who surround him to unite in his sweet employ. Singing and preaching, as means of glorifying God, are here joined together, and it is remarkable that, connected with all revivals of gospel ministry, there has been a sudden outburst of the spirit of song.
Martin Luther's Psalms and Hymns were in all men's mouths, and in the modern revival under John Wesley and George Whitefield, the strains of Charles Wesley, John Cennick, John Berridge, Augustus Toplady, Joseph Hart, John Newton, and many others, were the outgrowth of restored piety. The singing of the birds of praise fitly accompanies the return of the gracious spring of divine visitation through the proclamation of the truth. Sing on brethren, and preach on, and these shall both be a token that the Lord still dwelleth in Zion. It will be well for us when coming up to Zion, to remember that the Lord dwells among his saints, and is to be had in peculiar reverence of all those that are about him.

12 When he maketh inquisition for blood, he remembereth them: he forgetteth not the cry of the humble.

9:12 When an inquest is held concerning the blood of the oppressed, the martyred saints will have the first remembrance; he will avenge his own elect. Those saints who are living shall also be heard; they shall be exonerated from blame, and kept from destruction, even when the Lord's most terrible work is going on; the man with the inkhorn by his side shall mark them all for safety, before the slaughter men are permitted to smite the Lord's enemies. The humble cry of the poorest saints shall neither be drowned by the voice of the thundering justice nor by the shrieks of the condemned.

13 Have mercy upon me, O LORD; consider my trouble which I suffer of them that hate me, thou that liftest me up from the gates of death:

9:13 Memories of the past and confidences concerning the future conducted the man of God to the mercy seat to plead for the needs of the present. Between praising and praying he divided all his time. How could he have spent it more profitably? His first prayer is one suitable for all persons and occasions, it breathes a humble spirit, indicates self-knowledge, appeals to the proper attributes, and to the fitting person.

_Have mercy upon me, O Lord._ Just as Martin Luther used to call some texts little bibles, so we may call this sentence a little prayer book; for it has in it the soul and marrow of prayer. It is like the angelic sword which turns every way. The ladder looks to be short, but it reaches from earth to heaven. What a noble title is here given to the Most High.

_Thou that liftest me up from the gates of death!_ What a glorious lift! In sickness, in sin, in despair, in temptation, we have been brought very low, and the gloomy portal has seemed as if it would open to imprison us, but, underneath us were the everlasting arms, and, therefore, we have been uplifted even to the gates of heaven. John Trapp (1611-1669) quaintly says,

"_He commonly reserveth his hand for a dead lift, and rescueth those who were even talking of their graves._"

14 That I may shew forth all thy praise in the gates of the daughter of Zion: I will rejoice in thy salvation.

9:14 We must not overlook David's object in desiring mercy, it is God's glory:
that I may show forth all thy praise. Saints are not so selfish as to look only to self; they desire mercy's diamond that they may let others see it flash and sparkle, and may admire Him who gives such priceless gems to his beloved. The contrast between the gates of death and the gates of the New Jerusalem is very striking; let our songs be excited to the highest and most rapturous pitch by the double consideration of whence we are taken, and to what we have been advanced, and let our prayers for mercy be made more energetic and agonizing by a sense of the grace which such a salvation implies. When David speaks of his showing forth all God's praise, he means that, in his deliverance grace in all its heights and depths would be magnified. Just as our hymn puts it:

"O the length and breadth of love!
Jesus, Saviour, can it be?
All thy mercy's height I prove,
All the depth is seen in me.

Here ends the first part of this instructive Psalm, and in pausing awhile we feel bound to confess that our exposition has only flitted over its surface and has not digged into the depths. The verses are singularly full of teaching, and if the Holy Spirit shall bless the reader, he may go over this Psalm, as the writer has done scores of times, and see on each occasion fresh beauties.

15 The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made: in the net which they hid is their own foot taken.

9:15 In considering this terrible picture of the Lord's overwhelming judgments of his enemies, we are called upon to ponder and meditate upon it with deep seriousness by the two untranslated words, Higgaion, Selah. Meditate, pause. Consider, and tune your instrument. Bethink yourselves and solemnly adjust your hearts to the solemnity, which is so well becoming the subject. Let us in a humble spirit approach these verses, and notice, first, that the character of God requires the punishment of sin.

16 The LORD is known by the judgment which he executeth: the wicked is snared in the work of his own hands. Higgaion. Selah.

9:16 Jehovah is known by the judgment which he executeth; his holiness and abhorrence of sin is thus displayed. A ruler who winked at evil would soon be known by all his subjects to be evil himself, and he, on the other hand, who is severely just in judgment reveals his own nature thereby. So long as our God is God, he will not, he cannot spare the guilty; except through that one glorious way in which he is just, and yet the justifier of him that believeth in Jesus. We must notice, secondly, that the manner of his judgment is singularly wise, and indisputably just. He makes the wicked become their own executioners. "The heathen are sunk down in the pit that they made," etc. Like cunning hunters they prepared a pitfall for the godly and fell into it themselves: the foot of the victim escaped their crafty snares, but the toils surrounded themselves: the cruel snare was laboriously manufactured, and it proved its efficacy by snaring its own maker.
Persecutors and oppressors are often ruined by their own malicious projects. "Drunkards kill themselves; prodigals beggar themselves;" the contentious are involved in ruinous costs; the vicious are devoured with fierce diseases; the envious eat their own hearts; and blasphemers curse their own souls. Thus, men may read their sin in their punishment. They sowed the seed of sin, and the ripe fruit of damnation is the natural result.

17 The wicked shall be turned into hell, and all the nations that forget God.

9:17 The justice which has punished the wicked, and preserved the righteous, remains the same, and therefore in days to come, retribution will surely be meted out. How solemn is the seventeenth verse, especially in its warning to forgetters of God. The moral who are not devout, the honest who are not prayerful, the benevolent who are not believing, the amiable who are not converted, these must all have their own portion with the openly wicked in the hell which is prepared for the devil and his angels. There are whole nations of such; the forgetters of God are far more numerous than the profane or profligate, and according to the very forceful expression of the Hebrew, the nethermost hell will be the place into which all of them shall be hurled headlong. Forgetfulness seems a small sin, but it brings eternal wrath upon the man who lives and dies in it.

18 For the needy shall not alway be forgotten: the expectation of the poor shall not perish for ever.

9:18 Mercy is as ready to her work as ever justice can be. Needy souls fear that they are forgotten; well, if it be so, let them rejoice that they shall not alway be so. Satan tells poor tremblers that their hope shall perish, but they have here the divine assurance that their expectation shall not perish for ever. "The Lord's people are a humbled people, afflicted, emptied, sensible of need, driven to a daily attendance on God, daily begging of him, and living upon the hope of what is promised;" such persons may have to wait, but they shall find that they do not wait in vain.

19 Arise, O LORD; let not man prevail: let the heathen be judged in thy sight.

9:19 Prayers are the believer's weapons of war. When the battle is too hard for us, we call in our great ally, who, as it were, lies in ambush until faith gives the signal by crying out, Arise, O Lord. Although our cause be all but lost, it shall be soon won again, if the Almighty doth but bestir himself. He will not suffer man to prevail over God, but with swift judgments will confound their gloryings. In the very sight of God the wicked will be punished, and he who is now all tenderness will have no bowels of compassion for them, since they had no tears of repentance while their day of grace endured.
20 Put them in fear, O LORD: that the nations may know themselves to be but men. Selah.
Psalm 10

Since this Psalm has no title of its own, it is supposed by some to be a fragment of Psalm 9. We prefer, however, since it is complete in itself, to consider it as a separate composition. We have had instances already of Psalms which seem meant to form a pair (Psalm 1 and 2, Psalm 3 and 4) and this, with the ninth, is another specimen of the double Psalm. The prevailing theme seems to be the oppression and persecution of the wicked, we will, therefore, for our own guidance, entitle it, THE CRY OF THE OPPRESSED.

DIVISION. The first verse, in an exclamation of surprise, explains the intent of the Psalm, viz., to invoke the interposition of God for the deliverance of his poor and persecuted people. From verse 2 to 11, the character of the oppressor is described in powerful language. In verse 12, the cry of the first verse bursts forth again, but with a clearer utterance. In the next place (verses 13-15), God's eye is clearly beheld as regarding all the cruel deeds of the wicked; and as a consequence of divine omnipotence, the ultimate judgment of the oppressed is joyfully anticipated (verses 16-18). To the Church of God during times of persecution, and to individual saints who are smarting under the hand of the proud sinner, this Psalm furnishes suitable language both for prayer and praise.

1 Why standest thou afar off, O LORD? Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble?

10:1 To the tearful eye of the sufferer the Lord seemed to stand still, as if he calmly looked on, and did not sympathize with his afflicted one. Nay, more, the Lord appeared to be afar off, no longer "a very present help in trouble," but an inaccessible mountain, into which no man would be able to climb. The presence of God is the joy of his people, but any suspicion of his absence is distracting beyond measure. Let us, then, ever remember that the Lord is nigh us. The refiner is never far from the mouth of the furnace when his gold is in the fire, and the Son of God is always walking in the midst of the flames when his holy children are cast into them. Yet he that knows the frailty of man will little wonder that when we are sharply exercised, we find it hard to bear the apparent neglect of the Lord when he forbears to work our deliverance.

Why hidest thou thyself in times of trouble? It is not the trouble, but the hiding of our Father's face, which cuts us to the quick. When trial and desertion come together, we are in as perilous a plight as Paul, when his ship fell into a place where two seas met (Acts 27:41). It is but little wonder if we are like the vessel which ran aground, and the fore-part stuck fast, and remained unmovable, while the hinder part was broken by the violence of the waves. When our sun is eclipsed, it is dark indeed. If we need an answer to the question, "Why hidest thou thyself?" it is to be found in the fact that there is a "needs-be," not only for trial, but for heaviness of heart under trial (1 Peter 1:6); but how could this be the case, if the Lord should shine upon us while he is afflicting us? Should the parent comfort his child while he is correcting him, where would be the use of the chastening? A smiling face and a rod are not fit companions. God bares the back that the blow may be felt; for it is only felt affliction which can become blest affliction. If we were carried in the arms of God over every stream, where would be the trial, and where the experience, which trouble is meant to teach us?
2 The wicked in *his* pride doth persecute the poor: let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.

**10:2** The second verse contains the formal indictment against the wicked:

*The wicked in his pride doth persecute the poor.* The accusation divides itself into two distinct charges, —pride and tyranny; the one the root and cause of the other. The second sentence is the humble petition of the oppressed:

*Let them be taken in the devices that they have imagined.* The prayer is reasonable, just, and natural. Even our enemies themselves being judges, it is but right that men should be done by as they wished to do to others. We only weigh you in your own scales, and measure your corn with your own bushel. Terrible shall be thy day, O persecuting Babylon! When thou shalt be made to drink of the wine cup which thou thyself hast filled to the brim with the blood of saints. There are none who will dispute the justice of God, when he shall hang every Haman on his own gallows, and cast all the enemies of his Daniels into their own den of lions.

3 For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire, and blesseth the covetous, *whom* the LORD abhorreth.

**10:3** The indictment being read, and the petition presented, the evidence is now heard upon the first count. The evidence is very full and conclusive upon the matter of *pride,* and no jury could hesitate to give a verdict against the prisoner at the bar. Let us, however, hear the witnesses one by one. The first testifies that he is a boaster.

*For the wicked boasteth of his heart's desire.* He is a very silly boaster, for he glories in a mere desire: a very brazen-faced boaster, for that desire is villainy; and a most abandoned sinner, to boast of that which is his shame. Bragging sinners are the worst and most contemptible of men, especially when their filthy desires, —too filthy to be carried into act, —become the theme of their boastings. When Mr. Hate-Good and Mr. Heady are joined in partnership, they drive a brisk trade in the devil's wares. This one proof is enough to condemn the prisoner at the bar. Take him away, jailer! But stay, another witness desires to be sworn and heard. This time, the impudence of the proud rebel is even more apparent; for he

*blesseth the covetous, whom the Lord abhorreth.* This is insolence, which is pride unmasked. He is haughty enough to differ from the Judge of all the earth, and bless the men whom God hath cursed. So did the sinful generation in the days of Malachi, who called the proud happy, and set up those that worked wickedness (Malachi 3:15). These base pretenders would dispute with their Maker; they would—

"Snatch from his hand
the balance and the rod,
Rejudge his justice,
be the god of God."
How often have we heard the wicked man speaking in terms of honour of the covetous, the grinder of the poor, and the sharp dealer! Our old proverb hath it, —

"I wot well how the world wags;
He is most loved that hath most bags."

Pride meets covetousness, and compliments it as wise, thrifty, and prudent. We say it with sorrow, there are many professors of religion who esteem a rich man, and flatter him, even though they know that he has fattened himself upon the flesh and blood of the poor. The only sinners who are received as respectable are covetous men. If a man is a fornicator, or a drunkard, we put him out of the church; but who ever read of church discipline against that idolatrous wretch, —the covetous man? Let us tremble, lest we be found to be partakers of this atrocious sin of pride, "blessing the covetous, whom Jehovah abhorreth."

4 The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God: God is not in all his thoughts.

10:4 The proud boastings and lewd blessings of the wicked have been received in evidence against him, and now his own face confirms the accusation, and his empty closet cries aloud against him.

The wicked, through the pride of his countenance, will not seek after God. Proud hearts breed proud looks and stiff knees. It is an admirable arrangement that the heart is often written on the countenance, just as the motion of the wheels of a clock find their record on its face. A brazen face and a broken heart never go together. We are not quite sure that the Athenians were wise when they ordained that men should be tried in the dark lest their countenances should weigh with the judges; for there is much more to be learned from the motions of the muscles of the face than from the words of the lips. Honesty shines in the face, but villany peeps out at the eyes. See the effect of pride; it kept the man from seeking God. It is hard to pray with a stiff neck and an unbending knee.

God is not in all his thoughts: he thought much, but he had no thoughts for God. Amid heaps of chaff there was not a grain of wheat. The only place where God is not is in the thoughts of the wicked. This is a damning accusation; for where the God of heaven is not, the Lord of hell is reigning and raging; and if God be not in our thoughts, our thoughts will bring us to perdition.

5 His ways are always grievous; thy judgments are far above out of his sight: as for all his enemies, he puffeth at them.

10:5 His ways are always grievous. To himself they are hard. Men go a rough road when they go to hell. God has hedged-up the way of sin: O what folly to leap these hedges and fall among the thorns! To others, also, his ways cause much sorrow and vexation; but what cares he? He sits like the idol god upon his monstrous car, utterly regardless of the crowds who are crushed as he rolls along.

Thy judgments are far above out of his sight: he looks high, but not high enough. As God is forgotten, so are his judgments. He is not able to comprehend the things of God; a swine may
sooner look through a telescope at the stars than this man study the Word of God to understand the righteousness of the Lord.

As for all his enemies, he puffeth at them. He defies and domineers; and when men resist his injurious behavior, he sneers at them, and threatens to annihilate them with a puff. In most languages there is a word of contempt borrowed from the action of puffing with the lips, and in English we should express the idea by saying, "He cries, 'Pooh! Pooh!' at his enemies." Ah! there is one enemy who will not thus be puffed at. Death will puff at the candle of his life and blow it out, and the wicked boaster will find it grim work to brag in the tomb.

6 He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity.

10:6 The testimony of the sixth verse concludes the evidence against the prisoner upon the first charge of pride, and certainly it is conclusive in the highest degree. The present witness has been prying into the secret chambers of the heart, and has come to tell us what he has heard.

He hath said in his heart, I shall not be moved: for I shall never be in adversity. O impertinence runs to seed! The man thinks himself immutable, and omnipotent too, for he, he is never to be in adversity. He counts himself a privileged man. He sits alone, and shall see no sorrow. His nest is in the stars, and he dreams not of a hand that shall pluck him thence. But let us remember that this man's house is built upon the sand, upon a foundation no more substantial than the rolling waves of the sea. He that is too secure is never safe. Boastings are not buttresses, and self-confidence is a sorry bulwark. This is the ruin of fools, that when they succeed they become too big, and swell with self-conceit, as if their summer would last for ever, and their flowers bloom on eternally. Be humble, O man! For thou art mortal, and thy lot is mutable. The second crime is now to be proved. The fact that the man is proud and arrogant may go a long way to prove that he is vindictive and cruel. Haman's pride was the father of a cruel design to murder all the Jews. Nebuchadnezzar builds an idol; in pride he commands all men to bow before it; and then cruelly stands ready to heat the furnace seven times hotter for those who will not yield to his imperious will. Every proud thought is twin brother to a cruel thought. He who exalts himself will despise others, and one step further will make him a tyrant.

7 His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud: under his tongue is mischief and vanity.

10:7 Let us now hear the witnesses in court. Let the wretch speak for himself, for out of his own mouth he will be condemned.

His mouth is full of cursing and deceit and fraud. There is not only a little evil there, but his mouth is full of it. A three-headed serpent hath stowed away its coils and venom within the den of its black mouth. There is cursing which he spits against both God and men, deceit with which he entraps the unwary, and fraud by which, even in his common dealings, he robs his neighbors. Beware of such a man:
have no sort of dealing with him: none but the silliest of geese would go to the fox's sermon, and none but the most foolish will put themselves into the society of knaves. But we must proceed. Let us look under this man's tongue as well as in his mouth;

*under his tongue is mischief and vanity.* Deep in his throat are the unborn words which shall come forth as mischief and iniquity.

8 He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor.

**10:8** Despite the bragging of this base wretch, it seems that he is as cowardly as he is cruel.

*He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent: his eyes are privily set against the poor.* He acts the part of the highwayman, who springs upon the unsuspecting traveler in some desolate part of the road. There are always bad men lying in wait for the saints. This is a land of robbers and thieves; let us travel well armed, for every bush conceals an enemy. Everywhere there are traps laid for us, and foes thirsting for our blood. There are enemies at our table as well as across the sea. We are never safe, save when the Lord is with us.

9 He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor: he doth catch the poor, when he draweth him into his net.

**10:9** The picture becomes blacker, for here is the cunning of the lion, and of the huntsman, as well as the stealthiness of the robber. Surely there are some men who come up to the very letter of this description. With watching, perversion, slander, whispering, and false swearing, they ruin the character of the righteous, and murder the innocent; or, with legal quibbles, mortgages, bonds, writs, and the like, they catch the poor, and draw them into a net. John Chrysostom (AD 347-407) was peculiarly severe upon this last phase of cruelty, but assuredly not more so than was richly merited. Take care, brethren, for there are other traps besides these. Hungry lions are crouching in every den, and fowlers spread their nets in every field. Francis Quarles (1592-1644) well pictures our danger in those memorable lines, —

"The close pursuers' busy hands do plant
Snares in thy substance;
snares attend thy wants;
Snares in thy credit;
snares in thy disgrace;
Snares in thy high estate;
snares in thy base;
Snares tuck thy bed;
and snares surround thy board;
Snares watch thy thoughts;
and snares attack thy word;
Snares in thy quiet;
snares in thy commotion;"
10 He croucheth, and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.

**10:10 He croucheth and humbleth himself, that the poor may fall by his strong ones.** Seeming humility is often armour-bearer to malice. The lion crouches that he may leap with the greater force, and bring down his strong limbs upon his prey. When a wolf was old, and had tasted human blood, the old Saxon cried, "Ware, wolf!" and we may cry, "Ware fox!" They who crouch to our feet are longing to make us fall. Be very careful of fawners; for friendship and flattery are deadly enemies.

11 He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it.

**10:11 As upon the former count, so upon this one; a witness is forthcoming, who has been listening at the keyhole of the heart. Speak up, friend, and let us hear your story.**

*He hath said in his heart, God hath forgotten: he hideth his face; he will never see it.* This cruel man comforts himself with the idea that God is blind, or, at least, forgetful: a fond and foolish fancy, indeed. Men doubt Omniscience when they persecute the saints. If we had a sense of God's presence with us, it would be impossible for us to ill-treat his children. In fact, there can scarcely be a greater preservation from sin than the constant thought of *"Thou, God, seest me."* Thus has the trial proceeded. The case has been fully stated; and now it is but little wonder that the oppressed petitioner lifts up the cry for judgment, which we find in the following verse: —

12 Arise, O LORD; O God, lift up thine hand: forget not the humble.
10:12 With what bold language will faith address its God! And yet what unbelief is mingled with our strongest confidence. Fearlessly the Lord is stirred up to arise and lift up his hand, yet timidly he is begged not to forget the humble; as if Jehovah could ever be forgetful of his saints. This verse is the incessant cry of the Church, and she will never refrain therefrom until her Lord shall come in his glory to avenge her of all her adversaries.

13 Wherefore doth the wicked contemn God? He hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.

10:13 In these verses the description of the wicked is condensed, and the evil of his character traced to its source, viz., atheistical ideas with regard to the government of the world. We may at once perceive that this is intended to be another urgent plea with the Lord to show his power, and reveal his justice. When the wicked call God's righteousness in question, we may well beg him to teach them terrible things in righteousness. In verse 13, the hope of the infidel and his heart-wishes are laid bare. He despises the Lord, because he will not believe that sin will meet with punishment:

*he hath said in his heart, Thou wilt not require it.* If there were no hell for other men, there ought to be one for those who question the justice of it.

14 Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand: the poor committeth himself unto thee; thou art the helper of the fatherless.

10:14 This vile suggestion receives its answer in verse 14.

*Thou hast seen it; for thou beholdest mischief and spite, to requite it with thy hand.* God is all-eye to see, and all-hand to punish his enemies. From Divine oversight there is no hiding, and from Divine justice there is no fleeing. Wanton mischief shall meet with woeful misery, and those who harbor spite shall inherit sorrow. Verily there is a God which judgeth in the earth. Nor is this the only instance of the presence of God in the world; for while he chastises the oppressor, he befriends the oppressed.

*The poor committeth himself unto thee.* They give themselves up entirely into the Lord's hands. Resigning their judgment to his enlightenment, and their wills to his supremacy, they rest assured that he will order all things for the best. Nor does he deceive their hope. He preserves them in times of need, and causes them to rejoice in his goodness.

*Thou art the helper of the fatherless.* God is the parent of all orphans. When the earthly father sleeps beneath the sod, a heavenly Father smiles from above. By some means or other, orphan children are fed, and well they may when they have such a Father.

15 Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man: seek out his wickedness till thou find none.

10:15 In this verse we hear again the burden of the psalmist's prayer:
**Break thou the arm of the wicked and the evil man.** Let the sinner lose his power to sin; stop the tyrant, arrest the oppressor, weaken the loins of the mighty, and dash in pieces the terrible. They deny thy justice: let them feel it to the full. Indeed, they shall feel it; for God shall hunt the sinner for ever: so long as there is a grain of sin in him it shall be sought out and punished. It is not a little worthy of note, that very few great persecutors have ever died in their beds: the curse has manifestly pursued them, and their fearful sufferings have made them own that divine justice at which they could at one time launch defiance. God permits tyrants to arise as thorn-hedges to protect his church from the intrusion of hypocrites, and that he may teach his backsliding children by them, as Gideon did the men of Succoth with the briers of the wilderness; but he soon cuts up these Herods, like the thorns, and casts them into the fire. Thales, the Milesian, one of the wise men of Greece, being asked what he thought to be the greatest rarity in the world, replied, "To see a tyrant live to be an old man." See how the Lord breaks, not only the arm, but the neck of proud oppressors! To the men who had neither justice nor mercy for the saints, there shall be rendered justice to the full, but not a grain of mercy.

16 The LORD is King for ever and ever: the heathen are perished out of his land.  
17 LORD, thou hast heard the desire of the humble: thou wilt prepare their heart, thou wilt cause thine ear to hear:  
18 To judge the fatherless and the oppressed, that the man of the earth may no more oppress.

**10:16, 17, 18.** The Psalm ends with a song of thanksgiving to the great and everlasting King, because he has granted the desire of his humble and oppressed people, has defended the fatherless, and punished the heathen who trampled upon his poor and afflicted children. Let us learn that we are sure to speed well, if we carry our complaint to the King of kings. Rights will be vindicated, and wrongs redressed, at his throne. His government neglects not the interests of the needy, nor does it tolerate oppression in the mighty. Great God, we leave ourselves in thine hand; to thee we commit thy church afresh. Arise, O God, and let the man of the earth—the creature of a day—be broken before the majesty of thy power. Come, Lord Jesus, and glorify thy people. Amen and Amen.
Psalm 11

To the chief Musician
A Psalm of David

SUBJECT. Charles Simeon (d. 12 November 1836) gives an excellent summary of this Psalm in the following sentences: —"The Psalms are a rich repository of experimental knowledge. David, at the different periods of his life, was placed in almost every situation in which a believer, whether rich or poor, can be placed; in these heavenly compositions he delineates all the workings of the heart. He introduces, too, the sentiments and conduct of the various persons who were accessory either to his troubles or his joys; and thus sets before us a compendium of all that is passing in the hearts of men throughout the world. When he penned this Psalm he was under persecution from Saul, who sought his life, and hunted him 'as a partridge upon the mountains.' His timid friends were alarmed for his safety, and recommended him to flee to some mountain where he had a hiding-place, and thus to conceal himself from the rage of Saul. But David, being strong in faith, spurned the idea of resorting to any such pusillanimous expedients, and determined confidently to repose his trust in God." To assist us to remember this short, but sweet Psalm, we will give it the name of "THE SONG OF THE STEADFAST."

DIVISION. From 1 to 3, David describes the temptation with which he was assailed, and from 4 to 7, the arguments by which his courage was sustained.

1 In the LORD put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?

11:1 These verses contain an account of a temptation to distrust God, with which David was, upon some unmentioned occasion, greatly exercised. It may be, that in the days when he was in Saul's court, he was advised to flee at a time when this flight would have been charged against him as a breach of duty to the king, or a proof of personal cowardice. His case was like that of Nehemiah, when his enemies, under the garb of friendship, hoped to entrap him by advising him to escape for his life. Had he done so, they could then have found a ground of accusation. Nehemiah bravely replied, "Shall such a man as I flee?" and David, in a like spirit, refuses to retreat, exclaiming, "In the Lord put I my trust: how say ye to my soul, Flee as a bird to your mountain?" When Satan cannot overthrow us by presumption, how craftily will he seek to ruin us by distrust! He will employ our dearest friends to argue us out of our confidence, and he will use such plausible logic, that unless we once for all assert our immovable trust in Jehovah, he will make us like the timid bird which flies to the mountain whenever danger presents itself.

2 For, lo, the wicked bend their bow, they make ready their arrow upon the string, that they may privily [in darkness] shoot at the upright in heart.

11:2 How forcibly the case is put! The bow is bent, the arrow is fitted to the string:

"Flee, flee, thou defenseless bird, thy safety lies in flight; begone, for thine enemies will send their shafts into thy heart; haste, haste, for soon wilt thou be destroyed!" David seems to have felt the force of the advice, for it came home to his soul; but yet he would not yield, but would
rather dare the danger than exhibit a distrust in the Lord his God. Doubtless the perils which encompassed David were great and imminent; it was quite true that his enemies were ready to shoot privily at him.

3 If the foundations be destroyed, what can the righteous do?

11:3 It was equally correct that the very foundations of law and justice were destroyed under Saul's unrighteous government: but what were all these things to the man whose trust was in God alone? He could brave the dangers, could escape the enemies, and defy the injustice which surrounded him. His answer to the question, "What can the righteous do?" would be the counter-question, "What cannot they do?" When prayer engages God on our side, and when faith secures the fulfillment of the promise, what cause can there be for flight, however cruel and mighty our enemies? With a sling and a stone, David had smitten a giant before whom the whole hosts of Israel were trembling, and the Lord, who delivered him from the uncircumcised Philistine, could surely deliver him from King Saul and his myrmidons. There is no such word as "impossibility" in the language of faith; that martial grace knows how to fight and conquer, but she knows not how to flee.

4 The LORD is in his holy temple, the LORD's throne is in heaven: his eyes behold, his eyelids try, the children of men.

11:4 David here declares the great source of his unflinching courage. He borrows his light from heaven—from the great central orb of deity. The God of the believer is never far from him; he is not merely the God of the mountain fastnesses, but of the dangerous valleys and battle plains.

Jehovah is in his holy temple. The heavens are above our heads in all regions of the earth, and so is the Lord ever near to us in every state and condition. This is a very strong reason why we should not adopt the vile suggestions of distrust. There is one who pleads his precious blood in our behalf in the temple above, and there is one upon the throne who is never deaf to the intercession of his Son. Why, then, should we fear? What plots can men devise which Jesus will not discover? Satan has doubtless desired to have us, that he may sift us as wheat, but Jesus is in the temple praying for us, and how can our faith fail? What attempts can the wicked make which Jehovah shall not behold? And since he is in his holy temple, delighting in the sacrifice of his Son, will he not defeat every device, and send us a sure deliverance?

Jehovah's throne is in the heavens; he reigns supreme. Nothing can be done in heaven, or earth, or hell, which he doth not ordain and over-rule. He is the world's great Emperor. Wherefore, then, should we flee? If we trust this King of kings, is not this enough? Cannot he deliver us without our cowardly retreat?

Yes, blessed be the Lord our God, we can salute him as Jehovah-nissi; in his name we set up our banners, and instead of flight, we once more raise the shout of war.

His eyes behold. The eternal Watcher never slumbers; his eyes never know a sleep.
His eyelids try the children of men: he narrowly inspects their actions, words, and thoughts. As men, when intently and narrowly inspecting some very minute object, almost close their eyelids to exclude every other object, so will the Lord look all men through and through. God sees each man as much and as perfectly as if there were no other creature in the universe. He sees us always; he never removes his eye from us; he sees us entirely, reading the recesses of the soul as readily as the glancings of the eye. Is not this a sufficient ground of confidence, and an abundant answer to the solicitations of despondency? My danger is not hid from him; he knows my extremity, and I may rest assured that he will not suffer me to perish while I rely alone on him. Wherefore, then, should I take wings of a timid bird, and flee from the dangers which beset me?

5 The LORD trieth the righteous: but the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth.

11:5 The Lord trieth the righteous: he doth not hate them, but only tries them. They are precious to him, and therefore he refines them with afflictions. None of the Lord's children may hope to escape from trial, nor, indeed, in our right minds, would any of us desire to do so, for trial is the channel of many blessings.

"Tis my happiness below
Not to live without the cross;
But the Savior's power to know,
Sanctifying every loss.

Trials make the promise sweet;
Trials give new life to prayer;
Trials bring me to his feet—
Lay me low, and keep me there.

Did I meet no trials here—
No chastisement by the way—
Might I not, with reason, fear
I should prove a castaway?

Bastards may escape the rod,
Sunk in earthly vain delight;
But the true-born child of God
Must not—would not, if he might."

William Cowper

Is not this a very cogent reason why we should not distrustfully endeavor to shun a trial? —for in so doing we are seeking to avoid a blessing.

6 Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest: this shall be the portion of their cup.
11:6 "But the wicked and him that loveth violence his soul hateth:" why, then, shall I flee from these wicked men? If God hateth them, I will not fear them. Haman was very great in the palace until he lost favor, but when the king abhorred him, how bold were the meanest attendants to suggest the gallows for the man at whom they had often trembled! Look at the black mark upon the faces of our persecutors, and we shall not run away from them. If God is in the quarrel as well as ourselves, it would be foolish to question the result, or avoid the conflict. Sodom and Gomorrah perished by a fiery hail, and by a brimstone shower from heaven; so shall all the ungodly. They may gather together like Gog and Magog to battle, but the Lord will rain upon them "an overflowing rain, and great hailstones, fire, and brimstone:" Ezekiel 38:22. Some expositors think that in the term "horrible tempest," there is in the Hebrew an allusion to that burning, suffocating wind, which blows across the Arabian deserts, and is known by the name of Simoom. "A burning storm," Robert Lowth (1710-1787) calls it, while another great commentator reads it "wrathwind;" in either version the language is full of terrors. What a tempest will that be which shall overwhelm the despisers of God! Oh! What a shower will that be which shall pour out itself forever upon the defenseless heads of impenitent sinners in hell! Repent, ye rebels, or this fiery deluge shall soon surround you. Hell's horrors shall be your inheritance, your entailed estate, your portion of your cup. The dregs of that cup you shall wring out, and drink forever. A drop of hell is terrible, but what must a full cup of torment be? Think of it—a cup of misery, but not a drop of mercy. O people of God, how foolish is it to fear the faces of men who shall soon be faggots in the fire of hell! Think of their end, their fearful end, and all fear of them must be changed into contempt of their threatenings, and pity for their miserable estate.

7 For the righteous LORD loveth righteousness; his countenance doth behold the upright.

11:7 The delightful contrast of the last verse is well worthy of our observation, and it affords another overwhelming reason why we should be steadfast, unmovable, not carried away with fear, or led to adopt carnal expedients in order to avoid trial.

For the righteous Lord loveth righteousness. It is not only his office to defend it, but his nature to love it. He would deny himself if he did not defend the just. It is essential to the very being of God that he should be just; fear not, then, the end of all your trials, but "be just, and fear not." God approves, and, if men oppose, what matters it?

His countenance doth behold the upright. We need never be out of countenance, for God countenances us. He observes, he approves, he delights in the upright. He sees his own image in them, an image of his own fashioning, and therefore with complacency he regards them. Shall we dare to put forth our hand unto iniquity in order to escape affliction? Let us have done with by-ways and short turnings, and let us keep to that fair path of right along which Jehovah's smile shall light us. Are we tempted to put our light under a bushel, to conceal our religion from our neighbors? Is it suggested to us that there are ways of avoiding the cross, and shunning the reproach of Christ? Let us not hearken to the voice of the charmer, but seek an increase of faith, that we may wrestle with principalities and powers, and follow the Lord, fully going without the camp, bearing his reproach.
Mammon, the flesh, the devil, will all whisper in our ear, "Flee as a bird to your mountain;" but let us come forth and defy them all. "Resist the devil, and he will flee from you." There is no room or reason for retreat. Advance! Let the vanguard push on! To the front! All ye powers and passions of our soul. On! On! In God's name, on! For "the Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge."
Psalm 12

To the chief Musician upon Sheminith
A Psalm of David

SHEMINITH (shem'-i-ith), is a musical referring to an eight stringed instrument that was to be played (1 Chron. 15:21; Psalm 6, title) (S.E.M.).

TITLE. This Psalm is headed "To the Chief Musician upon Sheminith, a Psalm of David," which title is identical with that of the sixth Psalm, except that Neginoth is here omitted. We have nothing new to add, and therefore refer the reader to our remarks on the dedication of Psalm VI. As Sheminith signifies the eighth, the Arabic version says it is concerning the end of the world, which shall be the eighth day, and refers it to the coming of the Messiah: without accepting so fanciful an interpretation, we may read this song of complaining faith in the light of His coming who shall break in pieces the oppressor. The subject will be the better before the mind's eye if we entitle this Psalm: "GOOD THOUGHTS IN BAD TIMES." It is supposed to have been written while Saul was persecuting David, and those who favored his cause.

DIVISION. In the first and second verses David spreads his plaint before the Lord concerning the treachery of his age; verses 3 and 4 denounce judgments upon proud traitors; in verse 5, Jehovah himself thunders out his wrath against oppressors; hearing this, the Chief Musician sings sweetly of the faithfulness of God and his care of his people, in verses 6 and 7; but closes on the old key of lament in verse 8, as he observes the abounding wickedness of his times. Those holy souls who dwell in Mesech, and sojourn in the tents of Kedar, may read and sing these sacred stanzas with hearts in full accord with their mingled melody of lowly mourning and lofty confidence.

1 Help, LORD; for the godly man ceaseth; for the faithful fail from among the children of men.

12:1 Help, Lord. A short but sweet, suggestive, seasonable, and serviceable prayer; a kind of angel's sword, to be turned every way, and to be used on all occasions. Henry Ainsworth (d. 1622) says the word rendered "help" is largely used for all manner of saving, helping, delivering, preserving, etc. Thus it seems that the prayer is very full and instructive. The Psalmist sees the extreme danger of his position, for a man had better be among lions than among liars; he feels his own inability to deal with such sons of Belial, for "he who shall touch them must be fenced with iron;" he therefore turns himself to his all-sufficient Helper, the Lord, whose help is never denied to his servants, and whose aid is enough for all their needs. "Help, Lord," is a very useful ejaculation which we may dart up to heaven on occasions of emergency, whether in labour, learning, suffering, fighting, living, or dying. As small ships can sail into harbors which larger vessels, drawing more water, cannot enter, so our brief cries and short petitions may trade with heaven when our soul is wind-bound, and business-bound, as to longer exercises of devotion, and when the stream of grace seems at too low an ebb to float a more laborious supplication.

For the godly man ceaseth; the death, departure, or decline of godly men should be a trumpet-
call for more prayer. They say that fish smell first at the head, and when godly men decay, the whole commonwealth will soon go rotten. We must not, however, be rash in our judgment on this point, for Elijah erred in counting himself the only servant of God alive, when there were thousands whom the Lord held in reserve. The present times always appear to be peculiarly dangerous, because they are nearest to our anxious gaze, and whatever evils are rife are sure to be observed, while the faults of past ages are further off, and are more easily overlooked. Yet we expect that in the latter days, "because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold," and then we must the more thoroughly turn from man, and address ourselves to the Churches' Lord, by whose help the gates of hell shall be kept from prevailing against us.

The faithful fail from among the children of men; when godliness goes, faithfulness inevitably follows; without fear of God, men have no love of truth. Common honesty is no longer common, when common irreligion leads to universal godlessness. David had his eye on Doeg, and the men of Ziph and Keilah, and perhaps remembered the murdered priests of Nob, and the many banished ones who consorted with him in the cave of Adullam, and wondered where the state would drift without the anchors of its godly and faithful men. David, amid the general misrule, did not betake himself to seditious plottings, but to solemn petitionings; nor did he join with the multitude to do evil, but took up the arms of prayer to withstand their attacks upon virtue.

2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbor: with flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak.

12:2 They speak vanity every one with his neighbor. They utter that which is vain to hear, because of its frivolous, foolish, want of worth; vain to believe, because it was false and lying; vain to trust to, since it was deceitful and flattering; vain to regard, for it lifted up the hearer, filling him with proud conceit of himself. It is a sad thing when it is the fashion to talk vanity. "Ca'me, and I'll ca'thee." is the old Scotch proverb; give me a high sounding character, and I will give you one. Compliments and fawning congratulations are hateful to honest men; they know that if they take they must give them, and they scorn to do either. These accommodation-bills are most admired by those who are bankrupt in character. Bad are the times when every man thus cajoles and cozens his neighbor.

With flattering lips and with a double heart do they speak. He who puffs up another's heart, has nothing better than wind in his own. If a man extols me to my face, he only shows me one side of his heart, and the other is black with contempt for me, or foul with intent to cheat me. Flattery is the sign of the tavern where duplicity is the host. The Chinese consider a man of two hearts to be a very base man, and we shall be safe in reckoning all flatteries to be such.

3 The LORD shall cut off all flattering lips, and the tongue that speaketh proud things:
4 Who have said, With our tongue will we prevail; our lips are our own: who is lord over us?

12: 3, 4 Total destruction shall overwhelm the lovers of flattery and pride, but meanwhile how they hector and fume! Well did the apostle call them "raging waves of the sea, foaming out their
own shame." Free-thinkers are generally very free-talkers, and they are never more at ease than when railing at God's dominion, and arrogating to themselves unbounded license. Strange is it that the easy yoke of the Lord should so gall the shoulders of the proud, while the iron bands of Satan they bind about themselves as chains of honour: they boastfully cry unto God, 

Who is lord over us? and hear not the hollow voice of the evil one, who cries from the infernal lake, “I am your lord, and right faithfully do ye serve me.” Alas, poor fools, their pride and glory shall be cut off like a fading flower! May God grant that our soul may not be gathered with them. It is worthy of observation that flattering lips, and tongues speaking proud things, are classed together: the fitness of this is clear, for they are guilty of the same vice, the first flatters another, and the second flatters himself, in both cases a lie is in their right hands. One generally imagines that flatterers are such mean parasites, so cringing and fawning, that they cannot be proud; but the wise man will tell you that while all pride is truly meanness, there is in the very lowest meanness no small degree of pride. Caesar's horse is even more proud of carrying Caesar, than Caesar is of riding him. The mat on which the emperor wiped his shoes, boasts vaingloriously, crying out,

"I cleaned the imperial boots." None are so detestably domineering as the little creatures who creep into office by cringing to the great; those are bad times, indeed, in which these obnoxious beings are numerous and powerful. No wonder that the justice of God in cutting off such injurious persons is matter for a psalm, for both earth and heaven are weary of such provoking offenders, whose presence is a very plague to the people afflicted thereby. Men cannot tame the tongues of such boastful flatterers; but the Lord's remedy if sharp is sure, and is an unanswerable answer to their swelling words of vanity.

5 For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the LORD; I will set him in safety from him that puffeth at him. 

12:5 In due season the Lord will hear his elect ones, who cry day and night unto him, and though he bear long with their oppressors, yet will he avenge them speedily. Observe that the mere oppression of saints, however silently they bear it, is in itself a cry to God: Moses was heard at the Red Sea, though he said nothing; and Hagar's affliction was heard despite her silence. Jesus feels with his people, and their smarts are mighty orators with him. By-and-by, however, they begin to sigh and express their misery, and then relief comes post-haste. Nothing moves a father like the cries of his children; he bestirs himself, wakes up his manhood, overthrows the enemy, and sets his beloved in safety. A puff is too much for the child to bear, and the foe is so haughty, that he laughs the little one to scorn; but the Father comes, and then it is the child's turn to laugh, when he is set above the rage of his tormentor. What virtue is there in a poor man's sighs, that they should move the Almighty God to arise from his throne. The needy did not dare to speak, and could only sigh in secret, but the Lord heard, and could rest no longer, but girded on his sword for the battle. It is a fair day when our soul brings God into her quarrel, for when his bare arm is seen, Philistia shall rue the day. The darkest hours of the Church's night are those which precede the break of day. Man's extremity is God's opportunity. Jesus will come to deliver just when his needy ones shall sigh, as if all hope had gone for ever. O Lord, set thy now near at hand, and rise up speedily to our help. Should the afflicted reader be able to lay hold upon the promise of this verse, let him gratefully fetch a fullness of comfort from it. William Gurnall (1617-1679) says, "As one may draw out the wine of a whole hogshead at one tap, so may a poor
soul derive the comfort of the whole covenant to himself through one promise, if he be able to
apply it." He who promises to set us in safety, means thereby preservation on earth, and eternal
salvation in heaven.

6 The words of the LORD are pure words: as silver tried in a furnace of earth, purified seven times.

12:6 What a contrast between the vain words of man, and the pure words of Jehovah. Man's
words are yea and nay, but the Lord's promises are yea and amen. For truth, certainty, holiness,
faithfulness, the words of the Lord are pure as well-refined silver. In the original there is an
allusion to the most severely-purifying process known to the ancients, through which silver was
passed when the greatest possible purity
was desired; the dross was all consumed, and only the bright and precious metal remained; so
clear and free from all alloy of error or unfaithfulness is the book of the words of the Lord. The
Bible has passed through the furnace of persecution, literary criticism, philosophic doubt, and
scientific discovery, and has lost nothing but those human interpretations which clung to it as
alloy to precious ore. The experience of saints has tried it in every conceivable manner, but not a
single doctrine or promise has been consumed in the most excessive heat. What God's words are,
the words of his children should be. If we would be Godlike in conversation, we must watch our
language, and maintain the strictest purity of integrity and holiness in all our communications.

7 Thou shalt keep them, O LORD, thou shalt preserve them from this generation
for ever.

12:7 To fall into the hands of an evil generation, so as to be baited by their cruelty, or polluted by
their influence, is an evil to be dreaded beyond measure; but it is an evil foreseen and provided
for in the text. In life many a saint has lived a hundred years before his age, as though he had
darted his soul into the brighter future, and escaped the mists of the beclouded present: he has
gone to his grave unreverenced and misunderstood, and lo! As generations come and go, upon a
sudden the hero is unearthed, and lives in the admiration and love of the excellent of the earth;
preserved for ever from the generation which stigmatized him as a sower of sedition, or burned
him as a heretic. It should be our daily prayer that we may rise above our age as the
mountaintops above the clouds, and may stand out as heaven-pointing
pinnacle high above the mists of ignorance and sin which roll around us. O Eternal Spirit, fulfill
in us the faithful saying of this verse! Our faith believes those two assuring words, and cries,
"Thou shalt," "thou shalt."

8 The wicked walk on every side, when the vilest men are exalted.

12:8 Here we return to the fount of bitterness, which first made the psalmist run to the wells of
salvation, namely, the prevalence of wickedness. When those in power are vile, their underlings
will be no better. As a warm sun brings out noxious flies, so does a sinner in honour foster vice
everywhere. Our turf would not so swarm with abominables if those who are styled honorables
did not give their countenance to the craft. Would to God that the glory and triumph of our Lord
Jesus would encourage us to walk and work on every side; as like acts upon like, since an exalted
sinner encourages sinners, our exalted Redeemer must surely excite, cheer, and stimulate his saints. Nerved by a sight of his reigning power we shall meet the evils of the times in the spirit of holy resolution, and shall the more hopefully pray, "Help, Lord."
Psalm 13

To the chief Musician
A Psalm of David

OCCASION. The Psalm cannot be referred to any especial event or period in David's history. All attempts to find it a birthplace are but guesses. It was, doubtless, more than once the language of that much tried man of God, and is intended to express the feelings of the people of God in those ever-returning trials which beset them. If the reader has never yet found occasion to use the language of this brief ode, he will do so ere long, if he be a man after the Lord's own heart. We have been wont to call this the "How Long Psalm." We had almost said the Howling Psalm, from the incessant repetition of the cry "how long?"

DIVISION. This Psalm is very readily to be divided into three parts: the question of anxiety, 1, 2; the cry of prayer, 3, 4; the song of faith, 5, and 6.

1 How long wilt thou forget me, O LORD? For ever? How long wilt thou hide thy face from me?

13:1 How long? This question is repeated no less than four times. It betokens very intense desire for deliverance, and great anguish of heart. And what if there be some impatience mingled therewith; is not this the more true a portrait of our own experience? It is not easy to prevent desire from degenerating into impatience. O for grace that, while we wait on God, we may be kept from indulging a murmuring spirit! "How long?" Does not the oft-repeated cry become a very HOWLING? And what if grief should find no other means of utterance? Even then, God is not far from the voice of our roaring; for he does not regard the music of our prayers, but his own Spirit's work in them in exciting desire and inflaming the affections. "How long?" Ah! How long do our days appear when our soul is cast down within us!

"How wearily the moments seem to glide
O'er sadness! How the time
Delights to linger in its flight!"

Time flies with full-fledged wing in our summer days, but in our winters he flutters painfully. A week within prison-walls is longer than a month at liberty. Long sorrow seems to argue abounding corruption; for the gold which is long in the fire must have had much dross to be consumed, hence the question "how long?" may suggest deep searching of heart.

How long wilt thou forget me? Ah, David! How like a fool thou talkest! Can God forget? Can Omniscience fail in memory? Above all, can Jehovah's heart forget his own beloved child? Ah! brethren, let us drive away the thought, and hear the voice of our covenant God by the mouth of the prophet, "But Zion said, The Lord hath forsaken me, and my Lord hath forgotten me. Can a woman forget her sucking child, that she should not have compassion on the son of her womb? Yea, they may forget, yet will I not forget thee. Behold, I have graven thee upon the palms of my hands; thy walls are continually before me."
For ever? Oh, dark thought! It was surely bad enough to suspect a temporary forgetfulness, but shall we ask the ungracious question, and imagine that the Lord will for ever cast away his people? No, his anger may endure for a night, but his love shall abide eternally.

How long wilt thou hide thy face from me? This is a far more rational question, for God may hide his face, and yet he may remember still. A hidden face is no sign of a forgetful heart. It is in love that his face is turned away; yet to a real child of God, this hiding of his Father's face is terrible and he will never be at ease until, once more he hath his Father's smile.

2 How long shall I take counsel in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? How long shall mine enemy be exalted over me?

13:2 How long shall I take counsel, in my soul, having sorrow in my heart daily? There is in the original the idea of "laying up" counsels in his heart, as if his devices had become innumerable but unavailing. Herein we have often been like David, for we have considered and reconsidered day after day, but have not discovered the happy device by which to escape from our trouble. Such store is a sad sore. Ruminating upon trouble is bitter work. Children fill their mouths with bitterness when they rebelliously chew the pill which they ought obediently to have taken at once.

How long shall my enemy be exalted over me? This is like wormwood in the gall, to see the wicked enemy exulting while our soul is bowed down within us. The laughter of a foe grates horribly on the ears of grief. For the devil to make mirth of our misery is the last ounce of our complaint, and quite breaks down our patience; therefore let us make it one chief argument in our plea with mercy. Thus the careful reader will remark that the question "how long?" is put in four shapes. The writer's grief is viewed, as it seems to be, as it affects himself within, and his foes without. We are all prone to play most on the worst string. We set up monumental stones over the graves of our joys, but who thinks of erecting monuments of praise for mercies received? We write four books of Lamentations and only one of Canticles, and are far more at home in wailing out a Misere than in chanting a Te Deum.

3 Consider and hear me, O LORD my God: lighten mine eyes, lest I sleep the sleep of death;

13:3 But now prayer lifteth up her voice, like the watchman who proclaims the daybreak. Now will the tide turn, and the weeper shall dry his eyes. The mercy seat is the life of hope and the death of despair. The gloomy thought of God's having forsaken him is still upon the psalmist's soul, and he therefore cries,

Consider and hear me. He remembers at once the root of his woe, and cries aloud that it may be removed. The final absence of God is Tophet's fire, and his temporary absence brings his people into the very suburbs of hell. God is here entreated to see and hear, that so he may be doubly moved to pity. What should we do if we had no God to turn to in the hour of wretchedness?

Note the cry of faith,
**O Lord MY God!** Is it not a very glorious fact that our interest in our God is not destroyed by all our trials and sorrows? We may lose our gourds, but not our God. The title deed of heaven is not written in the sand, but in eternal brass.

**Lighten mine eyes:** that is, let the eye of my faith be clear, that I may see my God in the dark; let my eye of watchfulness be wide open, lest I be entrapped, and let the eye of my understanding be illuminated to see the right way. Perhaps, too, here is an allusion to that cheering of the spirits so frequently called the enlightening of the eyes because it causes the face to brighten, and the eyes to sparkle. Well may we use the prayer, "Lighten our darkness, we beseech thee, O Lord!" for in many respects we need the Holy Spirit's illuminating rays.

**Lest I sleep the sleep of death.** Darkness engenders sleep, and despondency is not slow in making the eyes heavy. From this faintness and dimness of vision, caused by despair, there is but a step to the iron sleep of death. David feared that his trials would end his life, and he rightly uses his fear as an argument with God in prayer; for deep distress has in it a kind of claim upon compassion, not a claim of right, but a plea which has power with grace. Under the pressure of heart sorrow, the psalmist does not look forward to the sleep of death with hope and joy, as assured believers do, but he shrinks from it with dread, from which we gather that bondage from fear of death is no new thing.

4 Lest mine enemy say, I have prevailed against him; and those that trouble me rejoice when I am moved.

13: 4 Another plea is urged in the fourth verse, and it is one which the tried believer may handle well when on his knees. We make use of our archenemy for once, and compel him, like Samson, to grind in our mill while we use his cruel arrogance as an argument in prayer. It is not the Lord's will that the great enemy of our souls should overcome his children. This would dishonor God, and cause the evil one to boast. It is well for us that our salvation and God's honour are so intimately connected, that they stand or fall together. Our covenant God will complete the confusion of all our enemies, and if for awhile we become their scoff and jest, the day is coming when the shame will change sides, and the contempt shall be poured on those to whom it is due.

5 But I have trusted in thy mercy; my heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.

13:5 What a change is here! Lo, the rain is over and gone, and the time of the singing of birds is come. The mercy-seat has so refreshed the poor weeper, that he clears his throat for a song. If we have mourned with him, let us now dance with him. David's heart was more often out of tune than his harp. He begins many of his psalms sighing, and ends them singing; and others he begins in joy and ends in sorrow; "so that one would think," says Peter Moulin, "that those Psalms had been composed by two men of a contrary humor." It is worthy to be observed that the joy is all the greater because of the previous sorrow, as calm is all the more delightful in recollection of the preceding tempest.

"Sorrows remembered
sweeten present joy."
Here is his avowal of his confidence:

**But I have trusted in thy mercy.** For many a year it had been his wont to make the Lord his castle and tower of defense, and he smiles from behind the same bulwark still. He is sure of his faith, and his faith makes him sure; had he doubted the reality of his trust in God, he would have blocked up one of the windows through which the sun of heaven delights to shine. Faith is now in exercise, and consequently is readily discovered; there is never a doubt in our heart about the existence of faith while it is in action: when the hare or partridge is quiet we see it not, but let the same be in motion and we soon perceive it. All the powers of his enemies had not driven the psalmist from his stronghold. As the shipwrecked mariner clings to the mast, so did David cling to his faith; he neither could nor would give up his confidence in the Lord his God. O that we may profit by his example and hold by our faith as by our very life! Now hearken to the music which faith makes in his soul. The bells of the mind are all ringing,

**My heart shall rejoice in thy salvation.** There is joy and feasting within doors, for a glorious guest has come, and the fatted calf is killed. Sweet is the music which sounds from the strings of the heart. But this is not all; *the voice* joins itself in the blessed work, and the tongue keeps tune with the soul, while the writer declares, "I will sing unto the Lord."

> "I will praise thee every day,  
Now thine anger's past away;  
Comfortable thoughts arise  
From the bleeding sacrifice."

6 I will sing unto the LORD, because he hath dealt bountifully with me.

13:6 The Psalm closes with a sentence which is a refutation of the charge of forgetfulness which David had uttered in the first verse,

**He hath dealt bountifully with me.** So shall it be with us if we wait awhile. The complaint which in our haste we utter shall be joyfully retracted, and we shall witness that the Lord hath dealt bountifully with us.
To the chief Musician
A Psalm of David

TITLE. This admirable ode is simply headed, "To the Chief Musician, by David." The dedication to the Chief Musician stands at the head of fifty-three of the Psalms, and clearly indicates that such psalms were intended, not merely for the private use of believers, but to be sung in the great assemblies by the appointed choir at whose head was the overseer, or superintendent, called in our version, "the Chief Musician," and by Ainsworth, "the Master of the Music." Several of these psalms have little or no praise in them, and were not addressed directly to the Most High, and yet were to be sung in public worship; which is a clear indication that the theory of Augustine lately revived by certain hymn-book makers, that nothing but praise should be sung, is far more plausible than scriptural. Not only did the ancient Church chant hallowed doctrine and offer prayer amid her spiritual songs, but even the wailing notes of complaint were put into her mouth by the sweet singer of Israel who was inspired of God. Some persons grasp at any nicety which has a gloss of apparent correctness upon it, and are pleased with being more fancifully precise than others; nevertheless it will ever be the way of plain men, not only to magnify the Lord in sacred canticles, but also, according to Paul's precept, to teach and admonish one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in their hearts unto the Lord. As no distinguishing title is given to this Psalm, we would suggest as an assistance to the memory, the heading—

CONCERNING RATIONAL ATHEISM.

The many conjectures as to the occasion upon which it was written are so completely without foundation, that it would be a waste of time to mention them at length. The apostle Paul, in Romans 3, has shown incidentally that the drift of the inspired writer is to show that both Jews and Gentiles are all under sin; there was, therefore, no reason for fixing upon any particular historical occasion, when all of history reeks with terrible evidence of human corruption. With instructive alterations, David has given us in Psalm 53 a second edition of this humiliating psalm, being moved of the Holy Ghost thus doubly to declare a truth which is ever distasteful to carnal minds.

DIVISION. The world's foolish creed (verse 1); its practical influence in corrupting morals, 1, 2, 3. The persecuting tendencies of sinners, 4; their alarms, 5; their ridicule of the godly, 6; and a prayer for the manifestation of the Lord to his people's joy.

1 The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God. They are corrupt, they have done abominable works, there is none that doeth good.

14:1 The fool. The Atheist is the fool pre-eminently, and a fool universally. He would not deny God if he were not a fool by nature, and having denied God it is no marvel that he becomes a fool in practice. Sin is always folly, and as it is the height of sin to attack the very existence of the Most High, so it is also the greatest imaginable folly. To say there is no God is to belie the plainest evidence, which is obstinacy; to oppose the common consent of mankind, which is stupidity; to stifle consciousness, which is madness. If the sinner could by his atheism destroy the God whom he hates there were some sense, although much wickedness, in his infidelity; but as denying the existence of fire does not prevent its
burning a man who is in it, so doubting the existence of God will not stop the Judge of all the earth from destroying the rebel who breaks his laws; nay, this atheism is a crime which much provokes heaven, and will bring down terrible vengeance on the fool who indulges it. The proverb says, "A fool's tongue cuts his own throat," and in this instance it kills both soul and body forever: would to God the mischief stopped even there, but alas! One fool makes hundreds, and a noisy blasphemer spreads his horrible doctrines as lepers spread the plague. Henry Ainsworth (d. 1622), in his "Annotations," tells us that the word here used is **Nabal**, which has the signification of fading, dying, or falling away, as a withered leaf or flower; it is a title given to the foolish man as having lost the juice and sap of wisdom, reason, honesty, and godliness. John Trapp (1611-1669) hits the mark when he calls him "that sapless fellow, that carcass of a man, that walking sepulchre of himself, in whom all religion and right reason is withered and wasted, dried up and decayed." Some translate it the apostate, and others the wretch. With what earnestness should we shun the appearance of doubt as to the presence, activity, power and love of God, for all such mistrust is of the nature of folly, and who among us would wish to be ranked with the fool in the text? Yet let us never forget that all unregenerate men are more or less such fools. The fool

**hath said in his heart.** May a man with his mouth profess to believe, and yet in heart say the reverse? Had he hardly become audacious enough to utter his folly with his tongue? Did the Lord look upon his thoughts as being in the nature of words to Him though not to man? Is this where man first becomes an unbeliever? —in his heart, not in his head? And when he talks atheistically, is it a foolish heart speaking, and endeavoring to clamor down the voice of conscience? We think so. If the affections were set upon truth and righteousness, the understanding would have no difficulty in settling the question of a present personal Deity, but as the heart dislikes the good and the right, it is no wonder that it desires to be rid of that Elohim, who is the great moral Governor, the Patron of rectitude and the Punisher of iniquity. While men's hearts remain what they are, we must not be surprised at the prevalence of skepticism; a corrupt tree will bring forth-corrupt fruit. "Every man," says David Dickson (1583-1662), "so long as he lieth unrenewed and unreconciled to God is nothing in effect but a madman." What wonder then if he raves? Such fools as those we are now dealing with are common to all time, and all countries; they grow without watering, and are found all the world over. The spread of mere intellectual enlightenment will not diminish their number, for since it is an affair of the heart, this folly and great learning will often dwell together. To answer skeptical caviling will be labour lost until grace enters to make the mind willing to believe; fools can raise more objections in an hour than wise men can answer in seven years, indeed it is their mirth to set stools for wise men to stumble over. Let the preacher aim at the heart, and preach the all-conquering love of Jesus, and he will by God's grace win more doubters to the faith of the gospel than any hundred of the best reasoners who only direct their arguments to the head.

**The fool hath said in his heart, There is no God,** or "no God." So monstrous is the assertion, that the man hardly dared to put it as a positive statement, but went very near to doing so. John Calvin seems to regard this saying, "no God," as hardly amounting to a syllogism, scarcely reaching to a positive, dogmatically declaration; but Dr. Alexander clearly shows that it does. It is not merely the wish of the sinner's corrupt nature, and the hope of his rebellious heart, but he manages after a fashion to bring himself to assert it, and at certain seasons he thinks that he believes it. It is a solemn reflection that some who worship God with their lips may in their hearts be saying, "no God." It is worthy of observation that he does not say there is no Jehovah,
but there is no Elohim; Deity in the abstract is not so much the object of attack, as the covenant, personal, ruling and governing presence of God in the world. God as ruler, lawgiver, worker, Saviour, is the butt at which the arrows of human wrath are shot. How impotent the malice! How mad the rage which raves and foams against Him in whom we live and move and have our being! How horrible the insanity which leads a man who owes his all to God to cry out, "No God"! How terrible the depravity which makes the whole race adopt this as their hearts desire, "no God!"

*They are corrupt.* This refers to all men, and we have the warrant of the Holy Ghost for so saying; see the third chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Where there is enmity to God, there is deep, inward depravity of mind. The words are rendered by eminent critics in an active sense, "they have done corruptly:" this may serve to remind us that sin is not only in our nature passively as the source of evil, but we ourselves actively fan the flame and corrupt ourselves, making that blacker still which was black as darkness itself already. We rivet our own chains by habit and continuance.

*They have done abominable works.* When men begin with renouncing the Most High God, who shall tell where they will end? When the Master's eyes are put out, what will not the servants do? Observe the state of the world before the flood, as portrayed in Genesis 6:12, and remember that human nature is unchanged. He who would see a terrible photograph of the world without God must read that most painful of all inspired Scriptures, the first chapter of the epistle to the Romans. Learned Hindus have confessed that the description is literally correct in Hindustan at the present moment; and were it not for the restraining grace of God, it would be so in England. Alas! it is even here but too correct a picture of things which are done of men in secret. Things loathsome to God and man are sweet to some palates.

*There is none that doeth good.* Sins of omission must abound where transgressions are rife. Those who do the things which they ought not to have done, are sure to leave undone those things which they ought to have done. What a picture of our race is this! Save only where grace reigns, there is none that doeth good; humanity, fallen and debased, is a desert without an oasis, a night without a star, a dunghill without a jewel, a hell without a bottom.

2 The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God.

**14:2 The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men.** As from a watchtower, or other elevated place of observation, the Lord is represented as gazing intently upon men. He will not punish blindly, nor like a tyrant command an indiscriminate massacre because a rumor of rebellion has come up to his ears. What condescending interest and impartial justice are here imaged!

The case of Sodom, visited before it was overthrown, illustrates the careful manner in which Divine Justice beholds the sin before it avenges it, and searches out the righteous that they perish not with the guilty. Behold then the eyes of Omniscience ransacking the globe, and prying among every people and nation,
to see if there were any that did understand and seek God. He who is looking down knows the good, is quick to discern it, would be delighted to find it; but as he views all the unregenerate children of men his search is fruitless, for of all the race of Adam, no unrenewed soul is other than an enemy to God and goodness. The objects of the Lord's search are not wealthy men, great men, or learned men; these, with all they can offer, cannot meet the demands of the great Governor: at the same time, he is not looking for superlative eminence in virtue, he seeks for any that understand themselves, their state, their duty, their destiny, their happiness; he looks for any that seek God, who, if there be a God, are willing and anxious to find him out. Surely this is not too great a matter to expect; for if men have not yet known God, if they have any right understanding, they will seek him. Alas! even this low degree of good is not to be found even by him who sees all things: but men love the hideous negation of "No God," and with their backs to their Creator, who is the sun of their life, they journey into the dreary region of unbelief and alienation, which is a land of darkness as darkness itself, and of the shadow of death without any order and where the light is as darkness.

3 They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.

14:3 They are all gone aside. Without exception, all men have apostatized from the Lord their Maker, from his laws, and from all the eternal principles of right. Like stubborn heifers they have sturdily refused to receive the yoke, like errant sheep they have found a gap and left the right field. The original speaks of the race as a whole, as a totality; and humanity as a whole has become depraved in heart and defiled in life.

They have altogether become filthy; as a whole they are spoiled and soured like corrupt leaven, or, as some put it, they have become putrid and even stinking. The only reason why we do not more clearly see this foulness is because we are accustomed to it, just as those who work daily among offensive odors at last cease to smell them. The miller does not observe the noise of his own mill, and we are slow to discover our own ruin and depravity. But are there no special cases, are all men sinful? "Yes," says the Psalmist, in a manner not to be mistaken, "they are." He has put it positively, he repeats it negatively,

There is none that doeth good, no, not one. The Hebrew phrase is an utter denial concerning any mere man that he of himself doeth good. What can be more sweeping? This is the verdict of the all-seeing Jehovah, who cannot exaggerate or mistake. As if no hope of finding a solitary specimen of a good man among the unrenewed human family might be harbored for an instant. The Holy Spirit is not content with saying all and altogether, but adds the crushing threefold negative, "none, no, not one." What say the opponents to the doctrine of natural depravity to this? Rather what do we feel concerning it? Do we not confess that we by nature are corrupt, and do we not bless the sovereign grace which has renewed us in the spirit of our minds, that sin may no more have dominion over us, but that grace may rule and reign?

4 Have all the workers of iniquity no knowledge? Who eat up my people as they eat bread, and call not upon the LORD.
Hatred of God and corruptness of life are the motive forces which produce persecution. Men who having no saving knowledge of divine things, enslave themselves to become workers of iniquity, have no heart to cry to the Lord for deliverance, but seek to amuse themselves with devouring the poor and despised people of God. It is hard bondage to be a "worker of iniquity;" a worker at the galleys, or in the mines of Siberia, is not more truly degraded and wretched; the toil is hard and the reward dreadful: those who have no knowledge choose such slavery, but those who are taught of God cry to be rescued from it. The same ignorance which keeps men bondsmen to evil, makes them hate the freeborn sons of God; hence they seek to eat them up "as they eat bread,"—daily, ravenously, as though it were an ordinary, usual, every-day matter to oppress the saints of God. As pikes in a pond, eat up little fish, as eagles prey on smaller birds, as wolves rend the sheep of the pasture, so sinners naturally and as a matter of course, persecute, malign, and mock the followers of the Lord Jesus. While thus preying, they forswear all praying, and in this act consistently, for how could they hope to be heard while their hands are full of blood?

5 There were they in great fear: for God is in the generation of the righteous.

Oppressors have it not all their own way, they have their fits of trembling and their appointed seasons of overthrow. There—where they denied God and hectored against his people; there—where they thought of peace and safety, they were made to quail.

There were they—these very loud-mouthed, iron-handed, proud-hearted Nimrods and Herods, those heady, high-minded sinners—

there were they in great fear. A panic terror seized them: "they feared a fear," as the Hebrew puts it; an indefinable, horrible, mysterious dread crept over them. The most hardened of men have their periods when conscience casts them into a cold sweat of alarm. As cowards are cruel, so all cruel men are at heart cowards. The ghost of past sin is a terrible specter to haunt any man, and though unbelievers may boast as loudly as they will, a sound is in their ears which makes them ill at ease.

For God is in the generation of the righteous. This makes the company of godly men so irksome to the wicked because they perceive that God is with them. Shut their eyes as they may, they cannot but perceive the image of God in the character of his truly gracious people, nor can they fail to see that he works for their deliverance. Like Haman, they instinctively feel a trembling when they see God's Mordecais. Even though the saint may be in a mean position, mourning at the gate where the persecutor rejoices in state, the sinner feels the influence of the believer's true nobility and quails before it, for God is there. Let scoffers beware, for they persecute the Lord Jesus when they molest his people; the union is very close between God and his people, it amounts to a mysterious indwelling, for God is in the generation of the righteous.

6 Ye have shamed the counsel of the poor, because the LORD is his refuge.
14:6 Notwithstanding their real cowardice, the wicked put on the lion's skin and lord it over the Lord's poor ones. Though fools themselves, they mock at the truly wise as if the folly were on their side; but this is what might be expected, for how should brutish minds appreciate excellence, and how can those who have owl's eyes admire the sun? The special point and butt of their jest seems to be the confidence of the godly in their Lord. What can your God do for you now? Who is that God who can deliver out of our hand? Where is the reward of all your praying and beseeching? Taunting questions of this sort they thrust into the faces of weak but gracious souls, and tempt them to feel ashamed of their refuge. Let us not be laughed out of our confidence by them, let us scorn their scorning and defy their jeers; we shall need to wait but a little, and then the Lord our refuge will avenge his own elect, and ease himself of his adversaries, who once made so light of him and of his people.

7 Oh that the salvation of Israel were come out of Zion! When the LORD bringeth back the captivity of his people, Jacob shall rejoice, and Israel shall be glad.

14:6 Natural enough is this closing prayer, for what would so effectually convince atheists, overthrow persecutors, stay sin, and secure the godly, as the manifest appearance of Israel's great Salvation? The coming of Messiah was the desire of the godly in all ages, and though he has already come with a sin-offering to purge away iniquity, we look for him to come a second time, to come without a sin-offering unto salvation. O that these weary years would have an end! Why tarries he so long? He knows that sin abounds and that his people are downtrodden; why comes he not to the rescue? His glorious advent will restore his ancient people from literal captivity, and his SPIRITUAL seed from spiritual sorrow. Wrestling Jacob and prevailing Israel shall alike rejoice before him when he is revealed as their salvation. O that he were come! What happy, holy, halcyon, heavenly days should we then see! But let us not count him slack, for behold he comes, he comes quickly! Blessed are all they that wait for him.
A Psalm of David

SUBJECT, &c. This Psalm of David bears no dedicatory title at all indicative of the occasion upon which it was written, but it is exceedingly probable that, together with the twenty-fourth Psalm, to which it bears a striking resemblance, its composition was in some way connected with the removal of the ark to the holy hill of Zion. Who should attend upon the ark was a matter of no small consequence, for because unauthorized persons had intruded into the office, David was unable on the first occasion to complete his purpose of bringing the ark to Zion. On the second attempt he is more careful, not only to allot the work of carrying the ark to the divinely appointed Levites (1 Chronicles 15:2), but also to leave it in charge of the man whose house the Lord had blessed, even Obed-edom, who, with his many sons, ministered in the house of the Lord. (1 Chronicles 26:8, 12.) Spiritually we have here a description of the man who is a child at home in the Church of God on earth, and who will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever above. He is primarily Jesus, the perfect man, and in him all who through grace are conformed to his image.

DIVISION. The first verse asks the question; the rest of the verses answer it. We will call the Psalm THE QUESTION AND ANSWER.

1 LORD, who shall abide in thy tabernacle? Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?

**15:1** THE QUESTION. Jehovah. Thou high and holy One, who shall be permitted to have fellowship with thee? The heavens are not pure in thy sight, and thou chargest thine angels with folly, who then of mortal mould shall dwell with thee, thou dread consuming fire? A sense of the glory of the Lord and of the holiness which becomes his house, his service, and his attendants, excites the humble mind to ask the solemn question before us. Where angels bow with veiled faces, how shall man be able to worship at all? The unthinking many imagine it to be a very easy matter to approach the Most High, and when professedly engaged in his worship they have no questionings of heart as to their fitness for it; but truly humbled souls often shrink under a sense of utter unworthiness, and would not dare to approach the throne of the God of holiness if it were not for him, our Lord, our Advocate, who can abide in the heavenly temple, because his righteousness endureth for ever.

**Who shall abide in thy tabernacle?** Who shall be admitted to be one of the household of God, to sojourn under his roof and enjoy communion with himself?

**Who shall dwell in thy holy hill?** Who shall be a citizen of Zion, and an inhabitant of the heavenly Jerusalem? The question is raised, because it is a question. All men have not this privilege, nay, even among professors there are aliens from the commonwealth,

who have no secret intercourse with God. On the grounds of law no mere man can dwell with God, for there is not one upon earth who answers to the just requirements mentioned in the succeeding verses. The questions in the text are asked of the Lord, as if none but the Infinite Mind could answer them so as to satisfy the unquiet conscience. We must know from the Lord of the tabernacle what are the qualifications for his service, and when we have been taught of him, we shall clearly see that only our spotless Lord Jesus, and those who are conformed unto his image, can ever stand with acceptance before the Majesty on high. Impertinent curiosity frequently desires to know who and how many shall be saved; if those who thus ask the question,
Who shall dwell in thy holy hill? would make it a soul-searching enquiry in reference to themselves they would act much more wisely. Members of the visible church, which is God's tabernacle of worship, and hill of eminence, should diligently see to it, that they have the preparation of heart which fits them to be inmates of the house of God. Without the wedding-dress of righteousness in Christ Jesus, we have no right to sit at the banquet of communion. Without uprightness of walk we are not fit for the imperfect church on earth, and certainly we must not hope to enter the perfect church above.

2 He that walketh uprightly, and worketh righteousness, and speaketh the truth in his heart.

15:2 THE ANSWER. The Lord in answer to the question informs us by his Holy Spirit of the character of the man who alone can dwell in his holy hill. In perfection this holiness is found only in the Man of Sorrows, but in a measure it is wrought in all his people by the Holy Ghost. Faith and the graces of the Spirit are not mentioned, because this is a description of outward character, and where fruits are found the root may not be seen, but it is surely there. Observe the accepted man's walk, work, and word.

He that walketh uprightly, he keeps himself erect as those do who traverse high ropes; if they lean on one side over they must go, or as those who carry precious but fragile ware in baskets on their heads, who lose all if they lose their perpendicular. True believers do not cringe as flatterers, wriggle as serpents, bend double as earth-grubbers, or crook on one side as those who have sinister aims; they have the strong backbone of the vital principle of grace within, and being themselves upright, they are able to walk uprightly. Walking is of far more importance than talking. He only is right who is upright in walk and downright in honesty.

And worketh righteousness. His faith shows itself by good works, and therefore is no dead faith. God's house is a hive for workers, not a nest for drones. Those who rejoice that everything is done for them by another, even the Lord Jesus, and therefore hate legality, are the best doers in the world upon gospel principles. If we are not positively serving the Lord, and doing his holy will to the best of our power, we may seriously debate our interest in divine things, for trees which bear no fruit must be hewn down and cast into the fire.

And speaketh the truth in his heart. The fool in the last psalm spoke falsely in his heart; observe both here and elsewhere in the two psalms, the striking contrast. Saints not only desire to love and speak truth with their lips, but they seek to be true within; they will not lie even in the closet of their hearts, for God is there to listen; they scorn double meanings, evasions, equivocations, white lies, flatteries, and deceptions. Though truths, like roses, have thorns about them, good men wear them in their bosoms. Our heart must be the sanctuary and refuge of truth, should it be banished from all the world beside, and hunted from among men; at all risk we must entertain the angel of truth, for truth is God's daughter. We must be careful that the heart is really fixed and settled in principle, for tenderness of conscience toward truthfulness, like the bloom on a peach, needs gentle handling, and once lost it were hard to regain it. Jesus was the mirror of sincerity and holiness. Oh, to be more and more fashioned after his similitude!
3 He that backbiteth not with his tongue, nor doeth evil to his neighbour, nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour.

15:3 After the positive comes the negative.

He that backbiteth not with his tongue. There is a sinful way of backbiting with the heart when we think too hardly of a neighbour, but it is the tongue which does the mischief. Some men's tongues bite more than their teeth. The tongue is not steel, but it cuts, and it's wounds are very hard to heal; its worst wounds are not with its edge to our face, but with its back when our head is turned. Under the law, a night hawk was an unclean bird, and its human image is abominable everywhere. All slanderers are the devil's bellows to blow up contention, but those are the worst which blow at the back of the fire.

Nor doeth evil to his neighbour. He who bridles his tongue will not give a license to his hand. Loving our neighbour as ourselves will make us jealous of his good name, careful not to injure his estate, or by ill example to corrupt his character.

Nor taketh up a reproach against his neighbour. He is a fool if not a knave who picks up stolen goods and harbors them; in slander as well as robbery, the receiver is as bad as the thief. If there were not gratified hearers of ill reports, there would be an end of the trade of spreading them. John Trapp (1611-1669) says, that "the tale-bearer carrieth the devil in his tongue, and the tale-hearer carries the devil in his ear." The original may be translated, "endureth," implying that it is a sin to endure or tolerate tale-bearers. "Show that man out!" we should say of a drunkard, yet it is very questionable if his unmanly behaviour will do us so much mischief as the tale-bearers insinuating story. "Call for a policeman!" we say if we see a thief at his business; ought we to feel no indignation when we hear a gossip at her work? Mad dog! Mad dog!! is a terrible hue and cry, but there are few curs whose bite is so dangerous as a busybody's tongue. Fire! Fire!! is an alarming note, but the tale-bearer's tongue is set on fire of hell, and those who indulge it had better mend their manners, or they may find that there is fire in hell for unbridled tongues. Our Lord spake evil of no man, but breathed a prayer for his foes; we must be like him, or we shall never be with him.

4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the LORD. He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not.

15:4 In whose eyes a vile person is contemned; but he honoureth them that fear the Lord. We must be as honest in paying respect as in paying our bills. Honour to whom honour is due. To all good men we owe a debt of honour, and we have no right to hand over what is their due to vile persons who happen to be in high places. When base men are in office, it is our duty to respect the office; but we cannot so violate our consciences as to do otherwise than contemn the men; and on the other hand, when true saints are in poverty and distress, we must sympathize with their afflictions and honour the men none the less. We may honour the roughest cabinet for the sake of the jewels, but we must not prize false gems because of their setting. A sinner in a gold chain and silken robes is no more to be compared with a saint in rags than a rush light in a silver candlestick with the sun behind a cloud. The proverb says, that "ugly women, finely dressed, are the uglier for it," and so mean men in high estate are the more mean because of it.
He that sweareth to his own hurt, and changeth not. Scriptural saints under the New Testament rule "swear not at all," but their word is as good as an oath: those men of God who think it right to swear, are careful and prayerful lest they should even seem to overshoot the mark. When engagements have been entered into which turn out to be unprofitable, "the saints are men of honour still." Our blessed Surety swore to his own hurt, but how gloriously he stood to his suretyship! What a comfort to us that he changeth not, and what an example to us to be scrupulously and precisely exact in fulfilling our covenants with others! The most far-seeing trader may enter into engagements which turn out to be serious losses, but whatsoever else he loses, if he keeps his honour, his losses will be bearable; if that be lost all is lost.

5 He that putteth not out his money to usury, nor taketh reward against the innocent. He that doeth these things shall never be moved.

15:5 He that putteth not out his money to usury. Usury was and is hateful both to God and man. That a lender should share with the borrower in gains made by his money is most fitting and proper; but that the man of property should eat up the poor wretch who unfortunately obtained a loan of him is abominable. Those who grind poor tradesmen, needy widows, and such like, by charging them interest at intolerable rates, will find that their gold, and their silver are cankered. The man who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord must shake off this sin as Paul shook the viper into the fire.

Nor taketh reward against the innocent. Bribery is a sin both in the giver and the receiver. It was frequently practiced in Eastern courts of justice; that form of it is now under our excellent judges almost an unheard-of thing; yet the sin survives in various forms, which the reader needs not that we should mention; and under every shape it is loathsome to the true man of God. He remembers that Jesus instead of taking reward against the innocent died for the guilty.

15:5 He that doeth these things shall never be moved. No storm shall tear him from his foundations, drag him from his anchorage, or uproot him from his place.

Like the Lord Jesus, whose dominion is everlasting, the true Christian shall never lose his crown. He shall not only be on Zion, but like Zion, fixed and firm. He shall dwell in the tabernacle of the Most High, and neither death nor judgment shall remove him from his place of privilege and blessedness. Let us betake ourselves to prayer and self-examination, for this Psalm is as fire for the gold, and as a furnace for silver. Can we endure its testing power?

Psalm 16

Michtam of David

TITLE. Michtam of David. This is usually understood to mean THE GOLDEN PSALM, and such a title is most appropriate, for the matter is as the most fine gold. Ainsworth calls it "David's jewel, or notable song." Dr. Robert Hawker (1753-1827), who is always alive to
passages full of savour, devoutly cries, "Some have rendered it precious, others golden, and others, precious jewel; and as the Holy Ghost, by the apostles Peter and Paul, hath shown us that it is all about the Lord Jesus Christ, what is here said of him is precious, is golden, is a jewel indeed!" We have not met with the term Michtam before, but if spared to write upon Psalms 56, 57, 58, 59, and 60, we shall see it again, and shall observe that like the present these psalms, although they begin with prayer, and imply trouble, abound in holy confidence and close with songs of assurance as to ultimate safety and joy. Dr. Alexander, whose notes are peculiarly valuable, thinks that the word is most probably a simple derivative of a word signifying to hide, and signifies a secret or mystery, and indicates the depth of doctrinal and spiritual import in these sacred compositions. If this be the true interpretation it well accords with the other, and when the two are put together, they make up a name which every reader will remember, and which will bring the precious subject at once to mind. THE PSALM OF THE PRECIOUS SECRET.

SUBJECT. We are not left to human interpreters for the key to this golden mystery, for, speaking by the Holy Ghost, Peter tells us, "David speaketh concerning HIM." (Acts 2:25.) Further on in his memorable sermon he said, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ, that his soul was not left in hell, neither his flesh did see corruption." (Acts 2:29-31.)

Nor is this our only guide, for the apostle Paul, led by the same infallible inspiration, quotes from this psalm, and testifies that David wrote of the man through whom is preached unto us the forgiveness of sins. (Acts 13:35-38.) It has been the usual plan of commentators to apply the psalm both to David, to the saints, and to the Lord Jesus, but we will venture to believe that in it "Christ is all;" since in the ninth and tenth verses, like the apostles on the mount, we can see "no man but Jesus only."

DIVISION. The whole is so compact that it is difficult to draw sharp lines of division. It may suffice to note our Lord's prayer of faith, verse 1, avowal of faith in Jehovah alone, 2, 3, 4, 5, the contentment of his faith in the present, 6, 7, and the joyous confidence of his faith for the future (8, 11).

1 Preserve me, O God: for in thee do I put my trust.

16:1 Preserve me, keep, or save me, or as Samuel Horsley (1733-1806) thinks, "guard me," even as bodyguards surround their monarch, or as shepherds protect their flocks. Tempted in all points like as we are, the manhood of Jesus needed to be preserved from the power of evil; and though in itself pure, the Lord Jesus did not confide in that purity of nature, but as an example to his followers, looked to the Lord, his God, for preservation. One of the great names of God is "the Preserver of men," (Job 7:20,) and this gracious office the Father exercised towards our Mediator and Representative. It had been promised to the Lord Jesus in express words, that he should be preserved, Isaiah 49:7, 8. "Thus saith the Lord, the Redeemer of Israel and his Holy One, to him whom man despiseth, to him whom the nation abhorreth, I will preserve thee, and give thee for a covenant of the people." This promise was to the letter fulfilled, both by providential deliverance and sustaining power, in the case of our Lord. Being preserved himself, he is able to restore the preserved of Israel, for we are "preserved in Christ Jesus and called." As
one with him, the elect were preserved in his preservation, and we may view this mediatorial supplication as the petition of the Great High Priest for all those who are in him. The intercession recorded in John 17 is but an amplification of this cry, "Holy Father, keep through thine own name those whom thou hast given me, that they may be one, as we are." When he says, "preserve me," he means his members, his mystical body, himself, and all in him. But while we rejoice in the fact that the Lord Jesus used this prayer for his members, we must not forget that he employed it most surely for himself; he had so emptied himself, and so truly taken upon him the form of a servant, that as man he needed divine keeping even as we do, and often cried unto the strong for strength. Frequently on the mountain-top he breathed forth this desire, and on one occasion in almost the same words, he publicly prayed, "Father, save me from this hour." (John 12:27.) If Jesus looked out of himself for protection, how much more must we, his erring followers, do so!

Error! Bookmark not defined.**O God.** The word for God here used is EL (Heb.), by which name the Lord Jesus, when under a sense of great weakness, as for instance when upon the cross, was wont to address the Mighty God, the Omnipotent Helper of his people. We, too, may turn to El, the Omnipotent One, in all hours of peril, with the confidence that he who heard the strong crying and tears of our faithful High Priest, is both able and willing to bless us in him. It is well to study the name and character of God, so that in our straits we may know how and by what title to address our Father who is in heaven.

**For in thee do I put my trust,** or, *I have taken shelter in thee.* As chickens run beneath the hen, so do I betake myself to thee. Thou art my great overshadowing Protector, and I have taken refuge beneath thy strength. This is a potent argument in pleading, and our Lord knew not only how to *use* it with God, but how to yield to its power when wielded by others upon himself. "According to thy faith be it done unto thee," is a great rule of heaven in dispensing favour, and when we can sincerely declare that we exercise faith in the Mighty God with regard to the mercy which we seek, we may rest assured that our plea will prevail. Faith, like the sword of Saul, never returns empty; it overcomes heaven when held in the hand of prayer. As the Saviour prayed, so let us pray, and as he became more than a conqueror, so shall we also through him; let us when buffeted by storms right bravely cry to the Lord as he did, "in thee do I put my trust."

2 **O my soul,** thou hast said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my Lord: my goodness *extendeth* not to thee;

16:2 **O my soul, thou hast said unto the Lord, Thou art my Lord.** In his inmost heart the Lord Jesus bowed himself to do service to his Heavenly Father, and before the throne of Jehovah his soul vowed allegiance to the Lord for our sakes. We are like him when our soul, truly and constantly in the presence of the heart-searching God, declares her full consent to the rule and government of the Infinite Jehovah, saying, *"Thou art my Lord."* To avow this with the lip is little, but for the soul to say it, especially in times of trial, is a gracious evidence of spiritual health; to profess it before men is a small matter, but to declare it before Jehovah himself is of far more consequence. This sentence may also be viewed as the utterance of appropriating faith, laying hold upon the Lord by personal covenant and enjoyment; in this sense may it be our daily song in the house of our pilgrimage.
**My goodness extendeth not to thee.** The work of our Lord Jesus was not needful on account of any necessity in the Divine Being. Jehovah would have been inconceivably glorious had the human race perished, and had no atonement been offered. Although the life-work and death-agony of the Son did reflect unparalleled luster upon every attribute of God, yet the Most Blessed and Infinitely Happy God stood in no need of the obedience and death of his Son; it was for our sakes that the work of redemption was undertaken, and not because of any lack or want on the part of the Most High. How modestly does the Saviour here estimate his own goodness! What overwhelming reasons have we for imitating his humility! "If thou be righteous, what givest thou him? or what receiveth he of thine hand?" (Job 35:7.)

3 *But* to the saints that are in the earth, and to the excellent, in whom is all my delight.

**16:3 But to the saints that are in the earth.** These sanctified ones, although still upon the earth, partake of the results of Jesus' mediatorial work, and by his goodness are made what they are. The peculiar people, zealous for good works, and hallowed to sacred service, are arrayed in the Savior's righteousness and washed in his blood, and so receive of the goodness treasured up in him; these are the persons who are profited by the work of the man Christ Jesus; but that work added nothing to the nature, virtue, or happiness of God, who is blessed for evermore. How much more forcibly is this true of us, poor unworthy servants not fit to be mentioned in comparison with the faithful Son of God! Our hope must ever be that haply some poor child of God may be served by us, for the Great Father can never need our aid. Well may we sing the verses of Dr. Isaac Watts (1674-1748):

"Oft have my heart and tongue confess'd
How empty and how poor I am;
My praise can never make thee blest,
Nor add new glories to thy name.

Yet, Lord, thy saints on earth may reap
Some profit by the good we do;
These are the company I keep,
These are the choicest friends I know."

Poor believers are God's receivers, and have a warrant from the Crown to receive the revenue of our offerings in the King's name. Saints departed we cannot bless; even prayer for them is of no service; but while they are here we should practically prove our love to them, even as our Master did, for they are *the excellent of the earth*. Despite their infirmities, their Lord thinks highly of them, and reckons them to be as nobles among men. The title of "His Excellency" more properly belongs to the meanest saint than to the greatest governor. The true aristocracy are believers in Jesus. They are the only Right Honorable. Stars and garters are poor distinctions compared with the graces of the Spirit. He who knows them best says of them,

**in whom is all my delight.** They are his Hephzibah and his land Beulah, and before all worlds his delights were with these chosen sons of men. Their own opinion of themselves is far other than their Beloved's opinion of them; they count themselves to be less than nothing, yet he makes much of them, and sets his heart towards them. What wonders the eyes of Divine Love can see
where the Hands of Infinite Power have been graciously at work. It was this quick-sighted affection which led Jesus to see in us a recompense for all his agony, and sustained him under all his sufferings by the joy of redeeming us from going down into the pit.

4 Their sorrows shall be multiplied that hasten after another god: their drink offerings of blood will I not offer, nor take up their names into my lips.

16:4 The same loving heart which opens towards the chosen people is fast closed against those who continue in their rebellion against God. Jesus hates all wickedness, and especially the high crime of idolatry. The text while it shows our Lord's abhorrence of sin, shows also the sinner's greediness after it. Professed believers are often slow towards the true Lord, but sinners hasten after another god. They run like madmen where we creep like snails. Let their zeal rebuke our tardiness. Yet theirs is a case in which the more they haste the worse they speed, for their sorrows are multiplied by their diligence in multiplying their sins. Matthew Henry pithily says,

_They that multiply gods multiply griefs to themselves; for whosoever thinks one god too little, will find two too many, and yet hundreds not enough._ The cruelties and hardships which men endure for their false gods is wonderful to contemplate; our missionary reports are a noteworthy comment on this passage; but perhaps our own experience is an equally vivid exposition; for when we have given our heart to idols, sooner or later we have had to smart for it. Near the roots of our self-love all our sorrows lie, and when that idol is overthrown, the sting is gone from grief. Moses broke the golden calf and ground it to powder, and cast it into the water of which he made Israel to drink, and so shall our cherished idols become bitter portions for us, unless we at once forsake them. Our Lord had no selfishness; he served but one Lord, and served him only. As for those who turn aside from Jehovah, he was separate from them, bearing their reproach without the camp. Sin and the Saviour had no communion. He came to destroy, not to patronize or be allied with the works of the devil. Hence he refused the testimony of unclean spirits as to his divinity, for in nothing would he have fellowship with darkness. We should be careful above measure not to connect ourselves in the remotest degree with falsehood in religion; even the most solemn of Popish rites we must abhor.

"Their drink offerings of blood will I not offer." The old proverb says, "It is not safe to eat at the devil's mess, though the spoon be never so long." The mere mentioning of ill names it were well to avoid, —

"nor take up their names into my lips." If we allow poison upon the lip, it may ere long penetrate to the inwards, and it is well to keep out of the mouth that which we would shut out from the heart. If the church would enjoy union with Christ, she must break all the bonds of impiety, and keep herself pure from all the pollutions of carnal will-worship, which now pollute the service of God. Some professors are guilty of great sin in remaining in the communion of Popish churches, where God is as much dishonored as in Rome herself, only in a more crafty manner.

5 The LORD is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup: thou maintainest my lot.
16:5 The Lord is the portion of mine inheritance and of my cup. With what confidence and bounding joy does Jesus turn to Jehovah, whom his soul possessed and delighted in! Content beyond measure with his portion in the Lord his God, he had not a single desire with which to hunt after other gods; his cup was full, and his heart was full too; even in his sorest sorrows he still laid hold with both his hands upon his Father, crying, "My God, my God;" he had not so much as a thought of falling down to worship the prince of this world, although tempted with an "all these will I give thee." We, too, can make our boast in the Lord; he is the meat and the drink of our souls. He is our portion, supplying all our necessities, and our cup yielding royal luxuries; our cup in this life, and our inheritance in the life to come. As children of the Father who is in heaven, we inherit, by virtue of our joint heirship with Jesus, all the riches of the covenant of grace; and the portion which falls to us sets upon our table the bread of heaven and the new wine of the kingdom. Who would not be satisfied with such dainty diet? Our shallow cup of sorrow we may well drain with resignation, since the deep cup of love stands side by side with it, and will never be empty.

Thou maintainest my lot. Some tenants have a covenant in their leases that they themselves shall maintain and uphold, but in our case Jehovah himself maintains our lot. Our Lord Jesus delighted in this truth, that the Father was on his side, and would maintain his right against all the wrongs of men. He knew that his elect would be reserved for him, and that almighty power would preserve them as his lot and reward for ever. Let us also be glad, because the Judge of all the earth will vindicate our righteous cause.

6 The lines are fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage.

16:6 Jesus found the way of obedience to lead into "pleasant places." Notwithstanding all the sorrows which marred his countenance, he exclaimed, "Lo, I come; in the volume of the book it is written of me, I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart." It may seem strange, but while no other man was ever so thoroughly acquainted with grief, it is our belief that no other man ever experienced so much joy and delight in service, for no other served so faithfully and with such great results in view as his recompense of reward. The joy which was set before him must have sent some of its beams of splendor a-down the rugged places where he endured the cross, despising the shame, and must have made them in some respects pleasant places to the generous heart of the Redeemer. At any rate, we know that Jesus was well content with the blood-bought portion which the lines of electing love marked off as his spoil with the strong and his portion with the great. Therein he solaced himself on earth, and delights himself in heaven; and he asks no more "GOODLY HERITAGE" than that his own beloved may be with him where he is and behold his glory. All the saints can use the language of this verse, and the more thoroughly they can enter into its contented, grateful, joyful spirit the better for themselves, and the more glorious to their God. Our Lord was poorer than we are, for he had not where to lay his head, and yet when he mentioned his poverty he never used a word of murmuring; discontented spirits are as unlike Jesus as the croaking raven is unlike the cooing dove. Martyrs have been happy in dungeons. "From the delectable orchard of the Leonine prison the Italian martyr dated his letter, and the presence of God made the gridiron of Laurence pleasant to him." Mr. Greenham was bold enough to say, "They never felt God's love, or tasted forgiveness of sin, who are discontented." Some divines think that discontent was the first sin, the rock which
wrecked our race in paradise; certainly there can be no paradise where this evil spirit has power, its slime will poison all the flowers of the garden.

7 I will bless the LORD, who hath given me counsel: my reins also instruct me in the night seasons.

16:7 I will bless the Lord, who hath given me counsel. Praise as well as prayer was presented to the Father by our Lord Jesus, and we are not truly his followers unless our resolve be, "I will bless the Lord." Jesus is called Wonderful, Counselor, but as man he spake not of himself, but as his Father had taught him. Read in confirmation of this, John 7:16; 8:28; and 12:49, 50; and the prophecy concerning him in Isaiah 11:2, 3. It was our Redeemer's wont to repair to his Father for direction, and having received it, he blessed him for giving him counsel. It would be well for us if we would follow his example of lowliness, cease from trusting in our own understanding, and seek to be guided by the Spirit of God.

My reins also instruct me in the night seasons. By the reins understand the inner man, the affections and feelings. The communion of the soul with God brings to it an inner spiritual wisdom which in still seasons is revealed to itself. Our Redeemer spent many nights alone upon the mountain, and we may readily conceive that together with his fellowship with heaven, he carried on a profitable commerce with himself; reviewing his experience, forecasting his work, and considering his position. Great generals fight their battles in their own mind long before the trumpet sounds, and so did our Lord win our battle on his knees before he gained it on the cross. It is a gracious habit after taking counsel from above to take counsel within. Wise men see more with their eyes shut by night than fools can see by day with their eyes open. He who learns from God and so gets the seed, will soon find wisdom within himself growing in the garden of his soul; "Thine ears shall hear a voice behind thee, saying, This is the way, walk ye in it, when ye turn to the right hand and when ye turn to the left." The night season which the sinner chooses for his sins is the hallowed hour of quiet when believers hear the soft still voices of heaven, and of the heavenly life within themselves.

8 I have set the LORD always before me: because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved.

16:8 The fear of death at one time cast its dark shadow over the soul of the Redeemer, and we read that, "he was heard in that he feared." There appeared unto him an angel, strengthening him; perhaps the heavenly messenger reassured him of his glorious resurrection as his people's surety, and of the eternal joy into which he should admit the flock redeemed by blood. Then hope shone full upon our Lord's soul, and, as recorded in these verses, he surveyed the future with holy confidence because he had a continued eye to Jehovah, and enjoyed his perpetual presence. He felt that, thus sustained, he could never be driven from his life's grand design; nor was he, for he stayed not his hand till he could say, "It is finished." What an infinite mercy was this for us! In this immovableness, caused by simple faith in the divine help, Jesus is to be viewed as our exemplar; to recognize the presence of the Lord is the duty of every believer;
I have set the Lord always before me; and to trust the Lord as our champion and guard is the privilege of every saint;

because he is at my right hand, I shall not be moved. The apostle translates this passage, "I foresaw the Lord always before my face;” Acts 2:25; the eye of Jesus’ faith could discern beforehand the continuance of divine support to his suffering Son, in such a degree that he should never be moved from the accomplishment of his purpose of redeeming his people. By the power of God at his right hand he foresaw that he should smite through all who rose up against him, and on that power he placed the firmest reliance.

9 Therefore my heart is glad, and my glory rejoiceth: my flesh also shall rest in hope.

16:9 He clearly foresaw that he must die, for he speaks of his flesh resting, and of his soul in the abode of separate spirits; death was full before his face, or he would not have mentioned corruption; but such was his devout reliance upon his God, that he sang over the tomb, and rejoiced in vision of the sepulchre. He knew that the visit of his soul to Sheol, or the invisible world of disembodied spirits, would be a very short one, and that his body in a very brief space would leave the grave, uninjured by its sojourn there; all this made him say,

my heart is glad, and moved his tongue, the glory of his frame, to rejoice in God, the strength of his salvation. Oh, for such holy faith in the prospect of trial and of death! It is the work of faith, not merely to create a peace which passeth all understanding, but to fill the heart full of gladness until the tongue, which, as the organ of an intelligent creature, is our glory, bursts forth in notes of harmonious praise. Faith gives us living joy, and bestows dying rest.

My flesh also shall rest in hope.

16:10 Our Lord Jesus was not disappointed in his hope. He declared his Father's faithfulness in the words,

thou wilt not leave my soul in hell, and that faithfulness was proven on the resurrection morning. Among the departed and disembodied Jesus was not left; he had believed in the resurrection, and he received it on the third day, when his body rose in glorious life, according as he had said in joyous confidence,

neither wilt thou suffer thine Holy One to see corruption. Into the outer prison of the grave his body might go, but into the inner prison of corruption he could not enter. He who in soul and body was pre-eminently God's "Holy One," was loosed from the pains of death, because it was not possible that he should be holden of it. This is noble encouragement to all the saints; die they must, but rise they shall, and though in their case they shall see corruption, yet they shall rise to everlasting life. Christ's resurrection is the cause, the earnest, the guarantee, and the emblem of
the rising of all his people. Let them, therefore, go to their graves as to their beds, resting their flesh among the clods as they now do upon their couches.

"Since Jesus is mine,
I'll not fear undressing,
But gladly put off these
   garments of clay;
To die in the Lord is
   a covenant blessing,
Since Jesus to glory through
dead led the way."

Wretched will that man be who, when the Philistines of death invade his soul, shall find that, like Saul, he is forsaken of God; but blessed is he who has the Lord at his right hand, for he shall fear no ill, but shall look forward to an eternity of bliss.

11 Thou wilt shew me the path of life: in thy presence is fullness of joy; at thy right hand there are pleasures for evermore.

16:11 **Thou wilt shew me the path of life.** To Jesus first this way was shown, for he is the first begotten from the dead, the first-born of every creature. He himself opened up the way through his own flesh, and then trod it as the forerunner of his own redeemed. The thought of being made the path of life to his people, gladdened the soul of Jesus.

**In thy presence is fullness of joy.** Christ being raised from the dead ascended into glory, to dwell in constant nearness to God, where joy is at its full for ever: the foresight of this urged him onward in his glorious but grievous toil. To bring his chosen to eternal happiness was the high ambition which inspired him, and made him wade through a sea of blood. O God, when a worldling's mirth has all expired, for ever with Jesus may we dwell at thy right hand, where there are pleasures for evermore; and meanwhile, may we have an earnest by tasting thy love below. John Trapp's (1611-1669) note on the heavenly verse which closes the Psalm is a sweet morsel, which may serve for a contemplation, and yield a foretaste of our inheritance. He writes, "Here is as much said as can be, but words are too weak to utter it. For quality there is in heaven joy and pleasures; for quantity, a fullness, a torrent whereat they drink without let or loathing; for constancy, it is at God's right hand, who is stronger than all, neither can any take us out of his hand; it is a constant happiness without intermission: and for perpetuity it is for evermore. Heaven's joys are without measure, mixture, or end."
Psalm 17

A Prayer of David

TITLE and SUBJECT. A prayer of David. David would not have been a man after God's own heart, if he had not been a man of prayer. He was a master in the sacred art of supplication. He flies to prayer in all times of need, as a pilot speeds to the harbor in the stress of tempest. So frequent were David's prayers that they could not be all dated and entitled; and hence this simply bears the author's name, and nothing more. The smell of the furnace is upon the present psalm, but there is evidence in the last verse that he who wrote it came unharmed out of the flame. We have in the present plaintive song, AN APPEAL TO HEAVEN from the persecutions of earth. A spiritual eye may see Jesus here.
DIVISIONS. There are no very clear lines of demarcation between the parts; but we prefer the division adopted by that precious old commentator, David Dickson. In verses 1-4, David craves justice in the controversy between him and his oppressors. In verses 5 and 6, he requests of the Lord grace to act rightly while under the trial. From verse 7-12, he seeks protection from his foes, whom he graphically describes; and in verses 13 and 14, pleads that they may be disappointed; closing the whole in the most comfortable confidence that all would certainly be well with himself at the last.

1 Hear the right, O LORD, attend unto my cry, give ear unto my prayer, that goeth not out of feigned lips.

17: 1. **Hear the right, O Lord.** He that has the worst cause makes the most noise; hence the oppressed soul is apprehensive that its voice may be drowned, and therefore pleads in this one verse for a hearing no less than three times. The troubled heart craves for the ear of the great Judge, persuaded that with him to hear is to redress. If our God could not or would not hear us, our state would be deplorable indeed; and yet some professors set such small store by the mercy-seat, that God does not hear them for the simple reason that they neglect to plead. As well have no house if we persist like gypsies in living in the lanes and commons; as well have no mercy-seat as be always defending our own cause and never going to God. There is more fear that we will not hear the Lord than that the Lord will not hear us.

"Hear the right;" it is well if our case is good in itself and can be urged as a right one, for right shall never be wronged by our righteous Judge; but if our suit be marred by our infirmities, it is a great privilege that we may make mention of the righteousness of our Lord Jesus, which is ever prevalent on high. Right has a voice which Jehovah always hears; and if my wrongs clamor against me with great force and fury, I will pray the Lord to hear that still louder and mightier voice of the right, and the rights of his dear Son.

"Hear, O God, the Just One;" i.e., "hear the Messiah," is a rendering adopted by Jerome, and admired by Bishop Horsley, whether correct or not as a translation, it is proper enough as a plea. Let the reader plead it at the throne of the righteous God, even when all other arguments are unavailing.

**Attend unto my cry.** This shows the vehemence and earnestness of the petitioner; he is no mere talker, he weeps and laments. Who can resist a cry? A real hearty, bitter, piteous cry, might almost melt a rock, there can be no fear of its prevalence with our heavenly Father. A cry is our earliest utterance, and in many ways the most natural of human sounds; if our prayer should like the infant's cry be more natural than intelligent, and more earnest than elegant, it will be none the less eloquent with God. There is a mighty power in a child's cry to prevail with a parent's heart.

**Give ear unto my prayer.** Some repetitions are not vain. The reduplication here used is neither superstition nor tautology, but is like the repeated blow of a hammer hitting the same nail on the head to fix it the more effectually, or the continued knocking of a beggar at the gate who cannot be denied an alms.

**That goeth not out of feigned lips.** Sincerity is a sine qua non in prayer. Lips of deceit are detestable to man and much more to God. In intercourse so hallowed as that of prayer, hypocrisy
even in the remotest degree is as fatal as it is foolish. Hypocritical piety is double iniquity. He who would feign and flatter had better try his craft with a fool like himself, for to deceive the all-seeing One is as impossible as to take the moon in a net, or to lead the sun into a snare. He who would deceive God is himself already most grossly deceived. Our sincerity in prayer has no merit in it, any more than the earnestness of a mendicant in the street; but at the same time the Lord has regard to it, through Jesus, and will not long refuse his ear to an honest and fervent petitioner.

2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence; let thine eyes behold the things that are equal.

17:2 Let my sentence come forth from thy presence. The psalmist has now grown bold by the strengthening influence of prayer, and he now entreats the Judge of all the earth to give sentence upon his case. He has been libeled, basely and maliciously libeled; and having brought his action before the highest court, he, like an innocent man, has no desire to escape the enquiry, but even invites and sues for judgment. He does not ask for secrecy, but would have the result come forth to the world. He would have sentence pronounced and executed forthwith. In some matters we may venture to be as bold as this; but except we can plead something better than our own supposed innocence, it were terrible presumption thus to challenge the judgment of a sin-hating God. With Jesus as our complete and all-glorious righteousness we need not fear, though the day of judgment should commence at once, and hell open her mouth at our feet, but might joyfully prove the truth of our hymn writer's holy boast—

"Bold shall I stand in that great day;  
For who aught to my charge shall lay?  
While, through thy blood, absolved I am,  
From sin's tremendous curse and shame."

Let thine eyes behold the things that are equal. Believers do not desire any other judge than God, or to be excused from judgment, or even to be judged on principles of partiality. No; our hope does not lie in the prospect of favoritism from God, and the consequent suspension of his law; we expect to be judged on the same principals as other men, and through the blood and righteousness of our Redeemer we shall pass the ordeal unscathed. The Lord will weigh us in the scales of justice fairly and justly; he will not use false weights to permit us to escape, but with the sternest equity those balances will be used upon us as well as upon others; and with our blessed Lord Jesus as our all in all we tremble not, for we shall not be found wanting. In David's case, he felt his cause to be so right that he simply desired the Divine eyes to rest upon the matter, and he was confident that equity would give him all that he needed.

3 Thou hast proved mine heart; thou hast visited me in the night; thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing; I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress.

17:3 Thou hast proved mine heart. Like Peter, David uses the argument, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee." It is a most assuring thing to be able to appeal at once to
the Lord, and call upon our Judge to be a witness for our defense. "Beloved, if our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence toward God."

"Thou hast visited me in the night." As if he had said, "Lord, thou hast entered my house at all hours; and thou hast seen me when no one else was nigh; thou hast come upon me unawares and marked my unrestrained actions, and thou knowest whether or no I am guilty of the crimes laid at my door." Happy man who can thus remember the omniscient eye, and the omnipresent visitor, and find comfort in the remembrance. We hope we have had our midnight visits from our Lord, and truly they are sweet; so sweet that the recollection of them sets us longing for more of such condescending communings. Lord, if indeed, we had been hypocrites, should we have had such fellowship, or feel such hungerings after a renewal of it?

Thou hast tried me, and shalt find nothing. Surely the Psalmist means nothing hypocritical or wicked in the sense in which his slanderers accused him; for if the Lord should put the best of his people into the crucible, the dross would be a fearful sight, and would make penitence open her sluices wide. Assayers very soon detect the presence of alloy, and when the chief of all assayers shall, at the last, say of us he has found nothing, it will be a glorious hour indeed—"They are without fault before the throne of God." Even here, as viewed in our covenant Head, the Lord sees no sin in Jacob, nor perverseness in Israel; even the all-detecting glance of Omniscience can see no flaw where the great Substitute covers all with beauty and perfection.

I am purposed that my mouth shall not transgress. Oh those sad lips of ours! we had need purpose to purpose if we would keep them from exceeding their bounds. The number of diseases of the tongue is as many as the diseases of all the rest of the man put together, and they are more invertebrate. Hands and feet one may bind, but who can fetter the lips? Iron bands may hold a madman, but what chains can restrain the tongue? It needs more than a purpose to keep this nimble offender within its proper range. Lion-taming and serpent-charming are not to be mentioned in the same day as tongue-taming, for the tongue can no man tame. Those who have to smart from the falsehoods of others should be the more jealous over themselves; perhaps this led the Psalmist to register this holy resolution; and, moreover, he intended thereby to aver that if he had said too much in his own defense, it was not intentional, for he desired in all-respects to tune his lips to the sweet and simple music of truth. Notwithstanding all this David was slandered, as if to show us that the purest innocence will be bemired by malice. There is no sunshine without a shadow, no ripe fruit unpecked by the birds.

4 Concerning the works of men, by the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer.

17:4 Concerning the works of men. While we are in the midst of men we shall have their works thrust under our notice, and we shall be compelled to keep a corner of our diary headed "concerning the works of men." To be quite clear from the dead works of carnal humanity is the devout desire of souls who are quickened by the Holy Spirit.

By the word of thy lips I have kept me from the paths of the destroyer. He had kept the highway of Scripture, and not chosen the bye-paths of malice. We should soon imitate the example of the worst of men if the grace of God did not use the Word of God as the great preservative from evil.
The paths of the destroyer have often tempted us; we have been prompted to become destroyers too, when we have been sorely provoked, and resentment has grown warm; but we have remembered the example of our Lord, who would not call fire from heaven upon his enemies, but meekly prayed, “Father, forgive them.” All the ways of sin are the paths of Satan, —the Apollyon or Abaddon, both of which words signify the destroyer. Foolish indeed are those who give their hearts to the old murderer, because for the time he panders to their evil desires. That heavenly Book which lies neglected on many a shelf is the only guide for those who would avoid the enticing and entangling mazes of sin; and it is the best means of preserving the youthful pilgrim from ever treading those dangerous ways. We must follow the one or the other; the Book of Life, or the way of death; the word of the Holy Spirit, or the suggestion of the Evil Spirit. David could urge as the proof of his sincerity that he had no part or lot with the ungodly in their ruinous ways. How can we venture to plead our cause with God, unless we also can wash our hands clean of all connection with the enemies of the Great King?

5 Hold up my goings in thy paths, that my footsteps slip not.

17:5 Under trial it is not easy to behave ourselves aright; a candle is not easily kept alight when many envious mouths are puffing at it. In evil times prayer is peculiarly needful, and wise men resort to it at once. Plato said to one of his disciples, “When men speak ill of thee, live so that no one will believe them;” good enough advice, but he did not tell us how to carry it out. We have a precept here incorporated in an example; if we would be preserved, we must cry to the Preserver, and enlist divine support upon our side.

_Hold up my goings_—as a careful driver holds up his horse when going down hill. We have all sorts of paces, both fast and slow, and the road is never long of one sort, but with God to hold up our goings, nothing in the pace or in the road can cast down. He who has been down once and cut his knees sadly, even to the bone, had need redouble his zeal when using this prayer; and all of us, since we are so weak on our legs through Adam's fall, had need use it every hour of the day. If a perfect father fell, how shall an imperfect son dare to boast?

_In thy paths._ Forsaking Satan's paths, he prayed to be upheld in God's paths. We cannot keep from evil without keeping to good. If the bushel be not full of wheat, it may soon be once more full of chaff. In all the appointed ordinances and duties of our most holy faith, may the Lord enable us to run through his upholding grace!

_That my footsteps slip not._ What! Slip in God's ways? Yes, the road is good, but our feet are evil, and therefore slip, even on the King's highway. Who wonders if carnal men slide and fall in ways of their own choosing, which like the vale of Siddim, are full of deadly slime-pits? One may trip over an ordinance as well as over a temptation. Jesus Christ himself is a stumbling-block to some, and the doctrines of grace have been the occasion of offence to many. Grace alone can hold up our goings in the paths of truth.

6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God: incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech.
17:6 I have called upon thee, for thou wilt hear me, O God. Thou hast always heard me, O my Lord, and therefore I have the utmost confidence in again approaching thine altar. Experience is a blessed teacher. He who has tried the faithfulness of God in hours of need, has great boldness in laying his case before the throne. The well of Bethlehem, from which we drew such cooling draughts in years gone by, our souls long for still; nor will we leave it for the broken cisterns of earth.

Incline thine ear unto me, and hear my speech. Stoop out of heaven and put thine ear to my mouth; give me thine ear all to myself, as men do when they lean over to catch every word from their friend. The Psalmist here comes back to his first prayer, and thus sets us an example of pressing our suit again and again, until we have a full assurance that we have succeeded.

7 Shew thy marvelous lovingkindness, O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them.

17:7 Shew thy marvelous lovingkindness. Marvelous in its antiquity, its distinguishing character, its faithfulness, its immutability, and above all, marvelous in the wonders which it works. That marvelous grace which has redeemed us with the precious blood of God's only begotten, is here invoked to come to the rescue. That grace is sometimes hidden; the text says, "Shew it." Present enjoyments of divine love are matchless cordials to support fainting hearts. Believer, what a prayer is this! Consider it well. O Lord, shew thy marvelous lovingkindness; shew it to my intellect, and remove my ignorance; shew it to my heart, and revive my gratitude; shew it to my faith, and renew my confidence; shew it to my experience, and deliver me from all my fears. The original word here used is the same which in Psalm 4:3 is rendered set apart, and it has the force of, Distinguish thy mercies, set them out, and set apart the choicest to be bestowed upon me in this hour of my severest affliction.

O thou that savest by thy right hand them which put their trust in thee from those that rise up against them. The title here given to our gracious God is eminently consolatory. He is the God of salvation; it is his present and perpetual habit to save believers; he puts forth his best and most glorious strength, using his right hand of wisdom and might, to save all those, of whatsoever rank or class, who trust themselves with him. Happy faith thus to secure the omnipotent protection of heaven! Blessed God, to be thus gracious to unworthy mortals, when they have but grace to rely upon thee! The right hand of God is interposed between the saints and all harm; God is never at a loss for means; his own bare hand is enough. He works without tools as well as with them.

8 Keep me as the apple of the eye, hide me under the shadow of thy wings,

17:8 Keep me as the apple of the eye. No part of the body more precious, more tender, and more carefully guarded than the eye; and of the eye, no portion more peculiarly to be protected than the central apple, the pupil, or as the Hebrew calls it, "the daughter of the eye." The all-wise Creator has placed the eye in a well-protected position; it stands surrounded by projecting bones like Jerusalem encircled by mountains. Moreover, its great Author has surrounded it with many tunics of inward covering, besides the
hedge of the eyebrows, the curtain of the eyelids, and the fence of the eyelashes; and, in addition to this, he has given to every man so high a value for his eyes, and so quick an apprehension of danger, that no member of the body is more faithfully cared for than the organ of sight. Thus, Lord, keep thou me, for I trust I am one with Jesus, and so a member of his mystical body.

*Hide me under the shadow of thy wings.* Even as the parent bird completely shields her brood from evil, and meanwhile cherishes them with the warmth of her own heart, by covering them with her wings, so do thou with me, most condescending God, for I am thine offspring, and thou hast a parent's love in perfection. This last clause is in the Hebrew in the future tense, as if to show that what the writer had asked for but a moment before he was now sure would be granted to him. Confident expectations should keep pace with earnest supplication.

9 From the wicked that oppress me, *from* my deadly enemies, *who* compass me about.

17:9 *From the wicked that oppress me, from my deadly enemies, who compass me about.* The foes from whom David sought to be rescued were wicked men. It is hopeful for us when our enemies are God's enemies. They were *deadly enemies*, whom nothing but his death would satisfy. The foes of a believer's soul are mortal foes most emphatically, for they who war against our faith aim at the very life of our life. Deadly sins are deadly enemies, and what sin is there which hath not death in its bowels? These foes oppressed David, they laid his spirit waste, as invading armies ravage a country, or as wild beasts desolate a land. He likens himself to a besieged city, and complains that his foes compass him about. It may well quicken our business upward, when all around us, every road, is blockaded by deadly foes. This is our daily position, for all around us dangers and sins are lurking. O God, do thou protect us from them all.

10 They are enclosed in their own fat: with their mouth they speak proudly.

17:10 *They are enclosed in their own fat.* Luxury and gluttony beget vainglorious fatness of heart, which shuts up its gates against all compassionate emotions and reasonable judgments. The old proverb says that full bellies make empty skulls, and it is yet more true that they frequently make empty hearts. The rankest weeds grow out of the fattest soil. Riches and self-indulgence are the fuel upon which some sins feed their flames. Pride and fullness of bread were Sodom's twin sins. (Ezekiel 16:49.) Fed hawks forget their masters; and the moon at its fullest is furthest from the sun. Eglon was a notable instance that a well-fed corporation is no security to life, when a sharp message comes from God, addressed to the inward vitals of the body.

*With their mouth they speak proudly.* He who adores himself, will have no heart to adore the Lord. Full of selfish pleasure within his heart, the wicked man fills his mouth with boastful and arrogant expressions. Prosperity and vanity often lodge together. Woe to the fed ox when it bellows at its owner, the poleax is not far off.

11 They have now compassed us in our steps: they have set their eyes bowing down to the earth;
They have now compassed us in our steps. The fury of the ungodly is aimed not at one believer alone, but at all the band; they have compassed us. All the race of the Jews were but a morsel for Haman's hungry revenge, and all because of one Mordecai. The prince of darkness hates all the saints for their Master's sake. The Lord Jesus is one of the us, and herein is our hope. He is the Breaker, and will clear a way for us through the hosts which environ us. The hatred of the powers of evil is continuous and energetic, for they watch every step, hoping that the time may come when they shall catch us by surprise. If our spiritual adversaries thus compass every step, how anxiously should we guard all our movements, lest by any means we should be betrayed into evil!

They have set their eyes bowing down to the earth. John Trapp (1611-1669) wittily explains this metaphor by an allusion to a bull when about to run at his victim; he lowers his head, looks downward, and then concentrates all his force in the dash which he makes. It most probably denotes the malicious jealousy with which the enemy watches the steps of the righteous; as if they studied the ground on which they trod, and searched after some wrong foot-mark to accuse them for the past, or some stumbling-stone to cast in their future path to trip them in days to come.

12 Like as a lion that is greedy of his prey, and as it were a young lion lurking in secret places.

Lions are not more greedy, nor their ways more cunning than are Satan and his helpers when engaged against the children of God. The blood of souls the adversary thirsts after, and all his strength and craft are exerted to the utmost to satisfy his detestable appetite. We are weak and foolish like sheep; but we have a shepherd wise and strong, who knows the old lion's wiles, and is more than a match for his force; therefore will we not fear, but rest in safety in the fold. Let us beware, however, of our lurking foe; and in those parts of the road where we feel most secure, let us look about us lest, peradventure, our foe should leap upon us.

13 Arise, O LORD, disappoint him, cast him down: deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword:

Arise, O Lord. The more furious the attack, the more fervent the Psalmist's prayer. His eye rests singly upon the Almighty, and he feels that God has but to rise from the seat of his patience, and the work will be performed at once. Let the lion spring upon us, if Jehovah steps between we need no better defense. When God meets our foe face to face in battle, the conflict will soon be over.

Disappoint him. Be beforehand with him, outwit and outrun him. Appoint it otherwise than he has appointed, and so disappoint him.

Cast him down. Prostrate him. Make him sink upon his knees. Make him bow as the conquered bows before the conqueror. What a glorious sight will it be to behold Satan prostrate beneath the foot of our glorious Lord! Haste, glorious day!
Deliver my soul from the wicked, which is thy sword. He recognizes the most profane and oppressive as being under the providential rule of the King of kings, and used as a sword in the divine hand. What can a sword do unless it be wielded by a hand? No more could the wicked annoy us, unless the Lord permitted them so to do. Most translators are, however, agreed that this is not the correct reading, but that it should be as John Calvin puts it,

"Deliver my soul from the ungodly man by thy sword." Thus David contrasts the sword of the Lord with human aids and reliefs, and rests assured that he is safe enough under the patronage of heaven.

14 From men which are thy hand, O LORD, from men of the world, which have their portion in this life, and whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure: they are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes.

17:14 Almost every word of this verse has furnished matter for discussion to scholars, for it is very obscure. We will, therefore, rest content with the common version, rather than distract the reader with divers translations.

From men which are thy hand. Having styled the ungodly a sword in his Father's hand, he now likens them to that hand itself, to set forth his conviction that God could as easily remove their violence as a man moves his own hand. He will never slay his child with his own hand.

From men of the world, mere earthworms; not men of the world to come, but mere dwellers in this narrow sphere of mortality; having no hopes or wishes beyond the ground on which they tread.

Which have their portion in this life. Like the prodigal, they have their portion, and are not content to wait their Father's time. Like Passion in the "Pilgrim's Progress," they have their best things first, and revel during their little hour. Martin Luther was always afraid lest he should have his portion here, and therefore frequently gave away sums of money which had been presented to him. We cannot have earth and heaven too for our choice and portion; wise men choose that which will last the longest.

Whose belly thou fillest with thy hid treasure. Their sensual appetite gets the gain which it craved for. God gives to these swine the husks which they hunger for. A generous man does not deny dogs their bones; and our generous God gives even his enemies enough to fill them, if they were not so unreasonable as never to be content. Gold and silver which are locked up in the dark treasuries of the earth are given to the wicked liberally, and they therefore roll in all manner of carnal delights. Every dog has his day, and they have theirs, and a bright summer's day it seems; but ah! how soon it ends in night!

They are full of children. This was their fondest hope, that a race from their loins would prolong their names far down the page of history, and God has granted them this also; so that they have all that heart can wish. What enviable creatures they seem, but it is only seeming!

They are full of children, and leave the rest of their substance to their babes. They were fat housekeepers, and yet leave no lean wills. Living and dying they lacked for nothing but grace
and alas! that lack spoils everything. They had a fair portion within the little circle of time, but eternity entered not into their calculations. They were penny wise, but pound foolish; they remembered the present, and forgot the future; they fought for the shell, and lost the kernel. How fine a description have we here of many a successful merchant, or popular statesman; and it is, at first sight, very showy and tempting, but in contrast with the glories of the world to come, what are these paltry molehill joys. Self, self, self, all these joys begin and end in basest selfishness; but oh, our God, how rich are those who begin and end in thee! From all the contamination and injury which association with worldly men is sure to bring us, deliver thou us, O God!

15 As for me, I will behold thy face in righteousness: I shall be satisfied, when I awake, with thy likeness.

Psalm 18

To the chief Musician A Psalm of David, the servant of the LORD, who spake unto the LORD the words of this song in the day that the LORD delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul: And he said,

TITLE. To the Chief Musician a Psalm of David, the servant of the Lord, who spake unto the Lord the words of this song in the day that the Lord delivered him from the hand of all his enemies, and from the hand of Saul. We have another form of this Psalm, with significant variations (2 Samuel 22), and this suggests the idea that it was sung by David at different times when he reviewed his own remarkable history, and observed the gracious hand of God in it all. Like Addison's hymn beginning, "When all thy mercies, O my God," this Psalm is the song of a grateful heart overwhelmed with a retrospect of the manifold and marvelous mercies of God. We will call it THE GRATEFUL RETROSPECT.

The title deserves attention. David, although at this time a king, calls himself, "the servant of Jehovah," but makes no mention of his royalty; hence we gather that he counted it a higher
honour to be the Lord's servant than to be Judah's king. Right wisely did he judge. Being possessed of poetic genius, he served the Lord by composing this Psalm for the use of the Lord's house; and it is no mean work to conduct or to improve that delightful part of divine worship, the singing of the Lord's praises. Would that more musical and poetical ability were consecrated, and that our chief musicians were fit to be trusted with devout and spiritual psalmody.

It should be observed that the words of this song were not composed with the view of gratifying the taste of men, but were spoken unto Jehovah. It were well if we had a more single eye to the honour of the Lord in our singing, and in all other hallowed exercises. That praise is little worth which is not directed solely and heartily to the Lord. David might well be thus direct in his gratitude, for he owed all to his God, and in the day of his deliverance he had none to thank but the Lord, whose right hand had preserved him. We too should feel that to God and God alone we owe the greatest debt of honour and thanksgiving.

If it be remembered that the second and the forty-ninth verses are both quoted in the New Testament (Hebrews 2:13; Romans 15:9) as the words of the Lord Jesus, it will be clear that a greater than David is here. Reader, you will not need our aid in this respect; if you know Jesus you will readily find him in his sorrows, deliverance, and triumphs all through this wonderful psalm.

DIVISION. The first three verses are the proem or preface in which the resolve to bless God is declared. Delivering mercy is most poetically extolled from verse 4 to verse 19; and then the happy songster from verse 20 to 28, protests that God had acted righteously in thus favoring him. Filled with grateful joy he again pictures his deliverance, and anticipates future victories from verse 29-45; and in closing speaks with evident prophetic foresight of the glorious triumphs of the Messiah, David's seed and the Lord's anointed.

1 I will love thee, O LORD, my strength.

18:1 I will love thee, O Lord. With strong, hearty affection will I cling to thee; as a child to its parent, or a spouse to her husband. The word is intensely forcible, the love is of the deepest kind.

"I will love heartily, with my inmost bowels." Here is a fixed resolution to abide in the nearest and most intimate union with the Most High. Our triune God deserves the warmest love of all our hearts. Father, Son and Spirit have each a claim upon our love. The solemn purpose never to cease loving naturally springs from present fervor of affection. It is wrong to make rash resolutions, but this when made in the strength of God is most wise and fitting.

My strength. Our God is the strength of our life, our graces, our works, our hopes, our conflicts, our victories. This verse is not found in 2 Samuel 22, and is a most precious addition, placed above all and after all to form the pinnacle of the temple, the apex of the pyramid. Love is still the crowning grace.

2 The LORD is my rock, and my fortress, and my deliverer; my God, my strength, in whom I will trust; my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower.
The Lord is my rock and my fortress. Dwelling among the crags and mountain fastnesses of Judea David had escaped the malice of Saul, and here he compares his God to such a place of concealment and security. Believers are often hidden in their God from the strife of tongues and the fury of the storm of trouble. The clefts of the Rock of Ages are safe abodes.

My deliverer, interposing in my hour of peril. When almost captured the Lord's people are rescued from the hand of the mighty by him who is mightier still. This title of "deliverer" has many sermons in it, and is well worthy of the study of all experienced saints.

My God; this is all good things in one. There is a boundless wealth in this expression; it means, my perpetual, unchanging, infinite, eternal good. He who can say truly "my God," may well add, "my heaven, my all." "My strength;" this word is really "my rock," in the sense of strength and immobility. My sure, unchanging, eternal confidence and support. Thus the word rock occurs twice, but it is no tautology, for the first time it is a rock for concealment, but here a rock for firmness and immutability.

In whom I will trust. Faith must be exercised, or the preciousness of God is not truly known; and God must be the object of faith, or faith is mere presumption.

My buckler, warding off the blows of my enemy, shielding me from arrow or sword. The Lord furnishes his warriors with weapons both offensive and defensive. Our armory is completely stored so that none need go to battle unarmed.

The horn of my salvation, enabling me to push down my foes, and to triumph over them with holy exultation.

My high tower, a citadel high planted on a rocky eminence beyond the reach of my enemies, from the heights of which I look down upon their fury without alarm, and survey a wide landscape of mercy reaching even unto the goodly land beyond Jordan. Here are many words, but none too many; we might profitably examine each one of them had we leisure, but summing up the whole, we may conclude with John Calvin, that David here equips the faithful from head to foot.

3 I will call upon the LORD, who is worthy to be praised: so shall I be saved from mine enemies.

In this verse the happy poet resolves to invoke the Lord in joyful song, believing that in all future conflicts his God would deal as well with him as in the past. It is well to pray to God as to one who deserves to be praised, for then we plead in a happy and confident manner. If I feel that I can and do bless the Lord for all his past goodness, I am bold to ask great things of him. That word So has much in it. To be saved singing is to be saved indeed. Many are saved mourning and doubting; but David had such faith that he could fight singing, and win the battle with a song still upon his lips. How happy a thing to receive fresh mercy with a heart already sensible of mercy enjoyed, and to anticipate new trials with a confidence based upon past experiences of divine love!
4 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the floods of ungodly men made me afraid.

18:4-19. In most poetical language the Psalmist now describes his experience of Jehovah's delivering power. Poesy has in all her treasures no gem more lustrous than the sonnet of the following verses; the sorrow, the cry, the descent of the Divine One, and the rescue of the afflicted, are here set to a music worthy of the golden harps. The Messiah our Saviour is evidently, over and beyond David or any other believer, the main and chief subject of this song; and while studying it we have grown more and more sure that every line here has its deepest and profoundest fulfillment in Him; but as we are desirous not to extend our comment beyond moderate bounds, we must leave it with the devout reader to make the very easy application of the passage to our once distressed but now triumphant Lord.

18:4 The sorrows of death compassed me. Death like a cruel conqueror seemed to twist round about him the cords of pain. He was environed and hemmed in with threatening deaths of the most appalling sort. He was like a mariner broken by the storm and driven upon the rocks by dreadful breakers, white as the teeth of death. Sad plight for the man after God's own heart, but thus it is that Jehovah dealeth with his sons.

The floods of ungodly men made me afraid. Torrents of ungodliness threatened to swamp all religion, and to hurry away the godly man's hope as a thing to be scorned and despised; so far was this threat fulfilled, that even the hero who slew Goliath began to be afraid. The most seaworthy bark is sometimes hard put to it when the storm fiend is abroad. The most courageous man, who as a rule hopes for the best, may sometimes fear the worst. Beloved reader, he who pens these lines has known better than most men what this verse means, and feels inclined to weep, and yet to sing, while he writes upon a text so descriptive of his own experience. On the night of the lamentable accident at the Surrey Music Hall, the floods of Belial were let loose, and the subsequent remarks of a large portion of the press were exceedingly malicious and wicked; our soul was afraid as we stood encompassed with the sorrows of death and the blasphemies of the cruel. But oh, what mercy was there in it all, and what honey of goodness was extracted by our Lord out of this lion of affliction! Surely God hath heard me! Art thou in an ill plight? Dear friend, learn thou from our experience to trust in the Lord Jehovah, who forsaketh not his chosen.

5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about: the snares of death prevented me.

18:5 The sorrows of hell compassed me about. From all sides the hell-hounds barked furiously. A cordon of devils hemmed in the hunted man of God; every way of escape was closed up. Satan knows how to blockade our coasts with the iron war-ships of sorrow, but, blessed be God, the port of all prayer is
still open, and grace can run the blockade bearing messages from earth to heaven, and blessings in return from heaven to earth.

The snares of death prevented me. The old enemy hunts for his prey, not only with the dogs of the infernal kennel, but also with the snares of deadly craft. The nets were drawn closer and closer until the contracted circle completely prevented the escape of the captive:

"About me the cords of hell were wound,
And snares of death my footsteps bound."

Thus hopeless was the case of this good man, as hopeless as a case could be, so utterly desperate that none but an almighty arm could be of any service. According to the four metaphors which he employs, he was bound like a malefactor for execution; overwhelmed like a shipwrecked mariner; surrounded and standing at bay like a hunted stag; and captured in a net like a trembling bird. What more of terror and distress could meet upon one poor defenseless head?

6 In my distress I called upon the LORD, and cried unto my God: he heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears.

18:6 In my distress I called upon the Lord, and cried unto my God. Prayer is that postern gate which is left open even when the city is straitly besieged by the enemy; it is that way upward from the pit of despair to which the spiritual miner flies at once when the floods from beneath break forth upon him. Observe that he calls, and then cries; prayer grows in vehemence as it proceeds. Note also that he first invokes his God under the name of Jehovah, and then advances to a more familiar name, "my God;" thus faith increases by exercise, and he whom we at first viewed as Lord is soon seen to be our God in covenant. It is never an ill time to pray; no distress should prevent us from using the divine remedy of supplication. Above the noise of the raging billows of death, or the barking dogs of hell, the feeblest cry of a true believer will be heard in heaven.

He heard my voice out of his temple, and my cry came before him, even into his ears. Far up within the bejeweled walls, and through the gates of pearl, the cry of the suffering suppliant was heard. Music of angels and harmony of seraphs availed not to drown or even to impair the voice of that humble call. The king heard it in his palace of light insufferable, and lent a willing ear to the cry of his own beloved child. O honored prayer, to be able thus through Jesus' blood to penetrate the very ears and heart of Deity. The voice and the cry are themselves heard directly by the Lord, and not made to pass through the medium of saints and intercessors;

My cry came before Him; the operation of prayer with God is immediate and personal. We may cry with confident and familiar importunity, while our Father himself listens.

7 Then the earth shook and trembled; the foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because he was wroth.
There was no great space between the cry and its answer. The Lord is not slack concerning his promise, but is swift to rescue his afflicted. David has in his mind's eye the glorious manifestations of God in Egypt, at Sinai, and on different occasions to Joshua and the judges; and he considers that his own case exhibits the same glory of power and goodness, and that, therefore, he may accommodate the descriptions of former displays of the divine majesty into his hymn of praise.

Then the earth shook and trembled. Observe how the most solid and immovable things feel the force of supplication. Prayer has shaken houses, opened prison doors, and made stout hearts to quail. Prayer rings the alarm bell, and the Master of the house arises to the rescue, shaking all things beneath his tread.

The foundations also of the hills moved and were shaken, because of his wrath. He who fixed the world's pillars can make them rock in their sockets, and can upheave the corner-stones of creation. The huge roots of the towering mountains are torn up when the Lord bestirs himself in anger to smite the enemies of his people. How shall puny man be able to face it out with God when the very mountains quake with fear? Let not the boaster dream that his present false confidence will support him in the dread day of wrath.

8 There went up a smoke out of his nostrils, and fire out of his mouth devoured: coals were kindled by it.

9 He bowed the heavens also, and came down: and darkness was under his feet.
"Amid the terror of the storm Jehovah the Avenger descended, bending beneath his foot the arch of heaven."

He bowed the heavens also, and came down. He came in haste, and spurned everything which impeded his rapidity. The thickest gloom concealed his splendor,

and darkness was under his feet; he fought within the dense vapors, as a warrior in clouds of smoke and dust, and

found out the hearts of his enemies with the sharp falchion of his vengeance. Darkness is no impediment to God; its densest gloom he makes his tent and secret pavilion. See how prayer moves earth and heaven, and raises storms to overthrow in a moment the foes of God's Israel. Things were bad for David before he prayed, but they were much worse for his foes so soon as the petition had gone up to heaven. A trustful heart, by enlisting the divine aid, turns the tables on its enemies. If I must have an enemy let him not be a man of prayer, or he will soon get the better of me by calling in his God into the quarrel.

10 And he rode upon a cherub, and did fly: yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind.

There is inimitable grandeur in this verse. Under the Mosaic system the cherubim are frequently represented as the chariot of God; hence Milton, in "Paradise Lost," writes of the Great Father, —

"He on the wings of cherubim
Uplifted, in paternal glory rode
Far into chaos."

Without speculating upon the mysterious and much-disputed subject of the cherubim, it may be enough to remark that angels are doubtless our guards and ministering friends, and all their powers are enlisted to expedite the rescue of the afflicted.

He rode upon a cherub, and did fly.
Nature also yields all her agents to be our helpers, and even the powers of the air are subservient:

yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind. The Lord comes flying when mercy is his errand, but he lingers long when sinners are being wooed to repent. The flight here pictured is as majestic as it is swift; "flying all abroad" is Thomas Sternhold's (c. 1547) word, and he is not far from correct. As the eagle soars in easy grandeur with wings outspread, without violent flapping and exertion, so comes the Lord with majesty of omnipotence to aid his own.

11 He made darkness his secret place; his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies.
12 At the brightness *that was* before him his thick clouds passed, hail *stones* and coals of fire.

13 The LORD also thundered in the heavens, and the Highest gave his voice; hail *stones* and coals of fire.

14 Yea, he sent out his arrows, and scattered them; and he shot out lightnings, and discomfited them.
15 Then the channels of waters were seen, and the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O LORD, at the blast of the breath of thy nostrils.

18:15 So tremendous was the shock of God's assault in arms that the order of nature was changed, and the bottoms of rivers and seas were laid bare.

The channels of waters was seen; and the deep cavernous bowels of the earth were upheaved till "the foundations of the world were discovered." What will not Jehovah's "rebuke" do? If "the blast of the breath of thy nostrils," O Lord, be so terrible, what must thine arm be? Vain are the attempts of men to conceal anything from him whose word unbars the deep, and lifts the doors of earth from their hinges! Vain are all hopes of resistance, for a whisper of his voice makes the whole earth quail in abject terror.

16 He sent from above, he took me, he drew me out of many waters.

18:16 Now comes the rescue. The Author is divine,

He sent; the work is heavenly,

from above; the deliverance is marvelous,

He drew me out of many waters. Here David was like another Moses, drawn from the water; and thus are all believers like their Lord, whose baptism in many waters of agony and in his own blood has redeemed us from the wrath to come. Torrents of evil shall not drown the man whose God sitteth upon the floods to restrain their fury.

17 He delivered me from my strong enemy, and from them which hated me: for they were too strong for me.

18:17 When we have been rescued, we must take care to ascribe all the glory to God by confessing our own weakness, and remembering the power of the conquered enemy. God's power derives honour from all the incidents of the conflict. Our great spiritual adversary is a "strong enemy" indeed, much too strong for poor, weak creatures like ourselves, but we have been delivered hitherto and shall be even to the end. Our weakness is a reason for divine help; mark the force of the "for" in the text.

18 They prevented me in the day of my calamity: but the LORD was my stay.

18:18 It was an ill day, a day of calamity, of which evil foes took cruel advantage, while they used crafty means utterly to ruin him, yet David could say, "but the Lord is my stay." What a blessed but which cuts the Gordian knot, and slays the hundred-headed hydra! There is no fear of deliverance when our stay is in Jehovah.
19 He brought me forth also into a large place; he delivered me, because he delighted in me.

18:19 *He brought me forth also into a large place.* After pining awhile in the prison-house Joseph reached the palace, and from the cave of Adullam David mounted to the throne. Sweet is pleasure after pain. Enlargement is the more delightful after a season of pinching poverty and sorrowful confinement. Besieged souls delight in the broad fields of the promise when God drives off the enemy and sets open the gates of the environed city. The Lord does not leave his work half done, for having routed the foe he leads out the captive into liberty. Large indeed is the possession and place of the believer in Jesus, there need be no limit to his peace, for there is no bound to his privilege.

*He delivered me, because he delighted in me.* Free grace lies at the foundation. Rest assured, if we go deep enough, sovereign grace is the truth which lies at the bottom of every well of mercy. Deep-sea fisheries in the ocean of divine bounty always bring the pearls of electing, discriminating love to light. Why Jehovah should delight in us is an answerless question, and a mystery which angels cannot solve; but that he does delight in his beloved is certain, and is the fruitful root of favors as numerous as they are precious. Believer, sit down, and inwardly digest the instructive sentence now before us, and learn to view the uncaused love of God as the cause of all the lovingkindness of which we are the partakers.

20 The LORD rewarded me according to my righteousness; according to the cleanness of my hands hath he recompensed me.

18:20 *The Lord rewarded me according to my righteousness.* Viewing this psalm as prophetical of the Messiah, these strongly-expressed claims to righteousness are readily understood, for his garments were as white as snow; but considered as the language of David they have perplexed many. Yet the case is clear, and if the words be not strained beyond their original intention, no difficulty need occur. Albeit that the dispensations of divine grace are to the fullest degree sovereign and irrespective of human merit, yet in the dealings of Providence there is often discernible a rule of justice by which the injured are at length avenged, and the righteous ultimately delivered. David's early troubles arose from the wicked malice of envious Saul, who no doubt prosecuted his persecutions under cover of charges brought against the character of "the man after God's own heart." These charges David declares to have been utterly false, and asserts that he possessed a grace-given righteousness which the Lord had graciously rewarded in defiance of all his calumniators. Before God the man after God's own heart was a humble sinner, but before his slanderers he could with unblushing face speak of the

*cleanness of his hands* and the righteousness of his life. He knows little of the sanctifying power of divine grace who is not at the bar of human equity able to plead innocence. There is no self-righteousness in an honest man knowing that he is honest, nor even in his believing that God rewards him in providence because of his honesty, for such is often a most evident matter of fact; but it would be self-righteousness indeed if we transferred such thoughts from the region of providential government into the spiritual kingdom, for there grace reigns not only supreme but sole in the distribution of divine favors. It is not at all an opposition to the doctrine of salvation by grace, and no sort of evidence of a Pharisaic spirit, when a gracious man, having been slandered, stoutly maintains his integrity, and vigorously defends his character.
A godly man has a clear conscience, and knows himself to be upright; is he to deny his own consciousness, and to despise the work of the Holy Ghost, by hypocritically making himself out to be worse than he is?

A godly man prizes his integrity very highly, or else he would not be a godly man at all; is he to be called proud because he will not readily lose the jewel of a reputable character?

A godly man can see that in divine providence uprightness and truth are in the long run sure to bring their own reward; may he not, when he sees that reward bestowed in his own case, praise the Lord for it? Yea rather, must he not show forth the faithfulness and goodness of his God? Read the cluster of expressions in this and the following verses as the song of a good conscience, after having safely out ridden a storm of obloquy, persecution, and abuse, and there will be no fear of our upbraiding the writer as one who sets too high a price upon his own moral character.

21 For I have kept the ways of the LORD, and have not wickedly departed from my God.

18:21 Here the assertion of purity is repeated, both in a positive and a negative form. There is

*I have* and "*I have not," both of which must be blended in a truly sanctified life; constraining and restraining grace must each take its share. The words of this verse refer to the saint as a traveler carefully keeping to

the ways of the Lord, and "not wickedly," that is, designedly, willfully, persistently, defiantly forsaking the ordained pathway in which God favors the pilgrim with his presence. Observe how it is implied in the expression,

and have not wickedly departed from my God, that David lived habitually in communion with God, and knew him to be his own God, whom he might speak of as "my God." God never departs from his people, let them take heed of departing from him.

22 For all his judgments were before me, and I did not put away his statutes from me.

18:22 For all his judgments were before me. The word, the character, and the actions of God should be evermore before our eyes; we should learn, consider, and reverence them. Men forget what they do not wish to remember, but the excellent attributes of the Most High are objects of the believer's affectionate and delighted admiration. We should keep the image of God so constantly before us that we become in our measure conformed unto it. This inner love to the right must be the main spring of Christian integrity in our public walk. The fountain must be filled with love to holiness, and then the streams which issue from it will be pure and gracious.

I did not put away his statutes from me. To put away the Scriptures from the mind's study is the certain way to prevent their influencing the outward conversation. Backsliders begin with dusty Bibles, and go on to filthy garments.
23 I was also upright before him, and I kept myself from mine iniquity.

18:23 I was also upright before him. Sincerity is here claimed; sincerity, such as would be accounted genuine before the bar of God. Whatever evil men might think of him, David felt that he had the good opinion of his God. Moreover, freedom from his one great besetting sin he ventures also to plead,

I kept myself from mine iniquity. It is a very gracious sign when the most violent parts of our nature have been well guarded. If the weakest link in the chain is not broken, the stronger links will be safe enough. David's impetuous temper might have led him to slay Saul when he had him within his power, but grace enabled him to keep his hands clean of the blood of his enemy; but what a wonder it was, and how well worthy of such a grateful record as these verses afford! It will be a sweet cordial to us one of these days to remember our self-denials, and to bless God that we were able to exhibit them.

24 Therefore hath the LORD recompensed me according to my righteousness, according to the cleanness of my hands in his eyesight.

18:24 God first gives us holiness, and then rewards us for it. We are his workmanship; vessels made unto honour; and when made, the honour is not withheld from the vessel; though, in fact, it all belongs to the Potter upon whose wheel the vessel was fashioned. The prize is awarded to the flower at the show, but the gardener reared it; the child wins the prize from the schoolmaster, but the real honour of his schooling lies with the master, although instead of receiving he gives the reward.

25 With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright;

18:25 The dealings of the Lord in his own case, cause the grateful singer to remember the usual rule of God's moral government; he is just in his dealings with the sons of men, and metes out to each man according to his measure.

With the merciful thou wilt shew thyself merciful; with an upright man thou wilt shew thyself upright. Every man shall have his meat weighed in his own scales, his corn meted in his own bushel, and his land measured with his own rod. No rule can be more fair, to ungodly men more terrible, or to the generous man more honorable. How would men throw away their light weights, and break their short yards, if they could but believe that they themselves are sure to be in the end the losers by their knavish tricks! Note that even the merciful need mercy; no amount of generosity to the poor, or forgiveness to enemies, can set us beyond the need of mercy. Lord, have mercy upon me, a sinner.

26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward.
18:26 With the pure thou wilt shew thyself pure; and with the froward thou wilt shew thyself froward. The sinner's frowardness is sinful and rebellious, and the only sense in which the term can be applied to the Most Holy God is that of judicial opposition and sternness, in which the Judge of all the earth will act at cross-purposes with the offender, and let him see that all things are not to be made subservient to wicked whims and willful fancies. John Calvin very forcibly says, "This brutish and monstrous stupidity in men compels God to invent new modes of expression, and as it were to clothe himself with a different character." There is a similar sentence in Leviticus 26:21-24, where God says, "and if ye walk contrary unto (or perversely with) me, then I will also walk contrary unto (or perversely, or roughly, or at random with) you." As if he had said that their obstinacy and stubbornness would make him on his part forget his accustomed forbearance and gentleness, and cast himself recklessly or at random against them. We see then what the stubborn at length gain by their obduracy; it is this, that God hardens himself still more to break them in pieces, and if they are of stone, he causes them to feel that he has the hardness of iron. The Jewish tradition was that the manna tasted according to each man's mouth; certainly God shows himself to each individual according to his character.

27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks.

18:27 For thou wilt save the afflicted people. This is a comforting assurance for the poor in spirit whose spiritual griefs admit of no sufficient solace from any other than a divine hand. They cannot save themselves nor can others do it, but God will save them. But will bring down high looks. Those who look down on others with scorn shall be looked down upon with contempt ere long. The Lord abhors a proud look. What a reason for repentance and humiliation! How much better to be humble than to provoke God to humble us in his wrath! A considerable number of clauses occur in this passage in the future tense; how forcibly are we thus brought to remember that our present joy or sorrow is not to have so much weight with us as the great and eternal future!

28 For thou wilt light my candle: the LORD my God will enlighten my darkness.

18:28 For thou wilt light my candle. Even the children of the day sometimes need candlelight. In the darkest hour light will arise; a candle shall be lit, it will be comfort such as we may fittingly use without dishonesty—it will be our own candle; yet God himself will find the holy fire with which the candle shall burn; our evidences are our own, but their comfortable light is from above. Candles which are lit by God the devil cannot blow out. All candles are not shining, and so there are some graces which yield no present comfort; but it is well to have candles which may by and by be lit, and it is well to possess graces which may yet afford us cheering evidences. The metaphor of the whole verse is founded upon the dolorous nature of darkness and the delightfulness of light; "truly the light is sweet, and a pleasant thing it is for the eyes to behold the sun;" and even so the presence of the Lord removes all the gloom of sorrow, and enables the believer to rejoice with exceeding great joy. The lighting of the lamp is a cheerful moment in the winter's evening, but the lifting up of the light of God's countenance is happier far. It is said that the poor in Egypt will stint themselves of bread to buy oil for the lamp, so that
they may not sit in darkness; we could well afford to part with all earthly comforts if the light of God's love could but constantly gladden our souls.

29 For by thee I have run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall.

18:29-45. Some repetitions are not vain repetitions. Second thoughts upon God's mercy should be and often are the best. Like wines on the lees our gratitude grows stronger and sweeter as we meditate upon divine goodness. The verses which we have now to consider are the ripe fruit of a thankful spirit; they are apples of gold as to matter, and they are placed in baskets of silver as to their language. They describe the believer's victorious career and his enemies' confusion.

18:29 For by thee have I run through a troop; and by my God have I leaped over a wall. Whether we meet the foe in the open field or leap upon them while they lurk behind the battlements of a city, we shall by God's grace defeat them in either case; if they hem us in with living legions, or environ us with stone walls, we shall with equal certainty obtain our liberty. Such feats we have already performed, hewing our way at a run through hosts of difficulties, and scaling impossibilities at a leap. God's warriors may expect to have a taste of every form of fighting, and must by the power of faith determine to quit themselves like men; but it behooves them to be very careful to lay all their laurels at Jehovah's feet, each one of them saying, "by my God" have I wrought this valiant deed. Our spolia optima, the trophies of our conflicts, we hereby dedicate to the God of Battles, and ascribe to him all glory and strength.

30 As for God, his way is perfect: the word of the LORD is tried: he is a buckler to all those that trust in him.

18:30 As for God, his way is perfect. Far past all fault and error are God's dealings with his people; all his actions are resplendent with justice, truth, tenderness, mercy, and holiness. Every way of God is complete in itself, and all his ways put together are matchless in harmony and goodness. Is it not very consolatory to believe that he who has begun to bless us will perfect his work, for all his ways are "perfect." Nor must the divine "word" be without its song of praise.

The word of the Lord is tried, like silver refined in the furnace. The doctrines are glorious, the precepts are pure, the promises are faithful, and the whole revelation is superlatively full of grace and truth. David had tried it, thousands have tried it, we have tried it, and it has never failed. It was meet that when way and word had been extolled, the Lord himself should be magnified; hence it is added,

He is a buckler to all those that trust in him. No armour of proof or shield of brass so well secures the warrior as the covenant God of Israel protects his warring people. He himself is the buckler of trustful ones; what a thought is this! What peace may every trusting soul enjoy!

31 For who is God save the LORD? Or who is a rock save our God?

18:31 Having mentioned his God, the psalmist's heart burns, and his words sparkle; he challenges heaven and earth to find another being worthy of adoration or trust in comparison
with Jehovah. His God, as Matthew Henry says, is a None-such. The idols of the heathen he scorns to mention, snuffing them all out as mere nothings when Deity is spoken of.

"Who is God save the Lord?" Who else creates, sustains, foresees, and overrules? Who but he is perfect in every attribute, and glorious in every act? To whom but Jehovah should creatures bow? Who else can claim their service and their love? "Who is a rock save our God?" Where can lasting hopes be fixed? Where can the soul find rest? Where is stability to be found? Where is strength to be discovered? Surely in the Lord Jehovah alone can we find rest and refuge.

32 It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.

18:32 Surveying all the armour in which he fought and conquered, the joyful victor praises the Lord for every part of the panoply. The girdle of his loins earns the first stanza:

**It is God that girdeth me with strength, and maketh my way perfect.** Girt about the loins with power from heaven, the warrior was filled with vigor, far above all created might; and, whereas, without this wondrous belt he would have been feeble and effeminate, with relaxed energies and scattered forces, he felt himself, when braced with the girdle of truth, to be compact in purpose, courageous in daring, and concentrated in power; so that his course was a complete success, so undisturbed by disastrous defeat as to be called "perfect." Have we been made more than conquerors over sin, and has our life hitherto been such as becometh the gospel? Then let us ascribe all the glory to him who girt us with his own inexhaustible strength, that we might be unconquered in battle and unwearied in pilgrimage.

33 He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places.

18:33 The conqueror's feet had been shod by a divine hand, and the next note must, therefore, refer to them. "He maketh my feet like hinds' feet, and setteth me upon my high places." Pursuing his foes the warrior had been swift of foot as a young roe, but, instead of taking pleasure in the legs of a man, he ascribes the boon of swiftness to the Lord alone. When our thoughts are nimble, and our spirits rapid, like the chariots of Amminadib, let us not forget that our best Beloved's hand has given us the choice favour. Climbing into impregnable fortresses, David had been preserved from slipping, and made to stand where scarce the wild goat can find a footing; herein was preserving mercy manifested. We, too, have had our high places of honour, service, temptation, and danger, but hitherto we have been kept from falling. Bring hither the harp, and let us emulate the psalmist's joyful thanksgiving; had we fallen, our wailings must have been terrible; since we have stood, let our gratitude be fervent.

34 He teacheth my hands to war, so that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms.

18:34 **He teacheth my hands to war.** Martial prowess and skill in the use of weapons are grateful acknowledged to be the result of divine teaching; no sacrifice is offered at the shrine of self in praise of natural dexterity, or acquired skillfulness; but, regarding all warlike prowess as a gift of heavenly favour, thankfulness is presented to the Giver. The Holy Spirit is the great Drillmaster of heavenly soldiers.
So that a bow of steel is broken by mine arms. A bow of brass is probably meant, and these bows could scarcely be bent by the arms alone, the archer had to gain the assistance of his foot; it was, therefore, a great feat of strength to bend the bow, so far as even to snap it in halves. This was meant of the enemies' bow, which he not only snatched from his grasp, but rendered useless by breaking it in pieces. Jesus not only destroyed the fiery suggestions of Satan, but he broke his arguments with which he shot them, by using Holy Scripture against him; by the same means we may win a like triumph, breaking the bow and cutting the spear in sunder by the sharp edge of revealed truth. Probably David had by nature a vigorous bodily frame; but it is even more likely that, like Samson, he was at times clothed with more than common strength; at any rate, he ascribes the honour of his feats entirely to his God. Let us never wickedly rob the Lord of his due, but faithfully give unto him the glory which is due unto his name.

35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation: and thy right hand hath holden me up, and thy gentleness hath made me great.

18:35 Thou hast also given me the shield of thy salvation. Above all we must take the shield of faith, for nothing else can quench Satan's fiery darts; this shield is of celestial workmanship, and is in all cases a direct gift from God himself; it is the channel, the sign, the guarantee, and the earnest of perfect salvation.

Thy right hand hath holden me up. Secret support is administered to us by the preserving grace of God, and at the same time Providence kindly yields us manifest aid. We are such babes that we cannot stand alone; but when the Lord's right hand upholds us, we are like brazen pillars which cannot be moved.

Thy gentleness hath made me great. There are several readings of this sentence. The word is capable of being translated,

thy goodness hath made me great. David saw much of benevolence in God's action towards him, and he gratefully ascribed all his greatness not to his own goodness, but to the goodness of God.

Thy providence is another reading, which is indeed nothing more than goodness in action. Goodness is the bud of which providence is the flower; or goodness is the seed of which providence is the harvest. Some render it, "thy help," which is but another word for providence; providence being the firm ally of the saints, aiding them in the service of their Lord. Certain learned annotators tell us that the text means, "thy humility hath made me great." "Thy condescension" may, perhaps, serve as a comprehensive reading, combining the ideas which we have already mentioned, as well as that of humility. It is God's making himself little which is the cause of our being made great. We are so little that If God should manifest his greatness without condescension, we should be trampled under his feet; but God, who must stoop to view the skies and bow to see what angels do, looks to the lowly and contrite, and makes them great. While these are the translations which have been given to the adopted text of the original, we find that there are other readings altogether; as for instance, the Septuagint, which reads, "thy discipline"—thy fatherly correction—"hath made me great;" while the Chaldee paraphrase
reads, "thy word hath increased me." Still the idea is the same. David ascribes all his own greatness to the condescending goodness and graciousness of his Father in heaven. Let us all feel this sentiment in our own hearts, and confess that whatever of goodness or greatness God may have put upon us, we must cast our crowns at his feet and cry, "thy gentleness hath made me great."

36 Thou hast enlarged my steps under me, that my feet did not slip.

| 18:36 Thou hast enlarged my steps. A smooth pathway leading to spacious possessions and camping-grounds had been opened up for him. Instead of threading the narrow mountain paths, and hiding in the cracks and corners of caverns, he was able to traverse the plains and dwell under his own vine and fig tree. It is no small mercy to be brought into full Christian liberty and enlargement, but it is a greater favour still to be enabled to walk worthily in such liberty, not being permitted to slip with our feet. To stand upon the rocks of affliction is the result of gracious upholding, but that aid is quite as much needed in the luxurious plains of prosperity. |

37 I have pursued mine enemies, and overtaken them: neither did I turn again till they were consumed.

| 18:37 The preservation of the saints bodes ill for their adversaries. The Amalekites thought themselves clear away with their booty, but when David's God guided him in the pursuit, they were soon overtaken and cut in pieces. When God is with us sins and sorrows flee, and all forms of evil are "consumed" before the power of grace. What a noble picture this and the following verses present to us of the victories of our glorious Lord Jesus! |

38 I have wounded them that they were not able to rise: they are fallen under my feet.

| 18:38 The destruction of our spiritual enemies is complete. We may exult over sin, death, and hell, as disarmed and disabled for us by our conquering Lord; may he graciously give them a like defeat within us. |

39 For thou hast girded me with strength unto the battle: thou hast subdued under me those that rose up against me.

40 Thou hast also given me the necks of mine enemies; that I might destroy them that hate me.

| 18:39 and 40 It is impossible to be too frequent in the duty of ascribing all our victories to the God of our salvation. It is true that we have to wrestle with our spiritual antagonists, but the triumph is far more the Lord's than ours. We must not boast like the ambitious votaries of vainglory, but we may exult as the willing and believing instruments in the Lord's hand of accomplishing his great designs. |

41 They cried, but there was none to save them: even unto the LORD, but he answered them not.
18:41 They cried, but there was none to save them; even unto the Lord, but he answered them not. Prayer is so notable a weapon that even the wicked will take to it in their fits of desperation. Bad men have appealed to God against God's own servants, but all in vain; the kingdom of heaven is not divided, and God never succors his foes at the expense of his friends. There are prayers to God which are no better than blasphemy, which bring no comfortable reply, but rather provoke the Lord to greater wrath. Shall I ask a man to wound or slay his own child to gratify my malice? Would he not resent the insult against his humanity? How much less will Jehovah regard the cruel desires of the enemies of the church, who dare to offer their prayers for its destruction, calling its existence schism, and its doctrine heresy!

42 Then did I beat them small as the dust before the wind: I did cast them out as the dirt in the streets.

18:42 The defeat of the nations who fought with King David was so utter and complete that they were like powders pounded in a mortar; their power was broken into fragments and they became as weak as dust before the wind, and as mean as the mire of the roads. Thus powerless and base are the enemies of God now become through the victory of the Son of David upon the cross. Arise, O my soul, and meet thine enemies, for they have sustained a deadly blow, and will fall before thy bold advance.

"Hell and my sins resist my course,
But hell and sin are vanquish'd foes
My Jesus nail'd them to his cross,
And sung the triumph when he rose."

43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people; and thou hast made me the head of the heathen: a people whom I have not known shall serve me.

18:43 Thou hast delivered me from the strivings of the people. Internal strife is very hard to deal with. A civil war is war in its most miserable form; it is a subject for warmest gratitude when concord rules within. Our poet praises Jehovah for the union and peace which smiled in his dominions, and if we have peace in the three kingdoms of our spirit, soul, and body, we are in duty bound to give Jehovah a song. Unity in a church should assuredly excite like gratitude.

Thou hast made me the head of the heathen; a people whom I have not known shall serve me. The neighboring nations yielded to the sway of Judah's prince. Oh, when shall all lands adore King Jesus, and serve him with holy joy? Surely there is far more of Jesus than of David here. Missionaries may derive rich encouragement from the positive declaration that heathen lands shall own the Headship of the Crucified.

44 As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me: the strangers shall submit themselves unto me.
18:44 As soon as they hear of me, they shall obey me. Thus readily did the once struggling captain become a far-renowned victor, and thus easy shall be our triumphs. We prefer, however, to speak of Jesus. In many cases the gospel is speedily received by hearts apparently unprepared for it. Those who have never heard the gospel before, have been charmed by its first message, and yielded obedience to it; while others, alas! who are accustomed to its joyful sound, are rather hardened than softened by its teachings. The grace of God sometimes runs like fire among the stubble, and a nation is born in a day. "Love at first sight" is no uncommon thing when Jesus is the wooer. He can write Caesar's message without boasting, Veni, vidi, vici [I came, I saw, I conquered]; his gospel is in some cases no sooner heard than believed. What inducements to spread abroad the doctrine of the cross!

45 The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid out of their close places.

18:45 The first clause is comparatively easy. The strangers shall fade away—"shall gradually wither and disappear;" but the second clause is very difficult, "They shall be afraid out of their close places." One Jewish scholar interprets it, "They shall fear for the prisons in which I will throw them and keep them confined" (Rabbi Solomon Jarchi).

Another, "They shall tremble in their castles to which they have betaken themselves for fear of me."

Another (Aben-Ezra, 1089–1164, Jewish grammarian, commentator, poet, philosopher, and astronomer, b. Tudela, Spain),

"They shall surrender themselves from their fortresses." The general meaning is plain enough. The class referred to are represented as reduced to a state of complete helpless subjugation. As to the event referred to, if we keep to the rendering of our translators the meaning may be,

"The Pagans, retired now generally to villages and remote places, shall gradually dwindle away, and fearfully anticipate the complete extinction of their religion." This exactly accords with history. If with some interpreters we read,

"The strangers shall fade away, and be afraid because of their prisons," then the meaning may be, "that they who only feigned submission, when persecution for the word should arise should openly apostatize." This, too, would be found consonant with fact. The first of these interpretations seems the more probable.—John Brown.

46 The LORD liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted.

18: 46 The Lord liveth; and blessed be my rock; and let the God of my salvation be exalted. Let us unite our hearts in this song for a close of our praises. Honours die, pleasures die, the world dies; but "The Lord liveth." My flesh is as sand; my fleshly life, strength, glory, is as a word written on sand; but "blessed be my ROCK." Those are for a moment; this stands for ever. The curse shall devour those; everlasting blessings on the head of this. Let outward salvations vanish; let the saved be crucified; let the "God" of our salvations "be exalted." This Lord is my rock; this God is my salvation—Peter Sterry, 1649.
"The Lord liveth." Why do you not oppose one God to all the armies of evils that beset you round? Why do you not take the more content in God when you have the less of the creature to take content in? Why do you not boast in your God? And bear up yourselves big with your hopes in God and expectations from him? Do you not see young heirs to great estates act and spend accordingly? And, why shall you, being the King of heaven's son, be lean and ragged from day to day, as though you were not worth a groat [hulled grain]? O sirs, live upon your portion, chide yourselves for living besides what you have. There are great and precious promises, rich, enriching mercies; you may make use of God's all-sufficiency; you can blame none but yourselves if you be defective or discouraged. A woman, truly godly for the main, having buried a child, and sitting alone in sadness, did yet bear up her heart with the expression, "God lives;" and having parted with another, still she redoubled,

"Comforts die, but God lives." At last her dear husband dies, and she sat oppressed and most overwhelmed with sorrow. A little child she had yet surviving, having observed what before she spoke to comfort herself, comes to her and saith,

"Is God dead, mother? is God dead?" This reached her heart, and by God's blessing recovered her former confidence in her God, who is a living God. Thus do you chide yourselves; ask your fainting spirits under pressing outward sorrows, is not God alive? And why then doth not thy soul revive? Why doth thy heart die within thee when comforts die! Cannot a living God support thy dying hopes? Thus, Christians, argue down your discouraged and disquieted spirits as David did —Oliver Heywood's "Sure Mercies of David," 1672.

It is God that avengeth me, and subdueth the people under me.

It is God. Sir, this is none other than the hand of God; and to him alone belongs the glory, wherein none are to share with him. The General served you with all faithfulness and honour; and the best commendation I can give him is that I dare say he attributes all to God, and would rather perish than assume to himself —Written to the Speaker of the House of Commons, after the battle of Naseby, June 14, 1645, by OLIVER CROMWELL.

He delivereth me from mine enemies: yea, thou liftest me up above those that rise up against me: thou hast delivered me from the violent man.

Therefore will I give thanks unto thee, O LORD, among the heathen, and sing praises unto thy name.

I admire King David a great deal more when I see him in the quire than when I see him in the camp; when I see him singing as the sweet singer of Israel, than when I see him fighting as the worthy warrior of Israel. For fighting with others he did overcome all others; but singing, and delighting himself, he did overcome himself—Thomas Playfere.

Great deliverance giveth he to his king; and sheweth mercy to his anointed, to David, and to his seed for evermore.
SUBJECT. It would be idle to enquire into the particular period when this delightful poem was composed, for their is nothing in its title or subject to assist us in the enquiry. The heading, "To the Chief Musician, a Psalm of David," informs us that David wrote it, and that it was committed to the Master of the service of song for the use of the assembled worshippers.

In his earliest days the psalmist, while keeping his father's flock, had devoted himself to the study of God's two great books—nature and Scripture; and he had so thoroughly entered into the spirit of these two only volumes in his library that he was able with a devout criticism to compare and contrast them, magnifying the excellency of the Author as seen in both. How foolish and wicked are those who instead of accepting the two sacred tomes, and delighting to behold the same divine hand in each, spend all their wits in endeavoring to find discrepancies and contradictions. We may rest assured that the true "Vestiges of Creation" will never contradict Genesis, nor will a correct "Cosmos" be found at variance with the narrative of Moses. He is wisest who reads both the world-book, and the Word-book as two volumes of the same work, and feels concerning them, "My Father wrote them both."

DIVISION. This song very distinctly divides itself into three parts, very well described by the translators in the ordinary heading of our version. The creatures show God's glory, 1-6. The word showeth his grace, 7-11. David prayeth for grace, 12-14. Thus praise and prayer are mingled, and he who here sings the work of God in the world without, pleads for a work of grace in himself within.

1 The heavens declare the glory of God; and the firmament sheweth his handiwork.

19:1 The heavens declare the glory of God. The book of nature has three leaves, heaven, earth, and sea, of which heaven is the first and the most glorious, and by its aid we are able to see the
beauties of the other two. Any book without its first page would be sadly imperfect, and especially the great Natural Bible, since its first pages, the sun, moon, and stars, supply light to the rest of the volume, and are thus the keys, without which the writing which follows would be dark and undiscerned. Man walking erect was evidently made to scan the skies, and he who begins to read creation by studying the stars begins the book at the right place. The heavens are plural for their variety, comprising the watery heavens with their clouds of countless forms, the aerial heavens with their calms and tempests, the solar heavens with all the glories of the day, and the starry heavens with all the marvels of the night; what the Heaven of heavens must be hath not entered into the heart of man, but there in chief all things are telling the glory of God. Any part of creation has more instruction in it than human mind will ever exhaust, but the celestial realm is peculiarly rich in spiritual lore.

The heavens declare, or are declaring, for the continuance of their testimony is intended by the participles employed; every moment God's existence, power, wisdom and goodness, are being sounded abroad by the heavenly heralds which shine upon us from above. He who would guess at divine sublimity should gaze upward into the starry vault; he who would imagine infinity must peer into the boundless expanse; he who desires to see divine wisdom should consider the balancing of the orbs; he who would know divine fidelity must mark the regularity of the planetary motions; and he who would attain some conceptions of divine power, greatness, and majesty, must estimate the forces of attraction, the magnitude of the fixed stars, and the brightness of the whole celestial train. It is not merely glory that the heavens declare, but the glory of God, for they deliver to us such unanswerable arguments for a conscious, intelligent, planning, controlling, and presiding Creator, that no unprejudiced person can remain unconvinced by them. The testimony given by the heavens is no mere hint, but a plain, unmistakable declaration; and it is a declaration of the most constant and abiding kind. Yet for all this, to what avail is the loudest declaration to a deaf man, or the clearest showing to one spiritually blind? God the Holy Ghost must illuminate us, or all the suns in the Milky Way never will.

The firmament sheweth his handy-work; not handy in the vulgar use of that term, but handwork. The expanse is full of the works of the Lord's skilful, creating hands; hands being attributed to the great creating Spirit to set forth his care and workmanlike action, and to meet the poor comprehension of mortals. It is humbling to find that even when the most devout and elevated minds are desirous to express their loftiest thoughts of God, they must use words and metaphors drawn from the earth. We are children, and must each confess, "I think as a child, I speak as a child." In the expanse above us God flies, as it were, his starry flag to show that the King is at home, and hangs out his escutcheon that atheists may see how he despises their denunciations of him. He who looks up to the firmament and then writes himself down an atheist, brands himself at the same moment as an idiot or a liar. Strange is it that some who love God are yet afraid to study the God-declaring book of nature; the mock-spirituality of some believers, who are too heavenly to consider the heavens, has given color to the vaunts of infidels that nature contradicts revelation. The wisest of men are those who with pious eagerness trace the goings forth of Jehovah as well in creation as in grace; only the foolish have any fears lest the honest study of the one should injure our faith in the other.

Dr. M'Cosh has well said,
"We have often mourned over the attempts made to set the works of God against the Word of God, and thereby excite, propagate, and perpetuate jealousies fitted to separate parties that ought to live in closest union. In particular, we have always regretted that endeavors should have been made to depreciate nature with a view of exalting revelation; it has always appeared to us to be nothing else than the degrading of one part of God's work in the hope thereby of exalting and recommending another. Let not science and religion be reckoned as opposing citadels, frowning defiance upon each other, and their troops brandishing their armour in hostile attitude. They have too many common foes, if they would but think of it, in ignorance and prejudice, in passion and vice, under all their forms, to admit of their lawfully wasting their strength in a useless warfare with each other. Science has a foundation, and so has religion; let them unite their foundations, and the basis will be broader, and they will be two compartments of one great fabric reared to the glory of God. Let one be the outer and the other the inner court. In the one, let all look, and admire and adore; and in the other, let those who have faith kneel, and pray, and praise. Let the one be the sanctuary where human learning may present its richest incense as an offering to God, and the other the holiest of all, separated from it by a veil now rent in twain, and in which, on a blood-sprinkled mercy-seat, we pour out the love of a reconciled heart, and hear the oracles of the living God."

2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge.

| 19:2 Day unto day uttereth speech, and night unto night sheweth knowledge. | As if one day took up the story where the other left it, and each night passed over the wondrous tale to the next. The original has in it the thought of pouring out or welling over, with speech; as though days and nights were but as a fountain flowing evermore with Jehovah's praise. Oh to drink often at the celestial well, and learn to utter the glory of God! The witnesses above cannot be slain or silenced; from their elevated seats they constantly preach the knowledge of God, unawed and unbiased by the judgment of men. Even the changes of alternating night and day are mutely eloquent, and light and shade equally reveal the Invisible One; let the vicissitudes of our circumstances do the same, and while we bless the God of our days of joy, let us also extol him who giveth "songs in the night."

The lesson of day and night is one which it were well if all men learned. It should be among our day-thoughts and night-thoughts, to remember the flight of time, the changeful character of earthly things, the brevity both of joy and sorrow, the preciousness of life, our utter powerlessness to recall the hours once flown, and the irresistible approach of eternity. Day bids us labour, night reminds us to prepare for our last time; day bids us work for God, and night invites us to rest in him; day bids us look for endless day, and night warns us to escape from everlasting night.

| 19:3 There is no speech nor language, where their voice is not heard. | Every man may hear the voices of the stars. Many are the languages of terrestrials, to celestials there is but one, and that one may be understood by every willing mind. The lowest heathen are without excuse, if they do not discover the invisible things of God in the works which he has made. Sun, moon, and stars...
are God's traveling preachers; they are apostles upon their journey confirming those who regard the Lord, and judges on circuit condemning those who worship idols. The margin gives us another rendering, which is more literal, and involves less repetition; "no speech, no words, their voice is not heard;" that is to say, their teaching is not addressed to the ear, and is not uttered in articulate sounds; it is pictorial, and directed to the eye and heart; it touches not the sense by which faith comes, for faith cometh by hearing. Jesus Christ is called the Word, for he is a far more distinct display of Godhead than all the heavens can afford; they are, after all, but dumb instructors; neither star nor sun can arrive at a word, but Jesus is the express image of Jehovah's person, and his name is the Word of God.

4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun,

19:4 Their line is gone out through all the earth, and their words to the end of the world. Although the heavenly bodies move in solemn silence, yet in reason's ear they utter precious teachings. They give forth no literal words, but yet their instruction is clear enough to be so described. George Horne (1730-1792) says that the phrase employed indicates a language of signs, and thus we are told that the heavens speak by their significant actions and operations. Nature's words are like those of the deaf and dumb, but grace tells us plainly of the Father. By their line is probably meant the measure of their domain which, together with their testimony, has gone out to the utmost end of the habitable earth. No man living beneath the copes of heaven dwells beyond the bounds of the diocese of God's Court-preachers; it is easy to escape from the light of ministers, who are as stars in the right hand of the Son of Man; but even then men, with a conscience yet unseared, will find a Nathan to accuse them, a Jonah to warn them, and an Elijah to threaten them in the silent stars of night. To gracious souls the voices of the heavens are more influential far, they feel the sweet influences of the Pleiades, and are drawn towards their Father God by the bright bands of Orion.

Note

Pleiades. The Pleiades star cluster, also known as the Seven Sisters, is a conspicuous object in the night sky with a prominent place in ancient mythology. The cluster contains hundreds of stars, of which only a handful are commonly visible to the eye without a telescope.

Many a night I saw the Pleiads, rising thro’ the mellow shade,
Glitter like a swarm of fireflies tangles in a silver band.

Alfred Lord Tennyson (1837)

Note

Orion. Refers to a constellation of stars steeped in mythology. According to Greek mythology Orion died being stung by a scorpion. He is set such in the sky that he sets in the west while his slayer, the Scorpius raises in the east. (S.E. M.).

In them hath he set a tabernacle for the sun. In the heavens the sun encamps, and marches like a mighty monarch on his glorious way. He has no fixed abode, but as a traveler pitches and
removes his tent, a tent which will soon be taken down and rolled together as a scroll. As the royal pavilion stood in the center of the host, so the sun in his place appears like a king in the midst of attendant stars.

5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber, and rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race.

19:5 Which is as a bridegroom coming out of his chamber. A bridegroom comes forth sumptuously appareled, his face beaming with a joy which he imparts to all around; such, but with a mighty emphasis, is the rising Sun. "And rejoiceth as a strong man to run a race." As a champion girt for running cheerfully addresses himself to the race, so does the sun speed onward with matchless regularity and unwearying swiftness in his appointed orbit. It is but mere play to him; there are no signs of effort,flagging, or exhaustion. No other creature yields such joy to the earth as her bridegroom the sun; and none, whether they be horse or eagle, can for an instant compare in swiftness with that heavenly champion. But all his glory is but the glory of God; even the sun shines in light borrowed from the Great Father of Lights.

"Thou sun, of this great world
both eye and soul,
Acknowledge Him thy greater;
sound his praise
Both when thou climb'st,
and when high noon hast gained,
And when thou fall'st."

6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it: and there is nothing hid from the heat thereof.

19:6 His going forth is from the end of the heaven, and his circuit unto the ends of it. He bears his light to the boundaries of the solar heavens, traversing the zodiac with steady motion, denying his light to none who dwell within his range.

And there is nothing hid from the heat thereof. Above, beneath, around, the heat of the sun exercises an influence. The bowels of the earth are stored with the ancient produce of the solar rays, and even yet earth's inmost caverns feel their power. Where light is shut out, yet heat and other more subtle influences find their way. There is no doubt a parallel intended to be drawn between the heaven of grace and the heaven of nature. God's way of grace is sublime and broad, and full of his glory; in all its displays it is to be admired and studied with diligence; both its lights and its shades are instructive; it has been proclaimed, in a measure, to every people, and in due time shall be yet more completely published to the ends of the earth. Jesus, like a sun, dwells in the midst of revelation, tabernacling among men in all his brightness; rejoicing, as the Bridegroom of his church, to reveal himself to men; and, like a champion, to win unto himself renown. He makes a circuit of mercy, blessing the remotest corners of the earth; and there are no seeking souls, however degraded and depraved, who shall be denied the comfortable warmth and
benediction of his love—even death shall feel the power of his presence, and resign the bodies of the saints, and this fallen earth shall be restored to its pristine glory. In the three following verses (7, 8, 9) we have a brief but instructive hexapla (six sided) containing six descriptive titles of the word, six characteristic qualities mentioned and six divine effects declared. Names, nature, and effect are well set forth.

7 The law of the LORD is perfect, converting the soul: the testimony of the LORD is sure, making wise the simple.

19:7 The law of the Lord is perfect; by which he means not merely the law of Moses but the doctrine of God, the whole run and rule of sacred Writ. The doctrine revealed by God he declares to be perfect, and yet David had but a very small part of the Scriptures, and if a fragment, and that the darkest and most historical portion, be perfect, what must the entire volume be? How more than perfect is the book which contains the clearest possible display of divine love, and gives us an open vision of redeeming grace. The gospel is a complete scheme or law of gracious salvation, presenting to the needy sinner everything that his terrible necessities can possibly demand. There are no redundancies and no omissions in the Word of God, and in the plan of grace; why then do men try to paint this lily and gild this refined gold? The gospel is perfect in all its parts, and perfect as a whole: it is a crime to add to it, treason to alter it, and felony to take from it.

Converting the soul. Making the man to be returned or restored to the place from which sin had cast him. The practical effect of the Word of God is to turn the man to himself, to his God, and to holiness; and the turn or conversion is not outward alone, “the soul” is moved and renewed. The great means of the conversion of sinners is the Word of God, and the more closely we keep to it in our ministry the more likely we are to be successful. It is God's Word rather than man's comment on God's Word which is made mighty with souls. When the law drives and the gospel draws, the action is different but the end is one, for by God's Spirit the soul is made to yield, and cries, "Turn me, and I shall be turned." Try men's depraved nature with philosophy and reasoning, and it laughs your efforts to scorn, but the Word of God soon works a transformation.

The testimony of the Lord is sure. God bears his testimony against sin, and on behalf of righteousness; he testifies of our fall and of our restoration; this testimony is plain, decided, and infallible, and is to be accepted as sure. God's witness in his Word is so sure that we may draw solid comfort from it both for time and eternity, and so sure that no attacks made upon it however fierce or subtle can ever weaken its force. What a blessing that in a world of uncertainties we have something sure to rest upon! We hasten from the quicksands of human speculations to the terra firma of Divine Revelation.

Making wise the simple. Humble, candid, teachable minds receive the word, and are made wise unto salvation. Things hidden from the wise and prudent are revealed unto babes. The persuadable grow wise, but the cathers continue fools. As a law or plan the Word of God converts, and then as a testimony it instructs; it is not enough for us to be converts, we must continue to be disciples; and if we have felt the power of truth, we must go on to prove its certainty by experience. The perfection of the gospel converts, but its sureness
edifies; if we would be edified it becomes us not to stagger at the promise through unbelief, for a doubted gospel cannot make us wise, but truth of which we are assured will be our establishment.

8 The statutes of the LORD are right, rejoicing the heart: the commandment of the LORD is pure, enlightening the eyes.

19:8 The statutes of the Lord are right. His precepts and decrees are founded in righteousness, and are such as are right or fitted to the right reason of man. As a physician gives the right medicine and a counselor gives the right advice, so does the Book of God.

Rejoicing the heart. Mark the progress; he who was converted was next made wise and is now made happy; that truth which makes the heart right then gives joy to the right heart. Free-grace brings heart-joy. Earthborn mirth dwells on the lip, and flushes the bodily powers; but heavenly delights satisfy the inner nature, and fill the mental faculties to the brim. There is no cordial of comfort like that which is poured from the bottle of Scripture. "Retire and read thy Bible to be gay." "The commandment of the Lord is pure." No mixture of error defiles it, no stain of sin pollutes it; it is the unadulterated milk, the undiluted wine.

Enlightening the eyes, purging away by its own purity the earthly grossness which mars the intellectual discernment: whether the eye be dim with sorrow or with sin, the Scripture is a skilful oculist, and makes the eye clear and bright. Look at the sun and it puts out your eyes, look at the more than sunlight of Revelation and it enlightens them; the purity of snow causes snow-blindness to the Alpine traveler, but the purity of God's truth has the contrary effect, and cures the natural blindness of the soul. It is well again to observe the gradation; the convert becomes a disciple and next a rejoicing soul, he now obtains a discerning eye and as a spiritual man discerneth all things, though he himself is discerned of no man.

9 The fear of the LORD is clean, enduring for ever: the judgments of the LORD are true and righteous altogether.

10 More to be desired are they than gold, yea, than much fine gold: sweeter also than honey and the honeycomb.

19:10 Sweeter than honey and the honeycomb. Love the word written. Psalm 119:97.

"Oh, how love I thy law!" "Lord," said Augustine (354-430 AD),

"let the holy Scriptures be my chaste delight." Chrysostom compares the Scripture to a garden, every truth is a fragrant flower, which we should wear, not on our bosom, but in our heart. David counted the word "sweeter than honey and the honeycomb." There is that in Scripture which may breed delight. It shows us the way to riches: Deuteronomy 28:5, Proverbs 3:10; to long life: Psalm 34:12; to a kingdom: Hebrews 12:28. Well, then, may we count those the sweetest hours which are spent in reading the holy Scriptures; well may we say with the prophet (Jeremiah 15:16), "Thy words were found and I did eat them; and they were the joy and rejoicing of my heart"—Thomas Watson.
11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned: and in keeping of them there is great reward.

19:11 Moreover by them is thy servant warned. A certain Jew had formed a design to poison Martin Luther, but was disappointed by a faithful friend, who sent Luther a portrait of the man, with a warning against him. By this, Luther knew the murderer and escaped his hands. Thus the word of God, O Christian, shows thee the face of those lusts which Satan employs to destroy thy comforts and poison thy soul.—G. S. Bowes, B.A., in "Illustrative Gatherings for Preachers and Teachers."

19:11 In keeping of them there is great reward. This "keeping of them" implies great carefulness to know, to remember, and to observe; and the "reward" (literally "the end"), i.e., the recompense, is far beyond anticipation.—W. Wilson.

19:11 In keeping of them there is great reward. Not only for keeping, but in keeping of them, there is great reward. The joy, the rest, the refreshing, the comforts, the contents, the smiles, the incomes that saints now enjoy, in the ways of God, are so precious and glorious in their eyes, that they would not exchange them for ten thousand worlds. Oh! if the vails, (Gratuities, presents), be thus sweet and glorious before pay-day comes, what will be that glory that Christ will crown his saints with for cleaving to his service in the face of all difficulties, when he shall say to his Father, "Lo, here am I, and the children which thou hast given me." Isaiah 8:18. If there be so much to be had in the wilderness, what then shall be had in paradise! —Thomas Brooks 1608-1680, Nonconformist preacher.

19:11 In keeping of them there is great reward. Not only for keeping but in keeping of them. As every flower hath its sweet smell, so every good action hath its sweet reflection upon the soul: and as Girolamo Cardan [1501, 1576, who lectured and wrote on mathematics, medicine, astronomy, astrology, alchemy, and physics] saith, that every precious stone hath some egregious virtue; so here, righteousness is its own reward, though few men think so, and act accordingly. Howbeit, the chief reward is not till the last cast, till we come home to heaven. The word here rendered "reward," signifieth the heel, and by a metaphor, the end of a work, and the reward of it, which is not till the end —John Trapp, 1611-1669.

19:11 "Reward." Though we should not serve God for a reward, yet we shall have a reward for our service. The time is coming when ungodliness shall be as much prosecuted by justice, as in times past godliness had been persecuted by injustice. Though our reward be not for our good works, yet we shall have our good works rewarded, and have a good reward for our works. Though the best of men (they being at the best but unprofitable servants) deserve nothing at the hands of God, yet they may deserve much at the hands of men; and if they have not the recompense they deserve, yet it is a kind of recompense to have deserved. As he said, and nobly,

"I had rather it should be said, Why doth not Cato's image stand here? Than it should be said, Why doth it stand here?"—Ralph Venning. 1620-1673.

12 Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults.

19:12 Who can understand his errors? After this survey of the works and word of God, he comes at last to peruse the third book, his conscience; a book which though wicked men may
can understand his errors? Those notions which God had with his own hand imprinted upon conscience in legible characters, are partly defaced and slurried with scribble, and interlinings of "secret faults;" partly obliterated and quite razed out with capital crimes, "presumptuous sins." And yet this manuscript cannot be so abused, but it will still give in evidence for God; there being no argument in the world that can with more force extort an acknowledgment of God from any man's conscience than the conviction of guilt itself labors under. For the sinner cannot but know he has transgressed a law, and he finds within him, if he is not past all sense, such apprehensions that though at present he "walk in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes" (as the wise man ironically advises the young man to do, Ecclesiastes 11:9), yet he knows (as the same wise man there from his own experience tells him) that "for all these things God will bring him into judgment." The conscience being thus convicted of sin, where there is any sense of true piety the soul will, with David, here address itself to God for pardon, that it may be cleansed from secret faults; and for grace, that by its restraints, and preventions, and assistances, it may be "kept back from presumptuous sins," and if unhappily engaged, that it may be freed at least from the "dominion" of them—"Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me," etc.—Adam Littleton, 1627-1694.

19:12 The prophet saith, "Who can understand his own faults?" No man can, but God can; therefore reason after this manner, as Saint Bernard (1090-1153) saith: “I know and am known; I know but in part, but God knows me and knows me wholly; but what I know I know but in part.” So the apostle reasons;” I know nothing of myself, yet am I not hereby justified.” Admit that thou keepest thyself so free, and renewest thy repentance so daily that thou knowest nothing by thyself, yet mark what the apostle adds further; "Notwithstanding, I do not judge myself; I am not hereby justified, but he that judges me is the Lord.” This is the condition of all men; he that is infinite knows them; therefore they should not dare to judge themselves, but with the prophet David, in Psalm 19, entreat the Lord that he would cleanse them from their secret sins —Richard Stock.

19:12 Who can understand his own errors? None can to the depth and bottom. In this question there are two considerables:
A concession;

A confession. He makes a grant that our life is full of errors; and the Scriptures say the same, while they affirm that:

"All we like sheep have gone astray" (Isaiah 53:6);

"I have gone astray like a lost sheep" Psalm 119:176; that the


I need not reckon up the particulars, as the errors of our senses, understandings, consciences, judgments, wills, affections, desires, actions, and occurrences. The whole man in nature is like a tree nipped at root, which brings forth worm-eaten fruits. The whole man in life is like an instrument out of tune, which jars at every stroke. If we cannot understand them, certainly they are very many—Robert Abbot, 1646.

19:12 Who can understand his errors? If a man repent not until he have made confession of all his sins in the ear of his ghostly father, if a man cannot have absolution of his sins until his sins be told by tale and number in the priest's ear; in that, as David saith, none can understand, much less, then, utter all his sins: Delicta quis intelligat? "Who can understand his sins?" In that David of himself complaineth elsewhere how that his "sins are overflowed his head, and as a heavy burden do depress him" (Psalm 38:4); Alas! Shall not a man by this doctrine be utterly driven from repentance? Though they have gone about something to make plasters for their sores, of confession or attrition to assuage their pain, bidding a man to hope well of his contrition, though it be not so full as required, and of his confession, though he have not numbered all his sins, if so be that he do so much as in him lieth: dearly beloved, in that there is none but that herein he is guilty (for who doth as much as he may?) trow ye that this plaster is not like salt for sore eyes? Yes, undoubtedly, when they have done all they can for the appeasing of consciences in these points, this is the sum, that we yet should hope well, but yet so hope that we must stand in a mammering (hesitating) and doubting whether our sins be forgiven. For to believe remissionem peccatorum, that is to be certain of "forgiveness of sins," as our creed teacheth us, they count it a presumption. Oh, abomination! And that not only herein, but in all their penance as they paint it—John Bradford (Martyr), 1510-1555.

19:12 Who can understand his errors? By "errors" he means his unwitting and inconsiderate mistakes. There are sins, some of which are committed when the sun shines—i.e., with light and knowledge; and then, as it is with colors when the sun shines, you may see them; so these, a man can see, and know, and confess them particularly to be transgressions. There are other sins which are committed either in the times of ignorance, or else (if there be knowledge), yet with unobservance. Either of these may be so heaped up in the particular number of them, that as a man did when he did commit them, take no notice of them; so now, after the commission, if he should take the brightest candle to search all the records of his soul, yet many of them would escape his notice. And, indeed, this is a great part of our misery, that we cannot understand all our debts. We can easily see too many, yet many more lie, as it were, dead and out of sight.
To sin is one great misery, and then to forget our sins is a misery too. If in repentance we could set the battle in array, point to every individual sin in the true and particular times of acting and re-acting, oh, how would our hearts be more broken with shame and sorrow, and how would we adore the richness of the treasure of mercy which must have a multitude in it to pardon the multitude of our infinite errors and sins. But this is the comfort; though we cannot understand every particular sin, or time of sinning, yet if we be not idle to search and cast over the books, and if we be heartily grieved for these sins which we have found out, and can by true repentance turn from them unto God, and by faith unto the blood of Jesus Christ, I say that God, who knows our sins better than we can know them, and who understands the true intentions and dispositions of the heart—that if it did see the unknown sins it would be answerably carried against them—he will for his own mercy sake forgive them, and he, too, will not remember them. Nevertheless, though David saith,

**Who can understand his errors?** as the prophet Jeremiah spake also, "The heart of man is desperately wicked, who can know it?" yet must we bestir ourselves at heaven to get more and more heavenly light, to find out more and more of our sinnings. So the Lord can search the heart; and, though we shall never be able to find out all our sins which we have committed, yet it is proper and beneficial for us to find out yet more sins than yet we do know. And you shall find these in your own experience; that as soon as ever grace entered your hearts, you saw sin in another way than you ever saw it before; yea, and the more grace hath traversed and increased in the soul, the more full discoveries hath it made of sins. It hath shown new sins as it were; new sins, not for their being, not as if they were not in the heart and life before, but for their evidence and our apprehension. We do now see such wages and such inclinations to be sinful which we did not think to be so before. As physic brings those humors which had their residence before now more to the sense of the patient, or as the sun makes open the motes of dust which were in the room before, so doth the light of the word discover more corruption—Obadiah Sedgwick.

19:12 **Who can understand his errors?** Who can tell how oft he offendeth? No man. The hairs of a man's head may be told, the stars appear in multitudes, yet some have undertaken to reckon them; but no arithmetic can number our sins. Before we can recount a thousand we shall commit ten thousand more; and so rather multiply by addition than divide by subtraction; there is no possibility of numeration. Like Hydra's head, while we are cutting off twenty by repentance, we find a hundred more grown up. It is just, then, that infinite sorrows shall follow infinite sins—Thomas Adams, 1614.

19:12 **Cleanse thou me from secret faults.** It is the desire of a holy person to be cleansed, not only from public, but also from private and secret sins. Romans 7:24. "O wretched man (saith Paul), who shall deliver me?" Why, O blessed apostle! What is it that holds thee? What is it that molesteth thee? Thy life, thou sayest, was unblamable before thy conversion, and since thy conversion. Philippians 3. Thou hast exercised thyself to have always a conscience void of offence toward God and toward men. Acts 24:16. And yet thou criest out, "O wretched man," and yet thou complainest,

"Who shall deliver me?" Verily, brethren, it was not sin abroad, but at home: it was not sin without, but at this time sin within; it was not Paul's sinning with man, but Paul's sinning within Paul: oh! that "law of his members warring (secretly within him) against the law of his mind;"
this, this made that holy man so to cry out, so to complain. As Rebekah was weary of her life, not as we read for any foreign disquietments, but because of domestic troubles:

"The daughters of Heth" within the house made her "weary of her life;" so the private and secret birth of corruption within Paul— the workings of that—that was the cause of his trouble, that was the ground of his exclamation and desires,

"Who shall deliver me?" I remember that the same Paul adviseth the Ephesians as

"to put off the former conversation" so "to put on the renewed spirit of the mind" (Ephesians 4:22, 23); intimating that there are sins lurking within as well as sins walking without; and that true Christians must not only sweep the door, but wash the chamber; my meaning is, not only come off from the sins which lie open in the conversation, but also labour to be cleansed from sin and sinning which remain secret and hidden in the spirit and inward disposition—Obadiah Sedgwick, 1599-1658, Puritan divine.

19:12 Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Learn to see thy spots. Many have unknown sins, as a man may have a mole on his back and himself never know it. Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults. But have we not spots whereof we are not ignorant? In diseases sometimes nature is strong enough to put forth spots, and there she cries to us by these outward declarations that we are sick. Sometimes she cannot do it but by the force of cordials. Sometimes conscience of herself shows us our sins; sometimes she cannot but by medicines, arguments that convince us out of the holy word. Some can see, and will not, as Balaam; some would see, and cannot, as the eunuch; some neither will nor can, as Pharaoh; some both can and will, as David. We have many spots which God does not hear from us, because we see them not in ourselves. Who will acknowledge that error, whereof he does not know himself guilty? The sight of sins is a great happiness, for it causeth an ingenuous confession—Thomas Adams.

19:12 Cleanse thou me from secret faults. The law of the Lord is so holy that forgiveness must be prayed for, even for hidden sins. (Note—This was a principal text of the Reformers against the auricular confession of the Roman Catholics.)—T. C. Barth's "Bible Manual," 1865.

19:12 "Secret faults." Sins may be termed "secret" either,

- When they are colored and disguised—though they do fly abroad, yet not under that name, but appareled with some semblance of virtues. Cyprian complains of such tricks in his second epistle, which is to Donatus (311?-355).

- When they are kept off from the stage of the world; they are like fire in the chimney; though you do not see it, yet it burns. So many a person, like those in Ezekiel, "commit abominations in secret"—that is, so as the public eye is not upon them. He is sinful, and acts it with the greatest vileness; all the difference betwixt another sinner and him is this—that he is, and the other saith he is, a sinner. Just as 'twixt a book shut and a book opened; that which is shut hath the same lines and words, but the other being opened every man may see and read them.
When they are kept, not only from the public eye, but from any mortal eye; that is, the carnal eye of him who commits the sins sees them not; he doth, indeed, see them with the eye of conscience, but not with the eye of natural sense. Even those persons with whom he doth have converse, and who highly commend the frame of his ways, cannot yet see the secret discoursings and actings of sin in his mind and heart. For, brethren, all the actings of sin are not without, they are not visible; but there are some, yes, the most dangerous actings within the soul, where corruption lies as a fountain and root. The heart of man is a scheme of wickedness; nay, a man saith that in his heart which he dares not speak with his tongue, and his thought will do that which his hands dare not to execute. Well, then, sin may be called "secret" when it is sin, and acted as sin, even there, where none but God and conscience can see. Methinks sin is like a candle in a lantern, where the shining is first within and then bursting out at the windows; or like evils and ulcerous humors, which are scabs and scurvy stuff, first within the skin, and afterwards they break out to the view on the outside. So it is with sin; it is a malignant humor and a fretting leprosy, diffusing itself into several secret acts and workings within the mind, and then it breaks abroad and dares adventure the practice of itself to the eye of the world; and be it that it may never see the light, that it may be like a child born and buried in the womb, yet as that child is a man, a true man there closeted in that hidden frame of nature, so sin is truly sin, though it never gets out beyond the womb which did conceive and enliven it—Obadiah Sedgwick.

19:12 "Secret faults." "Secret sins" are more dangerous to the person in some respects than open sins. For a man doth, by his art of sinning, deprive himself of the help of his sinfulness. Like him who will carry his wound covered, or who bleeds inwardly, help comes not in because the danger is not descried or known. If a man's sin breaks out there is a minister at hand, a friend near, and others to reprove, to warn, to direct; but when he is the artificer of his lusts, he bars himself of all public remedy, and takes great order and care to damn his soul, by covering his "secret sins" with some plausible varnish which may beget a good opinion in others of his ways.

A man does by his secrecy give the reins unto corruption: the mind is fed all the day long either with sinful contemplations or projectings, so that the very strength of the soul is wasted and corrupted. Nay, secret actings do but heat and inflame natural corruption. As in shoultering in a crowd, when one hath got out of the door, two or three are ready to fall out after; so when a man hath given his heart leave to act a secret sin, this begets a present, and quick, and strong flame in corruption to repeat and multiply and throng out the acts. Sinful acts are not only fruits of sin, but helps and strengths, all sinning being more sinful by more sinning, not only in the effects but in the cause: the spring and cause of sin will grow mad and insolent hereby, and more corrupt; this being a truth, that if the heart gives way for one sin, it will be ready for the next; if it will yield to bring forth once at the devil's pleasure, it will bring forth twice by its own motion. A man by "secret sins" doth but polish and square the hypocrisy of his heart: he doth strive to be an exact hypocrite; and the more cunning he is in the palliating of his sinnings, the more perfect he is in his hypocrisy—Obadiah Sedgwick.

19:12 "Secret faults." Beware of committing acts, which it will be necessary to conceal. There is a singular poem by Hood, called "The Dream of Eugene Aram"—a most remarkable piece it is indeed, illustrating the point
on which we are now dwelling. Aram had murdered a man, and cast his body into the river—"a sluggish water, black as ink, the depth was so extreme." The next morning he visited the scene of his guilt—

"And sought the black accursed pool,
With a wild misgiving eye;
And he saw the dead in the river bed,
For the faithless stream was dry."

Next he covered the corpse with heaps of leaves, but a mighty wind swept through the wood and left the secret bare before the sun—

"Then down I cast me on my face,
And first began to weep,
For I knew my secret then was one
That earth refused to keep:
On land or sea though it should be
Ten thousand fathoms deep."

In plaintive notes he prophesies his own discovery. He buried his victim in a cave, and trod him down with stones, but when years had run their weary round, the foul deed was discovered and the murderer put to death. Guilt is a "grim chamberlain," even when his fingers are not bloody red. Secret sins bring fevered eyes and sleepless nights, until men burn out their consciences, and become in very deed ripe for the pit. Hypocrisy is a hard game to play at, for it is one deceiver against many observers; and for certain it is a miserable trade, which will earn at last, as its certain climax, a tremendous bankruptcy.

Ah! ye who have sinned without discovery, "Be sure your sin will find you out;" and bethink you, it may find you out ere long. Sin, like murder, will come out; men will even tell tales about themselves in their dreams. God has made men to be so wretched in their consciences that they have been obliged to stand forth and confess the truth. Secret sinner! If thou wantest the foretaste of damnation upon earth, continue in thy secret sins; for no man is more miserable than he who sinneth secretly, and yet trieth to preserve a character.

Yon stag, followed by the hungry hounds, with open mouths, is far more happy than the man who is pursued by his sins. Yon bird, taken in the fowler's net, and laboring to escape, is far more happy than he who hath weaved around himself a web of deception, and labors to escape from it, day by day making the toils more thick and the web more strong. Oh the misery of secret sins! One may well pray, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."—Spurgeon's Sermons (No. 116), on "Secret Sins."

19:12 The sin through ignorance (Heb.) is the same that David prays against in Psalm 19:12, "Who can understand his errors (Heb.)? Cleanse thou me from secret things!" These are not sins of omission, but acts committed by a person, when at the time, he did not suppose that what he did was sin. Although he did the thing deliberately, yet he did not perceive the sin of it. So deceitful is sin, we may be committing that abominable thing which casts angels into an immediate and an eternal hell, and yet at the moment be totally unaware! Want of knowledge of
the truth, and too little tenderness of conscience hide it from us. Hardness of heart and a corrupt
type cause us to sin unperceived. But here again the form of the Son of Man appears! Jehovah,
God of Israel, institutes sacrifice for sins of ignorance, and thereby discovers the same
compassionate and considerate heart that appears in our High Priest, "who can have compassion
on the ignorant!"

Hebrews 5:2. Amidst the types of this tabernacle, we recognize the presence of Jesus—it is his
voice that shakes the curtains, and speaks in the ear of Moses, "If a soul shall sin through
ignorance!" The same yesterday, to day, and for ever! —Andrew A. Bonar, in "Commentary on
Leviticus," ch. iv. v. 2.

Verse 12 (last clause). This is a singular difference between pharisaical and real sanctity: that is
curious to look abroad, but seeth nothing at home: so that
Pharisee condemned the Publican, and saw nothing in himself worthy of blame; but this careful
to look at home, and searcheth into the secret corners, the very spirit of the mind. So did good
David when he prayed, "Cleanse thou me from secret faults."—Nathanael Hardy.

19:12 Our corruptions have made us such combustible matter, that there is scarce a dart thrown
at us in vain: when Satan tempts us, it is but like the casting of fire into tinder, that presently
catcheth: our hearts kindle upon the least spark that falls; as a vessel that is brimful of water,
upon the least jog, runs over. Were we but true to ourselves, though the devil might knock by his
temptations, yet he could never burst open the everlasting doors of our hearts by force or
violence; but alas! we ourselves are not all of one heart and one mind:

Satan hath got a strong party within us, that, as soon as he knocks, opens to him, and entertains
him. And hence it is, that many times, small temptations and very petty occasions draw forth
great corruptions: as a vessel, that is full of new liquor, upon the least vent given, works over
into foam and froth; so truly, our hearts, almost upon every slight and trivial temptation, make
that inbred corruption that lodgeth there, swell and boil, and run over into abundance of scum
and filth in our lives and conversations—Ezekiel Hopkins, 1634-1690.

19:12 Sins are many times hid from the godly man's eye, though he commits them, because he is
not diligent and accurate in making a search of himself, and in an impartial studying of his own
ways. If any sin be hid, as Saul was behind the stuff, or as Rahab had hid the spies, unless a man
be very careful to search, he shall think no sin is there where it is. Hence it is that the Scripture
doeth so often command that duty of searching and trying, of examining and communing with our
hearts. Now what need were there of this duty, but that it is supposed many secret and subtle
lusts lie lurking in our hearts, which we take no notice of? If then the godly would find out their
hidden lusts, know the sins they not yet know, they must more impartially judge themselves;
they must take time to survey and examine themselves; they must not in an overly and slight
manner, but really and industriously look up and down as they would search for thieves; and they
must again and again look into this dark corner, and that dark corner of their hearts, as the
woman sought for the lost groat [the traditional name of the English silver coin worth four
English pennies]. This self-scrutiny, and self-judging, this winnowing and sifting of ourselves, is
the only way to see what is chaff and what is wheat, what is mere refuse and what is enduring —
Anthony Burgess.
19:12 Sin is of a growing and advancing nature. From weakness to willfulness, from ignorance to presumption, is its ordinary course and progress. The cloud that Elijah's man saw, was at first no bigger than a hand's-breadth, and it threatened no such thing as a general tempest; but yet, at last, it overspread the face of the whole heavens; so truly, a sin that at first ariseth in the soul but as a small mist, and is scarcely discernable; yet, if it be not scattered by the breath of prayer, it will at length overspread the whole life, and become most tempestuous and raging. And therefore, David, as one experienced in the deceitfulness of sin, doth thus digest and methodize his prayer: first against secret and lesser sins; and then against the more gross and notorious; as knowing the one proceeds and issues from the other: Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults; and this will be a most effectual means to preserve and keep thy servant from presumptuous sins—Ezekiel Hopkins.

13 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.

19:12, 13 That there is a difference betwixt infirmities and presumptuous sins is not to be denied; it is expressly in the holy Scripture. Papists say that the man who doth a mortal sin is not in the state of grace; but for venials, a man may commit (in their divinity) who can tell how many of them, and yet be in Christ for all that! I hope there is no such meaning in any of our divines as to tie up men's consciences, to hang on such a distinction of sins; since it is beyond the wit of man to set down a distinct point between mortal and venial sins.

Now when it is an impossible matter punctually to set down to the understanding of man which is, and which is not a venial sin, they must pardon me for giving the least way to such divinity as must needs leave the conscience of a man in a maze and labyrinth. I find that the nature of infirmities doth so depend upon circumstances, that that is an infirmity in one man which is a gross sin in another; and some men plead for themselves that the things they do are but infirmities. He that will sin, and when he hath done will say—not to comfort his soul against Satan, but—to flatter himself in his sin, that it is but an infirmity; for aught I know, he may go to hell for his infirmities.

Besides, if that be good divinity, that a man who is in the state of grace may do infirmities, but not commit gross sins, then I would I could see a man that would undertake to find us out some rule out of the word, by which a sinner may find by his sin, when he is in Christ and when out of Christ; at what degree of sinning—where lies the mathematical point and stop—that a man may say, "Thus far may I go and yet be in grace; but if I step a step farther, then I am none of Christ's."

We all know that sins have their latitude; and for a man to hang his conscience on such a distinction as hath no rule to define where the difference lies, is not safe divinity. The conscience on the rack will not be laid and said with forms and quiddities. The best and nearest way to quiet the heart of man is to say, that be the sin a sin of infirmity when we strive and strive but yield at last; or, of precipitancy, when we be taken in haste, as he was who said in his haste, "All men are liars;" or, a mere gross sin in the matter: ay, say it be a presumptuous sin, yet if we allow it not, it hinders not but we are in Christ, though we do with reluctance act and commit it.
And I say that we do resist it if we do not allow it. For let us not go about to deny that a godly man during his being a godly man may possibly commit gross and presumptuous sins; and for infirmities, if we allow them and like them that we know to be sins, then we do not resist them; and such a man who allows himself in one is guilty of all, and is none of Christ's as yet. Be the sin what it will, James makes no distinction; and, where the law distinguisheth not, we must not distinguish. I speak not of doing a sin, but allowing; for a man may do it, and yet allow it not; as in Paul (Romans 7:15, 16),

"That which I would not, that I do;" and he that allows not sin doth resist it. Therefore, a man may resist it, hate it, and yet do it. All the difference that I know is this:

- That a man may live after his conversion all his days, and yet never fall into a gross sin. By gross here I mean presumptuous sins also. So David saith not "cleanse," but "KEEP BACK thy servant from presumptuous sins." We may, then, be kept from them. I speak not that all are, but some be; and, therefore, in itself all might be.

- For lesser sins, "secret faults," we cannot live without them—they are of daily and almost hourly incursion; but yet we must be cleansed from them, as David speaks. Daily get your pardon; there is a pardon, of course, for them; they do not usually distract and plague the conscience, but yet we must not see them and allow them; if we do our case is to be pitied, we are none of Christ's as yet.

- Great staring sins a man cannot usually and commonly practice them, but he shall allow them. So Psalm 19:13, "Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me," implying that except we be kept back from them they will have dominion over us. It follows, "then shall I be upright;" so that the man in whom gross or presumptuous sins or sins have no dominion, he is an upright man—Richard Capel.

19:12, 13.

The psalmist was sensible of sin's force and power; he was weary of sin's dominion; he cries unto God to deliver him from the reign of all the sins he knew; and those sins which were secret and concealed from his view, he begs that he might be convinced of them, and thoroughly cleansed from them. The Lord can turn the heart perfectly to hate the sin that was most of all beloved; and the strength of sin is gone when once 'tis hated; and as the hatred grows stronger and stronger, sin becomes weaker and weaker daily—Nathaniel Vincent, 1695.

19:13 "Keep back thy servant also from all presumptuous sins." He doth desire absolutely to be kept from "presumptuous sins;" but then, he adds by way of supposition and reserve, that if he could not by reason of his naughty heart be kept from them, yet that they might not have full power and dominion over him—Thomas Manton.
19:13 *Keep back thy servant.* It is an evil man's cross to be restrained, and a good man's joy to be kept back from sin. When sin puts forth itself, the evil man is putting forth his hand to the sin; but when sin puts forth itself, the good man is putting forth his hand to heaven; if he finds his heart yielding, out he cries, *O keep back thy servant.* An evil man is kept back from sin, as a friend from a friend, as a lover from his lover, with knit affections and projects of meeting; but a good man is kept back from sin, as a man from his deadly enemy, whose presence he hates, and with desires of his ruin and destruction. It is the good man's misery that he hath yet a heart to be more tamed and mastered; it is an evil man's vexation and discontent, that still, or at any time, he is held in by cord or bridle. And thus you see what David aims at in desiring to be kept back from presumptuous sins, namely, not a mere suspension, but a mortification, not a not acting only, but a subduing of the inclination; not for a time, but for ever.—Obadiah Sedgwick.

19:13 *Keep back thy servant,* etc. Even all the people of God, were they not kept by God's grace and power, they would every moment be undone both in soul and body. It is not our grace, our prayer, our watchfulness keeps us, but it is in the power of God, his right arm, supports us; we may see David praying to God that he would "keep" him in both these respects from temporal dangers (Psalm 18:8, 9; "keep me", etc.; where he doth not only pray to be kept, but he doth insinuate how carefully God keeps his people, and in what precious account their safety is, even as "the apple of the eye," and for spiritual preservation he often begs it.

Though David be God's "servant" yet he will, like a wild horse, run violently, and that into "presumptuous sins," if God "keep" him not "back," yea, he prayeth that God would "keep" the particular parts of his body that they sin not: "keep the door of my lips" (Psalm 141:3); he entreateth God to "keep" his lips and to set a watch about his mouth, as if he were not able to set guard sure enough: thus much more are we to pray that God would "keep" our hearts, our minds, our wills, our affections, for they are more masterful—Anthony Burgess.

19:13 "*Keep back thy servant.*" God keeps back his servants from sin,
- **By preventing grace,** which is, by infusing such a nature as is like a bias into a bowl, drawing it aside another way;

- **By assisting grace,** which is a further strength superadded to that first-implanted nature of holiness; like a hand upon a child holding him in;

- **By quickening grace,** which is, when God doth enliven our graces to manifest themselves in actual opposition; so that the soul shall not yield, but keep off from entertaining the sin;

- **By directing grace,** which is, when God confers that effectual wisdom to the mind, tenderness to the conscience, watchfulness to the heart, that his servants become greatly solicitous of his honour, scrupulously jealous of their own strength, and justly regardful of the honour of their holy profession;

- **By doing grace,** which is, when God effectually inclines the hearts of his servants to the places and ways of their refuge, safeties, and preservations from sin, by enlarging the spirit of supplication, and framing the heart to the reverent and affectionate use of his ordinances—Condensed from Obadiah Sedgwick.
Thy servant: as if he had said, "O God, thou art my Lord, I have chosen thee, to whom I will give obedience; thou art he whom I will follow; I bestow all that I am on thee. Now a lord will help his servant against an enemy, who for the lord's service is the servant's enemy. O my Lord, help me! I am not able by my own strength to uphold myself, but thou art All-sufficiency"—

"Keep back thy servant from presumptuous sins. . . . Beloved, it is a great thing to stand in near relations to God; and then it is a good thing to plead by them with God, forasmuch as nearer relations have strongest force with all. The servant can do more than a stranger, and the child than a servant, and the wife than a child. There be many reasons against sinning. Now this also may come in, namely, the specialty of our relation to God, that we are his children, and he is our Father; we are his servants, and he is our Lord: though the common obligations are many and sufficient, yet the special relations are also a further tie: the more near a person comes to God, the more careful he should be not to sin against God—Obadiah Sedgwick.

Presumptuous sins. The Rabbins distinguish all sins unto those committed (Heb.) ignorantly, and (Heb.) presumptuously—Benjamin Kennicott, D.D., 1718-1783.

Presumptuous sins. When sin grows up from act to delight, from delight to new acts, from repetition of sinful acts to vicious indulgence, to habit and custom and a second nature, so that anything that toucheth upon it is grievous, and strikes to the man's heart; when it is got into God's place, and requires to be loved with the whole strength, makes grace strike sail, and other vices do it homage, demands all his concerns to be sacrificed to it and to be served with his reputation, his fortunes, his parts, his body, and soul, to the irreparable loss of his time and eternity both—this is the height of its dominion—then sin becomes "exceedingly sinful," and must needs make strange and sad alterations in the state of saints themselves, and be great hindrances to them in their way to Heaven, having brought them so near to Hell—Adam Littleton.

Presumptuous sins. The distribution of sins into sins of ignorance, of infirmity, and of presumption, is very usual and very useful, and complete enough without the addition (which some make) of a fourth sort, to wit, sins of negligence or inadvertency, all such sins being easily reducible to some of the former three. The ground of the distinction is laid in the soul of man, where there are three distinct prime faculties, from which all our actions flow—the understanding, the will, and the sensual appetite or affections. . . . The enquiry must be, when a sin is done, where the fault lay most; and thence it must have the right denomination.

If the understanding be most in fault, not apprehending that good it should, or not aright, the sin so done, though possibly it may have in it somewhat both of infirmity and presumption withal, is yet properly a sin of ignorance.

If the main fault be in the affections, through some sudden passion or perturbation of mind, blinding, or corrupting, or but outrunning the judgment—as of fear, anger, desire, joy, or any of the rest—the sin thence arising, though perhaps joined with some ignorance or presumption withal, is yet properly a sin of infirmity.
But if the understanding be completely informed with knowledge, and not much blinded or transported with the incursion of any sudden, or violence of any vehement perturbation, so as the greatest blame must remain upon the untowardness of the will, resolutely bent upon the evil, the sin arising from such willfulness, though probably not free from all mixture of ignorance and infirmity withal, is yet properly a willful presumption, such a presumptuous sin as we are now in treaty of.

Rules are soonest learned and best remembered when illustrated with fit examples; and of such the rich storehouse of the Scripture affordeth us in each kind variety and choice enough, whence it shall suffice us to propose but one eminent of each sort. The men, all of them for their holiness, of singular and worthy renown: David, St. Peter, and St. Paul.

The sins, all of them for their matter, of the greatest magnitude: murdering of the innocent, abnegation of Christ, persecution of the church: Paul's persecution a grievous sin, yet a sin of ignorance; Peter's denial a grievous sin, yet a sin of infirmity; David's murder, a far more grievous sin than either of both, because a sin of presumption.

St. Paul, before his conversion, whilst he was Saul, persecuted and wasted the church of God to the utmost of his power, making havoc of the professors of Christ, entering into their very houses, and haling thence to prison, both men and women; and posting abroad with letters into remote quarters, to do all the mischief he could, everywhere with great fury, as if he had been mad, breathing out, wherever he came, nothing but threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord. His affections were not set against them through any personal provocations, but merely out of zeal to the law; and surely his zeal had been good had it not been blind.

Nor did his will run cross to his judgment, but was led by it, for he "verily thought in himself that he ought to do many things contrary to the name of Jesus;" and verily his will had been good had it not been misled. But the error was in his understanding, his judgment being not yet actually convinced of the truth of the Christian religion. He was yet fully persuaded that Jesus was an impostor, and Christianity a pestilent sect, raised by Satan, to the disgrace and prejudice of Moses and the law. If these things had indeed been so, as he apprehended them, his affections and will, in seeking to root out such a sect, had been not only blameless but commendable. It was his erroneous judgment that poisoned all, and made that which otherwise had been zeal, to become persecution.

But, however, the first discernable obliquity therein being in the understanding, that persecution of his was therefore a sin of ignorance, so called, and under that name condemned by himself. 1 Timothy 1:13. But such was not Peter's denial of his Master. He knew well enough who he was having conversed so long with him, and having, long before, so amply confessed him. And he knew also that he ought not, for anything in the world, to have denied him. That made him so confident before that he would not do it, because he was abundantly satisfied that he should not do it. Evident it is, then, that Peter wanted no knowledge, either of the Master's person, or of his own duty; and so no plea left him of ignorance, either facti [artificial] or juris [authoritative]. Nor was the fault so much in his will as to make it a sin properly of presumption.

For albeit de facto [after the fact] he did deny him when he was put to it, and that with fearful oaths and imprecations, yet was it not done with any prepensed apostasy, or out of design, yea,
he came rather with a contrary resolution, and he still honored his Master in his heart, even then when he denied him with his tongue; and as soon as ever the watchword was given him by the second cock, to prefer to his consideration what he had done, it grieved him sore that he had so done, and he wept bitterly for it. We find no circumstance, in the whole relation, that argueth any deep obstinacy in his will.

But in his affections, then! Alas! there was the fail! A sudden qualm of fear surprising his soul when he saw his Master so despitefully used before his face (which made him apprehensive of what hard usage himself might fall under if he should there and then have owned him) took from him for that time the benefit and use of his reason, and so drew all his thoughts to this one point—how to decline the present danger— that he had never a thought at so much liberty as to consult his judgment, whether it were a sin or no. And this, proceeding from such a sudden distemper of passion, Peter's denial was a sin properly of infirmity. But David's sin, in contriving the death of Uriah, was of a yet higher pitch, and of a deeper dye than either of these. He was no such stranger in the law of God as not to know that the willful murder of an innocent party, such as he also knew Uriah to be, was a most loud crying sin; and therefore nothing surer than that it was not merely a sin of ignorance. Neither yet was it a sin properly of infirmity, and so capable of that extenuating circumstance of being done in the heat of anger, as his uncleanness with Bathsheba was in the heat of lust, although that extenuation will not be allowed to pass there, unless in tanto [in part] only, and as it standeth in comparison with this fouler crime. But having time and leisure enough to bethink himself what he was about, he doth it in cool blood, and with much advised deliberation, plotting and contriving this way and that way to perfect his design. He was resolved, whatsoever should become of it, to have it done; in regard of which settled resolution of his will, this sin of David was therefore a high presumptuous sin—Robert Sanderson (Bishop of Lincoln), 1587-1662-3.

19:13 Presumptuous sins. David prays that God would keep him back from "presumptuous sins," from known and evident sins, such as proceed from the choice of the perverse will against the enlightened mind, which are committed with deliberation, with design, resolution, and eagerness, against the checks of conscience, and the motions of God's spirit: such sins are direct rebellion against God, a despising of his command, and they provoke his pure eyes—Alexander Cruden.

19:13 "Then shall I be innocent from the great transgression." It is in the motions of a tempted soul to sin, as in the motions of a stone falling from the brow of a hill; it is easily stopped at first, but when once it is set a-going, who shall stay it? And therefore it is the greatest wisdom in the world to observe the first motions of the heart, to check and stop it there—G. H. Salter.

19:13 "The great transgression." Watch very diligently against all sin; but above all, take special heed of those sins that come near to the sin against the Holy Ghost; and these are, hypocrisy, taking only the outward profession of religion, and so dissembling and mocking of God; sinning willfully against conviction of conscience, and against great light and knowledge, sinning presumptuously, with a high hand. These sins, though none of them are the direct sin against the Holy Ghost, yet they will come very near to it: therefore take special heed of them, lest they, in time, should bring you to the committing of that unpardonable sin.—Robert Russel, 1705.
19:13. “Let them not have dominion over me.” Any small sin may get the upper-hand of the sinner and bring him under in time, and after that is once habituated by long custom so as he cannot easily shake off the yoke, neither redeem himself from under the tyranny thereof. We see the experiment of it but too often, and too evidently in our common swearers and drunkards. Yet do such kind of sins, for the most part, grow on by little and little, steal into the throne insensibly, and do not exercise dominion over the enslaved soul till they have got strength by many and multiplied acts. But a presumptuous sin worketh a great alteration in the state of the soul at once, and by one single act advanceth marvelously, weakening the spirit, and giving a mighty advantage to the flesh, even to the hazard of a complete conquest—Robert Sanderson.

19:13 To sin presumptuously is the highest step. So in David's account; for first he prays, "Lord, keep me from secret sins," which he maketh sins of ignorance, and then next he prays against "presumptuous sins," which, as the opposition shows, are sins against knowledge; for says he, "if they get dominion over me, I shall not be free from that great offence," that is, that unpardonable sin which shall never be forgiven: so as these are nearest it of any other, yet not so as that every one that falls into such a sin commits it, but he is nigh to it, at the next step to it. For to commit that sin, but two things are required—light in the mind, and malice in the heart; not malice alone, unless there be light, for then that apostle had sinned it, so as knowledge is the parent of it, it is "after receiving the knowledge of the truth." Hebrews 10:27, 28—Thomas Goodwin.

19:13 Happy souls, who, under a sense of peace through the blood of Jesus, are daily praying to be kept by the grace of the Spirit. Such truly know themselves, see their danger of falling, will not, dare not palliate or lessen the odious nature, and hateful deformity of their sin. They will not give a softer name to sin than it deserves, lest they depreciate the infinite value of that precious blood which Jesus shed to atone its guilt. Far will they be from flattering themselves into a deceitful notion that they are perfect, and have no sin in them. The spirit of truth delivers them from such errors; he teacheth them as poor sinners to look to the Saviour, and to beseech him to "keep back" the headstrong passions, the unruly lusts and evil concupiscence which dwell in their sinful natures. Alas! the most exalted saint, the most established believer, if left to himself, how soon might the blackest crimes, the most "presumptuous sins," get the "dominion" over him! David had woeful experience of this for a season. He prays from a heartfelt sense of past misery, and the dread of future danger, and he found the blessing of that covenant-promise: "Sin shall not have dominion over you; for ye are not under the law, but under grace.” Romans 6:14—William Mason, 1719-1791, in "A Spiritual Treasury for the Children of God."

14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O LORD, my strength, and my redeemer.
19:14 Let the words of my mouth, etc. The best of men have their failing, and an honest Christian may be a weak one; but weak as he may be, the goodness and sincerity of his heart will entitle him to put the petition of this verse, which no hypocrite or cunning deceiver can ever make use of, —Thomas Sherlock (Bishop), 1676-1761.

19:14 Let the words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength and my Redeemer. Fast and pray; Lord, I do fast, and I would pray; for to what end do I withhold sustenance from my body if it be not the more to cheer up my soul? my hungry, my thirsty soul? But the bread, the water of life, both which I find nowhere but in thy word, I partake not but by exercising my soul therein. This I begin to do, and fain would do it well, but in vain shall I attempt except thou do bless: bless me then, O Lord; bless either part of me, both are thine, and I would withhold neither part from thee. Not my body; I would set my tongue on work to speak of thee; not my soul, I would exercise my heart in thinking on thee; I would join them in devotion which thou hast joined in creation. Yea, Lord, as they have conspired to sin against thee, so do they nor consort to do their duty to thee; my tongue is ready, my heart is ready; I would think, I would speak; think upon thee, speak to thee. But, Lord, what are my words? what are my thoughts?

Thou knowest the thoughts of men, that they are altogether vanity, and our words are but the blast of such thoughts; both are vile. It were well it were no more; both are wicked, my heart a corrupt fountain, and my tongue an unclean stream; and shall I bring such a sacrifice to God? The halt, the lame, the blind, though otherwise the beasts be clean, yet are they sacrifices abominable to God: how much more if we offer those beasts which are unclean? And yet, Lord, my sacrifice is no better, faltering words, wandering thoughts, are neither of them presentable to thee; how much less evil thoughts and idle words? Yet such are the best of mine. What remedy?

If any, it is in thee, O Lord, that I must find it, and for it now do I seek unto thee. Thou only, O Lord, canst hallow my tongue, and hallow my heart that my tongue may speak, and my heart think that which may "be acceptable unto thee," yea, that which may be thy delight. Do not I lavish? Were it not enough that God should bear with, that he should not publish, the defects of my words, of my thoughts? May I presume that God shall accept of me? Nay, delight in me? Forget I who the Lord is? Of what majesty? Of what felicity? Can it stand with his Majesty to vouchsafe acceptance?

With his felicity to take content in the words of a worm? in the thoughts of a wretch? And, Lord, I am too proud that vilify myself so little, and magnify thee no more. But see whither the desire of thy servant doth carry him; how, willing to please, I consider not how hard it is for dust and ashes to please God, to do that wherein God should take content. But Lord, here is my comfort that I may set God to give content unto God; God is mine, and I cannot want access unto God, if God may approach himself. Let me be weak, yet God is strong; O Lord, thou art "my strength." Let me be a slave to sin, God is a Saviour; O Lord, thou art my Saviour; thou hast redeemed me from all that woeful state whereunto Adam cast me, yea, thou hast built me upon a rock, strong and sure, that the gates of hell might never prevail against me. These two things hast thou done for me, O Lord, and what may not he presume of for whom thou hast done these things! I fear not to come before thee.
I presume my devotion shall content thee; be thine eyes never such all-seeing eyes, I will be bold to present my inward, my outward man before thee; be thy eyes never so holy eyes, I will not fly with Adam to hide my nakedness from thee, for I am able to keep my ground; seeing I am supported by my Lord, I doubt not but to prove a true Israelite, and to prevail with God. For all my woe, for all my sin, I will not shrink, nay, I will approach, approach to thee, for thou art "My Redeemer." The nearer I come to thee, the freer shall I be both from sin and woe. Oh, blessed state of man who is so weak, so strong; so wretched, and so happy; weak in himself, strong in God; most happy in God, though in himself a sinful wretch. And now, my soul, thou wouldst be devout; thou mayest be what thou wouldst: sacrifice to God thy words, sacrifice to God thy thoughts, make thyself a holocaust, doubt not but thou shalt be accepted, thou shalt content even the most glorious, the most holy eyes of God. Only presume not of thyself, presume on him; build thy words, build thy thoughts upon thy Rock, they shall not be shaken; free thy words, free thy thoughts (thoughts and words enthralled to sin), by thy Saviour, and thy sacrifice shall be accepted. So let me build on thee, so let me be enlarged by thee, in soul, in body, that "The words of my mouth, and the meditation of my heart, be acceptable in thy sight, O Lord, my strength, and my Redeemer."—Arthur Lake (Bishop), in "Divine Meditations," 1629.
Psalm 20

To the chief Musician
A Psalm of David

SUBJECT. We have before us a National Anthem, fitted to be sung at the outbreak of war, when the monarch was girding on his sword for the fight. If David had not been vexed with wars, we might never have been favored with such psalms as this. There is a needs be for the trials of one saint, that he may yield consolation to others. A happy people here plead for a beloved sovereign, and with loving hearts cry to Jehovah, "God save the King." We gather that this song was intended to be sung in public, not only from the matter of the song, but also from its dedication

"To the Chief Musician." We know its author to have been Israel's sweet singer, from the short title,

"A Psalm of David." The particular occasion which suggested it, it would be mere folly to conjecture, for Israel was almost always at war in David's day. His sword may have been hacked, but it was never rusted. David Kimchi (d. 1240) reads the title, concerning David, or, for David, and it is clear that the king is the subject as well as the composer of the song. It needs but a moment's reflection to perceive that this hymn of prayer is prophetical of our Lord Jesus, and is the cry of the ancient church on behalf of her Lord, as she sees him in vision enduring a great fight of afflictions on her behalf. The militant people of God, with the great Captain of salvation at their head, may still in earnest plead that the pleasure of the Lord may prosper in his hand.

We shall endeavor to keep to this view of the subject in our brief exposition, but we cannot entirely restrict out remarks to it.

DIVISION. The first four verses are a prayer for the success of the king. Verses 5, 6, and 7 express unwavering confidence in God and his Anointed; verse 8 declares the defeat of the foe, and verse 9 is a concluding appeal to Jehovah.

1 The LORD hear thee in the day of trouble; the name of the God of Jacob defend thee;

20:1 The Lord hear thee in the day of trouble. All loyal subjects pray for their king, and most certainly citizens of Zion have good cause to pray for the Prince of Peace. In times of conflict loving subjects redouble their pleas, and surely in the sorrows of our Lord his church could not
but be in earnest. All the Savior’s days were days of trouble, and he also made them days of prayer; the church joins her intercession with her Lord's, and pleads that he may be heard in his cries and tears. The agony in the garden was especially a gloomy hour, but he was heard in that he feared. He knew that his Father heard him always, yet in that troublous hour no reply came until thrice he had fallen on his face in the garden; then sufficient strength was given in answer to prayer, and he rose a victor from the conflict. On the cross also his prayer was not unheard, for in the twenty-second Psalm he tells us, "thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns." The church in this verse implies that her Lord would be himself much given to prayer; in this he is our example, teaching us that if we are to receive any advantage from the prayers of others, we must first pray for ourselves. What a mercy that we may pray in the day of trouble, and what a still more blessed privilege that no trouble can prevent the Lord from hearing us! Troubles roar like thunder, but the believer's voice will be heard above the storm. O Jesus, when thou pleadest for us in our hour of trouble, the Lord Jehovah will hear thee. This is a most refreshing confidence, and it may be indulged in without fear.

The name of the God of Jacob defend thee; or, as some read it, "set thee in a high place." By "the name" is meant the revealed character and Word of God; we are not to worship "the unknown God," but we should seek to know the covenant God of Jacob, who has been pleased to reveal his name and attributes to his people. There may be much in a royal name, or a learned name, or a venerable name, but it will be a theme for heavenly scholarship to discover all that is contained in the divine name. The glorious power of God defended and preserved the Lord Jesus through the battle of his life and death, and exalted him above all his enemies. His warfare is now accomplished in his own proper person, but in his mystical body, the church, he is still beset with dangers, and only the eternal arm of our God in covenant can defend the soldiers of the cross, and set them on high out of the reach of their foes. The day of trouble is not over, the pleading Saviour is not silent, and the name of the God of Israel is still the defense of the faithful. The name, "God of Jacob," is suggestive; Jacob had his day of trouble, he wrestled, was heard, was defended, and in due time was set on high, and his God is our God still, the same God to all his wrestling Jacobs. The whole verse is a very fitting benediction to be pronounced by a gracious heart over a child, a friend, or a minister, in prospect of trial; it includes both temporal and spiritual protection, and directs the mind to the great source of all good. How delightful to believe that our heavenly Father has pronounced it upon our favored heads!

2 Send thee help from the sanctuary, and strengthen thee out of Zion;

20:2 Send thee help from the sanctuary. Out of heaven's sanctuary came the angel to strengthen our Lord, and from the precious remembrance of God's doings in his sanctuary our Lord refreshed himself when on the tree. There is no help like that which is of God's sending, and no deliverance like that which comes out of his sanctuary. The sanctuary to us is the person of our blessed Lord, who was typified by the temple, and is the true sanctuary which God has pitched, and not man: let us fly to the cross for shelter in all times of need and help will be sent to us. Men of the world despise sanctuary help, but our hearts have learned to prize it beyond all material aid. They seek help out of the armory, or the treasury, or the buttery, but we turn to the sanctuary.
And strengthen thee out of Zion. Out of the assemblies of the pleading saints who had for ages prayed for their Lord, help might well result to the despised sufferer, for praying breath is never spent in vain. To the Lord's mystical body the richest comes in answer to the pleadings of his saints assembled for holy worship as his Zion. Certain advertisers recommend a strengthening plaster, but nothing can give such strength to the loins of a saint as waiting upon God in the assemblies of his people. This verse is a benediction befitting a Sabbath morning, and may be the salutation either of a pastor to his people, or of a church to its minister. God in the sanctuary of his dear Son's person, and in the city of his chosen church is the proper object of his people's prayers, and under such a character may they confidently look to him for his promised aid.

3 Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice; Selah.

20:3 Remember all thy offerings, and accept thy burnt sacrifice. Selah. Before war kings offered sacrifice, upon the acceptance of which the depended for success; our blessed Lord presented himself as a victim, and was a sweet savour unto the Most High, and then he met and routed the embattled legions of hell. Still does his burnt sacrifice perfume the courts of heaven, and through him the offerings of his people are received as his sacrifices and oblations. We ought in our spiritual conflicts to have an eye to the sacrifice of Jesus, and never venture to war until first the Lord has given us a token for good at the altar of the cross, where faith beholds her bleeding Lord. "Selah." It is well to pause at the cross before we march onward to battle, and with the psalmist cry "Selah." We are too much in a hurry to make good haste. A little pausing might greatly help our speed. Stay, good man, there is a haste which hinders; rest awhile, meditate on the burnt sacrifice, and put thy heart right for the stern work which lieth before thee.

4 Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfill all thy counsel.

20:4 Grant thee according to thine own heart, and fulfill all thy counsel. Christ's desire and counsel were both set upon the salvation of his people; the church of old desired for him good speed in his design, and the church in these latter days, with all her heart desires the complete fulfillment of his purpose. In Christ Jesus sanctified souls may appropriate this verse as a promise; they shall have their desire, and their plans to glorify their Master shall succeed. We may have our own will, when our will is God's will. This was always the case with our Lord, and yet he said, "not as I will, but as thou wilt." What need for submission in our case; if it was necessary to him, how much more for us?

5 We will rejoice in thy salvation, and in the name of our God we will set up our banners: the LORD fulfill all thy petitions.

20:5 We will rejoice in thy salvation. In Jesus there is salvation; it is his own, and hence it is called thy salvation; but it is ours to receive and ours to rejoice in. We should fixedly resolve that come what may, we will rejoice in the saving arm of the Lord Jesus. The people in this psalm, before their king went to battle,
felt sure of victory, and therefore began to rejoice beforehand; how much more ought we to do this who have seen the victory completely won! Unbelief begins weeping for the funeral before the man is dead; why should not faith commence piping before the dance of victory begins? Buds are beautiful, and promises not yet fulfilled are worthy to be admired. If joy were more general among the Lord's people, God would be more glorified among men; the happiness of the subjects is the honour of the sovereign. "And in the name of our God we will set up our banners."

We lift the standard of defiance in the face of the foe, and wave the flag of victory over the fallen adversary. Some proclaim war in the name of one king, and some of another, but the faithful go to war in Jesus' name, the name of the incarnate God, Immanuel, God with us. The times are evil at present, but so long as Jesus lives and reigns in his church we need not furl our banners in fear, but advance them with sacred courage.

"Jesus' tremendous name
Puts all our foes to flight;
Jesus, the meek, the angry Lamb
A lion is in fight."

The church cannot forget that Jesus is her advocate before the throne, and therefore she sums up the desires already expressed in the short sentence, "The Lord fulfill all thy petitions." Be it never forgotten that among those petitions is that choice one, "Father, I will that they also whom thou hast given me be with me where I am."

6 Now know I that the LORD saveth his anointed; he will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand.

20:6 Now know I that the Lord saveth his anointed. We live and learn, and what we learn we are not ashamed to acknowledge. He who thinks he knows everything will miss the joy of finding out new truth; he will never be able to cry, "now know I," for he is so wise in his own conceit that he knows all that can be revealed and more. Souls conscious of ignorance shall be taught of the Lord, and rejoice as they learn. Earnest prayer frequently leads to assured confidence. The church pleaded that the Lord Jesus might win the victory in his great struggle, and now by faith she sees him saved by the omnipotent arm. She evidently finds a sweet relish in the fragrant title of "anointed;" she thinks of him as ordained before all worlds to his great work, and then endowed with the needful solace of the believer, that Jehovah himself hath anointed Jesus to be a Prince and a Saviour, and that our shield is thus the Lord's own anointed. "He will hear him from his holy heaven with the saving strength of his right hand." It is here asserted confidently that God's holiness and power would both come to the rescue of the Saviour in his conflict, and surely these two glorious attributes found congenial work in answering the sufferer's cries. Since Jesus was heard, we shall be; God is in heaven, but our prayers can scale those glorious heights; those heavens are holy, but Jesus purifies our prayers, and so they gain admittance; our need is great, but the divine arm is strong, and all its strength is "saving strength;" that strength, moreover, is in the hand which is most used and which is used most readily—the right hand. What encouragements are these for pleading saints!
Contrasts frequently bring out the truth vividly, and here the church sets forth the creature confidences of carnal men in contrast with her reliance upon the Prince Immanuel and the invisible Jehovah.

7 Some trust in chariots, and some in horses: but we will remember the name of the LORD our God.

Some trust in chariots, and some in horses. Chariots and horses make an imposing show, and with their rattling, and dust, and fine caparisons, make so great a figure that vain man is much taken with them; yet the discerning eye of faith sees more in an invisible God than in all these. The most dreaded war-engine of David's day was the war-chariot, armed with scythes, which mowed down men like grass: this was the boast and glory of the neighboring nations; but the saints considered the name of Jehovah to be a far better defense. As the Israelites might not keep horses, it was natural for them to regard the enemy's calvary with more than usual dread. It is, therefore, all the greater evidence of faith that the bold songster can here disdain even the horse of Egypt in comparison with the Lord of hosts. Alas, how many in our day who profess to be the Lord's are as abjectly dependent upon their fellow-men or upon an arm of flesh in some shape or other, as if they had never known the name of Jehovah at all. Jesus, be thou alone our rock and refuge, and never may we mar the simplicity of our faith.

We will remember the name of the Lord our God. "Our God" in covenant, who has chosen us and whom we have chosen; this God is our God. The name of our God is JEHOVAH, and this should never be forgotten: the self-existent, independent, immutable, ever-present, all-filling I AM. Let us adore that matchless name, and never dishonor it by distrust or creature confidence. Reader, you must know it before you can remember it. May the blessed Spirit reveal it graciously to your soul!

8 They are brought down and fallen: but we are risen, and stand upright.

How different the end of those whose trusts are different! The enemies of God are uppermost at first, but they ere long are brought down by force, or else fall of their own accord. Their foundation is rotten, and therefore when the time comes it gives way under them: their chariots are burned in the fire, and their horses die of pestilence, and where is their boasted strength? As for those who rest on Jehovah, they are often cast down at the first onset, but an Almighty arm uplifts them, and they joyfully stand upright. The victory of Jesus is the inheritance of his people. The world, death, Satan, and sin, shall all be trampled beneath the feet of the champions of faith; while those who rely upon an arm of flesh shall be ashamed and confounded for ever.

9 Save, LORD: let the king hear us when we call.

The Psalm is here recapitulated. That Jesus might himself be delivered, and might then, as our King, hear us, is the two-fold desire of the Psalm. The first request is granted, and the second is sure to all the seed; and therefore we may close the Psalm with the hearty shout, "God save the King." "God save King Jesus, and may he soon come to reign."
Psalm 21

To the chief Musician
A Psalm of David

SUBJECT. The title gives us but little information; it is simply, To the chief Musician, a Psalm of David. Probably written by David, sung by David, relating to David, and intended by David to refer in its fullest reach of meaning to David's Lord. It is evidently the fit companion of Psalm Twenty, and is in its proper position next to it. Psalm Twenty anticipates what this regards as realized. If we pray today for a benefit and receive it, we must, ere the sun goes down, praise God for that mercy, or we deserve to be denied the next time. It has been called David's triumphant song, and we may remember it as The Royal Triumphant Ode. "The king" is most prominent throughout, and we shall read it to true profit if our meditation of him shall be sweet while perusing it. We must crown him with the glory of our salvation; singing of his love, and praising his power, The next psalm will take us to the foot of the cross, this introduces us to the steps of the throne.

DIVISION. The division of the translators will answer every purpose. A thanksgiving for victory, verses 1 to 6. Confidence of further success, verses 7 to 13.

1 The king shall joy in thy strength, O LORD; and in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice!

21:1 The king shall joy in thy strength, O Lord. Jesus is a Royal Personage. The question, "Art thou a King then?" received a full answer from the Savior's lips: Thou sayest that I am a King. To this end was I born, and for this purpose came I into the world, that I might bear witness unto the truth." He is not merely a King, but the King; King over minds and hearts, reigning with a dominion of love, before which all other rule is but mere brute force. He was proclaimed King even on the cross, for there, indeed, to the eye of faith, he reigned as on a throne, blessing with more than imperial munificence the needy sons of earth. Jesus has wrought out the salvation of his people, but as a man he found his strength in Jehovah his God, to whom he addressed himself in prayer upon the lonely mountain's side, and in the garden's solitary gloom. That strength so abundantly given is here gratefully acknowledged, and made the subject of joy. The Man of Sorrows is now anointed with the oil of gladness above his fellows. Returned in triumph from the overthrow of all his foes, he offers his own rapturous Te Deum in the temple above, and joys in the power of the Lord. Herein let every subject of King Jesus imitate the King; let us lean upon Jehovah's strength, let us joy in it by unstaggering faith, let us exult in it in our thankful songs. Jesus not only has thus rejoiced, but he shall do so as he sees the power of divine grace
bringing out from their sinful hiding-places the purchase of his soul's travail; we also shall
rejoice more and more as we learn by experience more and more fully the strength of the arm of
our covenant God. Our weakness unstrings our harps, but his strength tunes them anew. If we
cannot sing a note in honour of our own strength, we can at any rate rejoice in our omnipotent
God.

And in thy salvation how greatly shall he rejoice! Everything is ascribed to God; the source is
thy strength and the stream is thy salvation. Jehovah planned and ordained it, works it and
crowns it, and therefore it is his salvation. The joy here spoken of is described by a note of
exclamation and a word of wonder: "how greatly!" The rejoicing of our risen Lord must, like his
agony, be unutterable. If the mountains of his joy rise in proportion to the depth of the valleys of
his grief, then his sacred bliss is high as the seventh heaven. For the joy which was set before
him as he endured the cross, despising the shame, and now that joy daily grows, for he rests in
his love and rejoices over his redeemed with singing, as in due order they are brought to find
their salvation in his blood. Let us with our Lord rejoice in salvation, as coming from God, as
coming to us, as extending itself to others, and as soon to encompass all lands. We need not be
afraid of too much rejoicing in this respect; this solid foundation will well sustain the loftiest
edifice of joy. The shoutings of the early Methodists in the excitement of the joy were far more
pardonable than our own lukewarmness. Our joy should have some sort of inexpressibleness in
it.

2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire, and hast not withholden the request of
his lips. Selah.

21:2 Thou hast given him his heart's desire. That desire he ardently pursued when he was on
earth, both by his prayer, his actions, and his suffering; he manifested that his heart longed to
redeem his people, and now in heaven he has his desire granted him, for he sees his beloved
coming to be with him where he is. The desires of the Lord Jesus were from his heart, and the
Lord heard them; if our hearts are right with God, he will in our case also "fulfill the desires of
them that fear him."

And hast not withholden the request of his lips. What is in the well of the heart is sure to come
up in the bucket of the lips, and those are the only true prayers where the heart's desire is first,
and the lip's request follows after. Jesus prayed vocally as well as mentally; speech is a great
assistance to thought. Some of us feel that even when alone we find it easier to collect our
thoughts when we can pray aloud. The requests of the Saviour were not witheld. He was and
still is a prevailing Pledger. Our Advocate on high returns not empty from the throne of grace.
He asked for his elect in the eternal council-chamber, he asked for blessings for them here, he
asked for glory for them hereafter, and his requests have speeded. He is ready to ask for us at the
mercy-seat. Have we not at this hour some desire to send up to his Father by him? Let us not be
slack to use our willing, loving, all-prevailing Intercessor.

Selah. Here a pause is very properly inserted that we may admire the blessed success of the
king's prayers, and that we may prepare our own requests which may be presented through him.
If we had

a few more quiet rests, a few more Selahs in our public worship, it might be profitable.
3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness: thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head.

21:3 For thou preventest him with the blessings of goodness. The word prevent formerly signified to precede or go before, and assuredly Jehovah preceded his Son with blessings. Before he died saints were saved by the anticipated merit of his death, before he came believers saw his day and were glad, and he himself had his delights with the sons of men. The Father is so willing to give blessings through his Son, that instead of his being constrained to bestow his grace, he outstrips the Mediatorial march of mercy. I say not that I will pray the Father for you, for the Father himself loveth you.” Before Jesus calls the Father answers, and while he is yet speaking he hears. Mercies may be bought with blood, but they are also freely given. The love of Jehovah is not caused by the Redeemer's sacrifice, but that love, with its blessings of goodness, preceded the great atonement, and provided it for our salvation. Reader, it will be a happy thing for thee if, like thy Lord, thou canst see both providence and grace preceding thee, forestalling thy needs, and preparing thy path. Mercy, in the case of many of us, ran before our desires and prayers, and it ever outruns our endeavors and expectancies, and even our hopes are left to lag behind. Prevenient grace deserves a song; we may make one out of this sentence; let us try. All our mercies are to be viewed as "blessings;" gifts of a blessed God, meant to make us blessed; they are "blessings of goodness," not of merit, but of free favour; and they come to us in a preventing way, a way of prudent foresight, such as only preventing love could have arranged. In this light the verse is itself a sonnet!

Thou settest a crown of pure gold on his head. Jesus wore the thorn-crown, but now wears the glory-crown. It is a "crown," indicating royal nature, imperial power, deserved honour, glorious conquest, and divine government. The crown is of the richest, rarest, most resplendent, and most lasting order—"gold," and that gold of the most refined and valuable sort, "pure gold," to indicate the excellence of his dominion. This crown is set upon his head most firmly, and whereas other monarchs find their diadems fitting loosely, his is fixed so that no power can move it, for Jehovah himself has set it upon his brow. Napoleon crowned himself, but Jehovah crowned the Lord Jesus; the empire of the one melted in an hour, but the other has an abiding dominion. Some versions read, "a crown of precious stones;" this may remind us of those beloved ones who shall be as jewels in his crown, of whom he has said,

"They shall be mine in the day when I make up my jewels." May we be set in the golden circlet of the Redeemer's glory, and adorn his head for ever!

4 He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever.

21:4 He asked life of thee, and thou gavest it him, even length of days for ever and ever. The first words may suit King David, but the length of days for ever and ever can only refer to the King Messiah. Jesus, as man, prayed for resurrection and he received it, and now possesses it in immortality. He died once, but being raised from the dead he dieth no more. “Because I live, ye
shall live also,” is the delightful intimation which the Saviour gives us, that we are partakers of his eternal life. We had never found this jewel, if he had not rolled away the stone which covered it.

5 His glory is great in thy salvation: honour and majesty hast thou laid upon him.

221:5 *His glory is great in thy salvation.* Immanuel bears the palm; he once bore the cross. The Father has glorified the Son, so that there is no glory like unto that which surroundeth him. See his person as it is described by John in the Revelation; see his dominion as it stretches from sea to sea; see his splendor as he is revealed in flaming fire. Lord, who is like unto thee? Solomon in all his glory could not be compared with thee, thou once despised Man of Nazareth! Mark, reader: salvation is ascribed to God; and thus the Son, as our Saviour, magnifies his Father; but the Son's glory is also greatly seen, for the Father glorifies his Son. “*Honor and majesty hast thou laid upon him.*” John Parkhurst (1728-1797) reads, "splendor and beauty." These are put upon Jesus as chains of gold, and stars and tokens of honour are placed upon princes and great men. As the wood of the tabernacle was overlaid with pure gold, so is Jesus covered with glory and honour. If there be a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory for his humble followers, what must there be for our Lord himself? The whole weight of sin was laid upon him; it is but meet that the full measure of the glory of bearing it away should be laid upon the same beloved person. A glory commensurate with his shame he must and will receive, for well has he earned it. It is not possible for us to honour Jesus too much; what our God delights to do, we may certainly do to our utmost. Oh for new crowns for the lofty brow which once was marred with thorns!

"Let him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed his head to death,
And be his honours sounded high
By all things that have breath."

6 For thou hast made him most blessed for ever: thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.

21:6 *For thou hast made him most blessed for ever.* He is most blessed in himself, for he is God over all, blessed for ever; but this relates to him as our Mediator, in which capacity blessedness is given to him as a reward. The margin has it, *thou hast set him to be blessings;* he is an overflowing wellspring of blessings to others, a sun filling the universe with light. According as the Lord sware unto Abraham, the promised seed is an everlasting source of blessings to all the nations of the earth. He is set for this, ordained, appointed, made incarnate with this very design, that he may bless the sons of men. Oh that sinners had sense enough to use the Saviour for that end to which he is ordained, viz., to be a Saviour to lost and guilty souls.

*Thou hast made him exceeding glad with thy countenance.* He who is a blessing to others cannot but be glad himself; the unbounded good-doing of Jesus ensures him unlimited joy. The loving favour of his Father, the countenance of God, gives Jesus exceeding joy. This is the purest stream to drink of, and Jesus chooses no other. His joy is full. Its source is divine. Its continuance is eternal. Its degree exceeding all bounds. The countenance of God makes the Prince of Heaven
glad; how ought we to seek it, and how careful should we be lest we should provoke him by our sins to hide his face from us! Our anticipations may cheerfully fly forward to the hour when the joy of our Lord shall be shed abroad on all the saints, and the countenance of Jehovah shall shine upon all the blood-bought. So shall we "enter into the joy of our Lord." So far all has been "the shout of them that triumph, the song of them that feast." Let us shout and sing with them, for Jesus is our King, and in his triumphs we share a part.

7 For the king trusteth in the LORD, and through the mercy of the most High he shall not be moved.

21:7 For the king trusteth in the Lord. Our Lord, like a true King and leader, was a master in the use of the weapons, and could handle well the shield of faith, for he has set us a brilliant example of unwavering confidence in God. He felt himself safe in his Father's care until his hour was come, he knew that he was always heard in heaven; he committed his cause to him that judgeth right, and in his last moments he committed his spirit into the same hands. The joy expressed in the former verses was the joy of faith, and the victory achieved was due to the same precious grace. A holy confidence in Jehovah is the true mother of victories. This psalm of triumph was composed long before our Lord's conflict began, but faith overlaps the boundaries of time, and chants her "Io triumphe, [great triumph]" while yet she sings her battle song.

Through the mercy of the Most High he shall not be moved. Eternal mercy secures the mediatorial throne of Jesus. He who is Most High in every sense, engages all his infinite perfections to maintain the throne of grace upon which our King in Zion reigns. He was not moved from his purpose, nor in his sufferings, nor by his enemies, nor shall he be moved from the completion of his designs. He is the same yesterday, to-day, and for ever. Other empires are dissolved by the lapse of years, but eternal mercy maintains his growing dominion evermore; other kings fail because they rest upon an arm of flesh, but our monarch reigns on in splendor because he trusteth in Jehovah. It is a great display of divine mercy to men that the throne of King Jesus is still among them: nothing but divine mercy could sustain it, for human malice would overturn it to-morrow if it could. We ought to trust in God for the promotion of the Redeemer's kingdom, for in Jehovah the King himself trusts: all unbelieving methods of action, and especially all reliance upon mere human ability, should be for ever discarded from a kingdom where the monarch sets the examples of walking by faith in God.

8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee.

21:8 Thine hand shall find out all thine enemies: thy right hand shall find out those that hate thee. The destruction of the wicked is a fitting subject for joy to the friends of righteousness; hence here, and in most scriptural songs, it is noted with calm thanksgiving. "Thou hast put down the mighty from their seats," is a note of the same song which sings, "and hast exalted them of low degree." We pity the lost for they are men, but we cannot pity them as enemies of Christ. None can escape from the wrath of the victorious King, nor is it desirable that they should. Without looking for his flying foes he will find them with his hand, for his presence is about and around them. In vain shall any hope for escape, he will find out all, and be able to punish all, and that too with the ease and rapidity which belong to the warrior's right hand. The finding out relates, we think, not only to the discovery of the hiding places of the haters of God, but to the
touching of them in their tenderest parts, so as to cause the severest suffering. When he appears to judge the world hard hearts will be subdued into terror, and proud spirits humbled into shame. He who has the key of human nature can touch all its springs at his will, and find out the means of bringing the utmost confusion and terror upon those who aforetime boastfully expressed their hatred of him.

21:9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger: the LORD shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them.

21:9 Thou shalt make them as a fiery oven in the time of thine anger. They themselves shall be an oven to themselves, and so their own tormentors. Those who burned with anger against thee shall be burned by thine anger. The fire of sin will be followed by the fire of wrath. Even as the smoke of Sodom and Gomorrah went up to heaven, so shall the enemies of the Lord Jesus be utterly and terribly consumed. Some read it, "thou shalt put them as it were into a furnace of fire." Like faggots cast into an oven they shall burn furiously beneath the anger of the Lord; "they shall be cast into a furnace of fire, there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth." These are terrible words, and those teachers do not well who endeavor by their sophistical reasonings to weaken their force. Reader, never tolerate slight thoughts of hell, or you will soon have low thoughts of sin. The hell of sinners must be fearful beyond all conception, or such language as the present would not be used. Who would have the Son of God to be his enemy when such an overthrow awaits his foes? The expression, "the time of thine anger," reminds us that as now is the time of his grace, so there will be a set time for his wrath. The judge goes upon assize at an appointed time. There is a day of vengeance of our God; let those who despise the day of grace remember this day of wrath.

The Lord shall swallow them up in his wrath, and the fire shall devour them. Jehovah will himself visit with his anger the enemies of his Son. The Lord Jesus will, as it were, judge by commission from God, whose solemn assent and co-operation shall be with him in his sentences upon impenitent sinners. An utter destruction of soul and body, so that both shall be swallowed up with misery, and be devoured with anguish, is here intended. Oh, the wrath to come! The wrath to come! Who can endure it? Lord, save us from it, for Jesus’ sake.

10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth, and their seed from among the children of men.

21:10 Their fruit shalt thou destroy from the earth. Their life's work shall be a failure, and the result of their toil shall be disappointment. That in which they prided themselves shall be forgotten; their very names shall be wiped out as abominable, and their seed from among the children of men. Their posterity following in their footsteps shall meet with a similar overthrow, till at last the race shall come to an end. Doubtless the blessing of God is often handed down by the righteous to their sons, as almost a heirloom in the family, while the dying sinner bequeaths a curse to his descendants. If men will hate the Son of God, they must not wonder if their own sons meet with no favour.
11 For they intended evil against thee: they imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform.

**21:11 For they intended evil against thee.** God takes notice of intentions. He who would but could not is as guilty as he who did. Christ's church and cause are not only attacked by those who do not understand it, but there are many who have the light and yet hate it. Intentional evil has a virus in it which is not found in sins of ignorance; now as ungodly men with malice aforethought attack the gospel of Christ, their crime is great, and their punishment will be proportionate. The words "against thee" show us that he who intends evil against the poorest believer means ill to the King himself: let persecutors beware.

They imagined a mischievous device, which they are not able to perform. Want of power is the clog on the foot of the haters of the Lord Jesus. They have the wickedness to imagine, and the cunning to devise, and the malice to plot mischief, but blessed be God, they fail in ability; yet they shall be judged as to their hearts, and the will shall be taken for the deed in the great day of account. When we read the boastful threatenings of the enemies of the gospel at the present day, we may close our reading by cheerfully repeating, which they are not able to perform. The serpent may hiss, but his head is broken; the lion may worry, but he cannot devour: the tempest may thunder, but cannot strike. Old Giant Pope bites his nails at the pilgrims, but he cannot pick their bones as aforetime. Growling forth a hideous "non possumus," the devil and all his allies retire in dismay from the walls of Zion, for the Lord is there.

12 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.

**21:12 Therefore shalt thou make them turn their back, when thou shalt make ready thine arrows upon thy strings against the face of them.** For a time the foes of God may make bold advances, and threaten to overthrow everything, but a few ticks of the clock will alter the face of their affairs. At first they advance impudently enough, but Jehovah meets them to their teeth, and a taste of the sharp judgment of God speedily makes them flee in dismay. The original has in it the thought of the wicked being set as a butt for God to shoot at, a target for his wrath to aim at. What a dreadful situation! As an illustration upon a large scale, remember Jerusalem during the siege; and for a specimen in an individual, read the story of the deathbed of Francis Spira. God takes sure aim; who would be his target? His arrows are sharp and transfix the heart; who would wish to be wounded by them? Ah, ye enemies of God, your boastings will soon be over when once the shafts begin to fly!

**Note**

Francis Spira. was a well educated and articulate civil lawyer. In 1548, Francis embraced Lutheranism and began to share the message of salvation by grace alone with others. Under opposition from the Catholic Church, however, he renounced his Protestant faith only to become convinced that he was a reprobate, destined for hell. The story of his subsequent spiritual despair spread throughout Europe, surfacing in sermons and treatises.
13 Be thou exalted, LORD, in thine own strength: so will we sing and praise thy power.

21:13 **Be thou exalted, Lord, in thine own strength.** A sweet concluding verse. Our hearts shall join in it. It is always right to praise the Lord when we call to remembrance his goodness to his Son, and the overthrow of his foes. The exaltation of the name of God should be the business of every Christian; but since such poor things as we fail to honour him as he deserves, we may invoke his own power to aid us. Be high, O God, but do thou maintain thy loftiness by thine own almightiness, for no other power can worthily do it.

**So will we sing and praise thy power.** For a time the saints may mourn, but the glorious appearance of their divine Helper awakens their joy. Joy should always flow in the channel of praise. All the attributes of God are fitting subjects to be celebrated by the music of our hearts and voices, and when we observe a display of his power, we must extol it. He wrought our deliverance alone, and he alone shall have the praise.
Palm 22

To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar, A Psalm of David

TITLE. "To the chief Musician upon Aijeleth Shahar. A Psalm of David." This ode of singular excellence was committed to the most excellent of the temple songsters; the chief among ten thousand is worthy to be extolled by the chief Musician; no meaner singer must have charge of such a strain; we must see to it that we call up our best abilities when Jesus is the theme of praise. The words Aijeleth Shahar are enigmatical, and their meaning is uncertain; some refer them to a musical instrument used upon mournful occasions, but the majority adhere to the translation of our margin, "Concerning the kind of the morning." This last interpretation is the subject of much enquiry and conjecture. Calmet believed that the psalm was addressed to the music master who presided over the band called the "Morning Hind," and Adam Clarke thinks this to be the most likely of all the conjectural interpretations, although he himself inclines to the belief that no interpretation should be attempted, and believes that it is a merely arbitrary and unmeaning title, such as Orientals have always been in the habit of appending to their songs. Our Lord Jesus is so often compared to a hind, and his cruel huntings are so pathetically described in this most affecting psalm, that we cannot but believe that the title indicates the Lord Jesus under a well-known poetical metaphor; at any rate, Jesus is the Hind of the morning concerning whom David here sings.

SUBJECT. This is beyond all others THE PSALM OF THE CROSS. It may have been actually repeated word by word by our Lord when hanging on the tree; it would be too bold to say that it was so, but even a casual reader may see that it might have been. It begins with, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" and ends, according to some, in the original with "It is finished." For plaintive expressions uprising from unutterable depths of woe we may say of this psalm, "there is none like it." It is the photograph of our Lord's saddest hours, the record of his dying words, the lachrymatory of his last tears, the memorial of his expiring joys. David and his afflictions may be here in a very modified sense, but, as the star is concealed by the light of the sun, he who sees Jesus will probably neither see nor care to see David. Before us we have a description both of the darkness and of the glory of the cross, the sufferings of Christ and the glory which shall follow. Oh for grace to draw near and see this great sight! We should read reverently, putting off our shoes from off our feet, as Moses did at the burning bush, for if there be holy ground anywhere in Scripture it is in this psalm.

DIVISION. From the commencement to the twenty-first verse is a most pitiful cry for help, and from verse 21 to 31 is a most precious foretaste of deliverance. The first division may be subdivided at the tenth verse, from verse 1 to 10 being an appeal based upon covenant
relationship; and from verse 10 to 21 being an equally earnest plea derived from the imminence of his peril.

1 ¶My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>22: 1 My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me? This was the startling cry of Golgotha: Eloi, Eloi, lama sabacthani. The Jews mocked, but the angels adored when Jesus cried this exceeding bitter cry. Nailed to the tree we behold our great Redeemer in extremities, and what see we? Having ears to hear let us hear, and having eyes to see let us see! Let us gaze with holy wonder, and mark the flashes of light amid the awful darkness of that midday-midnight. First, our Lord's faith beams forth and deserves our reverent imitation; he keeps his hold upon his God with both hands and cries twice, &quot;My God, my God!&quot; The spirit of adoption was strong within the suffering Son of Man, and he felt no doubt about his interest in his God. Oh that we could imitate this cleaving to an afflicting God! Nor does the sufferer distrust the power of God to sustain him, for the title used —&quot;El&quot;—signifies strength, and is the name of the Mighty God. He knows the Lord to be the all-sufficient support and succour of his spirit, and therefore appeals to him in the agony of grief, but not in the misery of doubt. He would fain know why he is left, he raises that question and repeats it, but neither the power nor the faithfulness of God does he mistrust. What an enquiry is this before us!</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why hast thou forsaken me?</strong> We must lay the emphasis on every word of this saddest of all utterances. &quot;Why?&quot; what is the great cause of such a strange fact as for God to leave his own Son at such a time and in such a plight? There was no cause in him, why then was he deserted?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Hast:</strong> it is done, and the Saviour is feeling its dread effect as he asks the question; it is surely true, but how mysterious! It was no threatening of forsaking which made the great Surety cry aloud, he endured that forsaking in very deed.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Thou:</strong> I can understand why traitorous Judas and timid Peter should be gone, but thou, my God, my faithful friend, how canst thou leave me? This is worst of all, yea, worse than all put together. Hell itself has for its fiercest flame the separation of the soul from God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Forsaken:</strong> if thou hadst chastened I might bear it, for thy face would shine; but to forsake me utterly, ah! why is this?</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Me:</strong> thine innocent, obedient, suffering Son, why leavest thou me to perish? A sight of self seen by penitence, and of Jesus on the cross seen by faith will best expound this question. Jesus is forsaken because our sins had separated between us and our God.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Why art thou so far from helping me, and from the words of my roaring?</strong> The Man of Sorrows had prayed until his speech failed him, and he could only utter moanings and groanings as men do in severe sicknesses, like the roarings of a wounded animal. To what extremity of grief was our Master driven? What strong crying and tears were those which made him too hoarse for speech! What must have been his anguish to find his own beloved and trusted Father standing afar off, and neither granting help nor</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
apparently hearing prayer! This was good cause to make him "roar." Yet there was reason for all this which those who rest in Jesus as their Substitute well know.

2 O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not; and in the night season, and am not silent.

22: 2. O my God, I cry in the daytime, but thou hearest not. For our prayers to appear to be unheard is no new trial, Jesus felt it before us, and it is observable that he still held fast his believing hold on God, and cried still, "My God." On the other hand his faith did not render him less importunate, for amid the hurry and horror of that dismal day he ceased not his cry, even as in Gethsemane he had agonized all through the gloomy night. Our Lord continued to pray even though no comfortable answer came, and in this he set us an example of obedience to his own words, "men ought always to pray, and not to faint." No daylight is too glaring, and no midnight too dark to pray in; and no delay or apparent denial, however grievous, should tempt us to forbear from importunate pleading.

3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel.

22: 3 But thou art holy, O thou that inhabitest the praises of Israel. However ill things may look, there is no ill in thee, O God! We are very apt to think and speak hardly of God when we are under his afflicting hand, but not so the obedient Son. He knows too well his Father's goodness to let outward circumstances libel his character. There in no unrighteousness with the God of Jacob, he deserves no censure; let him do what he will, he is to be praised, and to reign enthroned amid the songs of his chosen people. If prayer be unanswered it is not because God is unfaithful, but for some other good and weighty reason. If we cannot perceive any ground for the delay, we must leave the riddle unsolved, but we must not fly in God's face in order to invent an answer. While the holiness of God is in the highest degree acknowledged and adored, the afflicted speaker in this verse seems to marvel how the holy God could forsake him, and be silent to his cries. The argument is, thou art holy, Oh! why is it that thou dost disregard thy holy One in his hour of sharpest anguish? We may not question the holiness of God, but we may argue from it, and use it as a plea in our petitions.

4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them.

22: 4 Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. This is the rule of life with all the chosen family. Three times over is it mentioned, they trusted, and trusted, and trusted, and never left off trusting, for it was their very life; and they fared well too, for thou didst deliver them. Out of all their straits, difficulties, and miseries faith brought them by calling their God to the rescue; but in the case of our Lord it appeared as if faith would bring no assistance from heaven, he alone of all the trusting ones was to remain without deliverance. The experience of other saints may be a great consolation to us when in deep waters if faith can be sure that their deliverance will be ours; but when we feel ourselves sinking, it is poor comfort to know that others are swimming. Our Lord here pleads the past dealings of God with his people as a reason why he should not be left alone; here again he is an example to us in the skilful use of
the weapon of all prayer. The use of the plural pronoun "our" shows how one with his people Jesus was even on the cross. We say, "Our Father which art in heaven," and he calls those "our fathers" through whom we came into the world, although he was without father as to the flesh.

5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded.

22: 5 They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded. As if he had said, "How is it that I am now left without succour in my overwhelming griefs, while all others have been helped? We may remind the Lord of his former lovingkindnesses to his people, and beseech him to be still the same. This is true wrestling; let us learn the art. Observe, that ancient saints cried and trusted, and that in trouble we must do the same; and the invariable result was that they were not ashamed of their hope, for deliverance came in due time; this same happy portion shall be ours. The prayer of faith can do the deed when nothing else can. Let us wonder when we see Jesus using the same pleas as ourselves, and immersed in griefs far deeper than our own.

6 But I am a worm, and no man; a reproach of men, and despised of the people.

22: 6 But I am a worm, and no man. This verse is a miracle in language. How could the Lord of glory be brought to such abasement as to be not only lower than the angels, but even lower than men. What a contrast between "I AM" and I am a worm! yet such a double nature was found in the person of our Lord Jesus when bleeding upon the tree. He felt himself to be comparable to a helpless, powerless, down-trodden worm, passive while crushed, and unnoticed and despised by those who trod upon him. He selects the weakest of creatures, which is all flesh; and becomes, when trodden upon, writhing, quivering flesh, utterly devoid of any might except strength to suffer. This was a true likeness of himself when his body and soul had become a mass of misery—the very essence of agony—in the dying pangs of crucifixion. Man by nature is but a worm; but our Lord puts himself even beneath man, on account of the scorn that was heaped upon him and the weakness which he felt, and therefore he adds, "and no man." The privileges and blessings which belonged to the fathers he could not obtain while deserted by God, and common acts of humanity were not allowed him, for he was rejected of men; he was outlawed from the society of earth, and shut out from the smile of heaven. How utterly did the Saviour empty himself of all glory, and become of no reputation for our sakes!

A reproach of men —their common butt and jest; a byword and a proverb unto them: the sport of the rabble, and the scorn of the rulers. Oh the caustic power of reproach, to those who endure it with patience, yet smart under it most painfully!

And despised of the people. The vox populi [voice of the people] was against him. The very people who would once have crowned him then contemned him, and they who were benefited by his cures sneered at him in his woes. Sin is worthy of all reproach and contempt, and for this reason Jesus, the Sinbearer, was given up to be thus unworthily and shamefully entreated.
7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn: they shoot out the lip, they shake the head, saying,

22: 7 All they that see me laugh me to scorn. Read the evangelistic narrative of the ridicule endured by the Crucified One, and then consider, in the light of this expression, how it grieved him. The iron entered into his soul. Mockery has for its distinctive description "cruel mockings;" those endured by our Lord were of the most cruel kind. The scornful ridicule of our Lord was universal; all sorts of men were unanimous in the derisive laughter, and vied with each other in insulting him. Priests and people, Jews and Gentiles, soldiers and civilians, all united in the general scoff, and that at the time when he was prostrate in weakness and ready to die. Which shall we wonder at the most, the cruelty of man or the love of the bleeding Saviour? How can we ever complain of ridicule after this?

They shoot out the lip, they shake the head. These were gestures of contempt. Pouting, grinning, shaking of the head, thrusting out of the tongue, and other modes of derision were endured by our patient Lord; men made faces at him before whom angels veil their faces and adore. The basest signs of disgrace which disdain could devise were maliciously cast at him. They punned upon his prayers, they made matter for laughter of his sufferings, and set him utterly at nought. Herbert sings of our Lord as saying,—

"Shame tears my soul,
my body many a wound;
Sharp nails pierce this,
but sharper that confound;
Reproaches which are free,
while I am bound.
Was ever grief like mine?"

8 He trusted on the LORD that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him.

22: 8 He trusted on the Lord that he would deliver him: let him deliver him, seeing he delighted in him. Here the taunt is cruelly aimed at the sufferer's faith in God, which is the tenderest point in a good man's soul, the very apple of his eye. They must have learned the diabolical art from Satan himself, for they made rare proficiency in it. According to Matthew 27:39-44, there were five forms of taunt hurled at the Lord Jesus; this special piece of mockery is probably mentioned in this psalm because it is the most bitter of the whole; it has a biting, sarcastic irony in it, which gives it a peculiar venom; it must have stung the Man of Sorrows to the quick. When we are tormented in the same manner, let us remember him who endured such contradiction of sinners against himself, and we shall be comforted. On reading these verses one is ready, with Trapp, to ask, Is this a prophecy or a history? For the description is so accurate. We must not lose sight of the truth which was unwittingly uttered by the Jewish scoffers. They themselves are witnesses that Jesus of Nazareth trusted in God: why then was he permitted to
perish? Jehovah had aforetime delivered those who rolled their burdens upon him: why was this man deserted? Oh that they had understood the answer! Note further, that their ironical jest, seeing he delighted in him, was true. The Lord did delight in his dear Son, and when he was found in fashion as a man, and became obedient unto death, he still was well pleased with him. Strange mixture! Jehovah delights in him, and yet bruises him; is well pleased, and yet slays him.

9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb: thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts.

22: 9 But thou art he that took me out of the womb. Kindly providence attends with the surgery of tenderness at every human birth; but the Son of Man, who was marvelously begotten of the Holy Ghost, was in an especial manner watched over by the Lord when brought forth by Mary. The destitute state of Joseph and Mary, far away from friends and home, led them to see the cherishing hand of God in the safe delivery of the mother, and the happy birth of the child; that Child now fighting the great battle of his life, uses the mercy of his nativity as an argument with God. Faith finds weapons everywhere. He who wills to believe shall never lack reasons for believing.

"Thou didst make me hope when I was upon my mother's breasts." Was our Lord so early a believer? Was he one of those babes and sucklings out of whose mouths strength is ordained? So it would seem; and if so, what a plea for help! Early piety gives peculiar comfort in our after trials, for surely he who loved us when we were children is too faithful to cast us off in our riper years. Some give the text the sense of "gave me cause to trust, by keeping me safely," and assuredly there was a special providence which preserved our Lord's infant days from the fury of Herod, the dangers of traveling, and the ills of poverty.

10 I was cast upon thee from the womb: thou art my God from my mother's belly.

22: 10 I was cast upon thee from the womb. Into the Almighty arms he was first received, as into those of a loving parent. This is a sweet thought. God begins his care over us from the earliest hour. We are dandled upon the knee of mercy, and cherished in the lap of goodness; our cradle is canopied by divine love, and our first totterings are guided by his care.

Thou art my God from my mother's belly. The psalm begins with "My God, my God," and here, not only is the claim repeated, but its early date is urged. Oh noble perseverance of faith, thus to continue pleading with holy ingenuity of argument! Our birth was our weakest and most perilous period of existence; if we were then secured by Omnipotent tenderness, surely we have no cause to suspect that divine goodness will fail us now. He who was our God when we left our mother, will be with us till we return to mother earth, and will keep us from perishing in the belly of hell.

11 ¶ Be not far from me; for trouble is near; for there is none to help.
22: 11-21. The crucified Son of David continues to pour out his complaint and prayer. We need much grace that while reading we may have fellowship with his sufferings. May the blessed Spirit conduct us into a most clear and affecting sight of our Redeemer's woes.

22: 11 **Be not far from me.** This is the petition for which he has been using such varied and powerful pleas. His great woe was that God had forsaken him, his great prayer is that he would be near him. A lively sense of the divine presence is a mighty stay to the heart in times of distress.

*For trouble is near; for there is none to help.* There are two "fors," as though faith gave a double knock at mercy's gate; that is a powerful prayer which is full of holy reasons and thoughtful arguments. The nearness of trouble is a weighty motive for divine help; this moves our heavenly Father's heart, and brings down his helping hand. It is his glory to be our very present help in trouble. Our Substitute had trouble in his inmost heart, for he said, "the waters have come in, even unto my soul;" well might he cry,

"be not far from me." The absence of all other helpers is another telling plea. In our Lord's case none either could or would help him; it was needful that he should tread the winepress alone; yet was it a sore aggravation to find that all his disciples had forsaken him, and lover and friend were put far from him. There is an awfulness about absolute friendlessness which is crushing to the human mind, for man was not made to be alone, and is like a dismembered limb when he has to endure heart-loneliness.

12 Many bulls have compassed me: strong **bulls** of Bashan have beset me round.

22: 12 **Many bulls have compassed me: strong bulls of Bashan have beset me round.** The mighty ones in the crowd are here marked by the tearful eye of their victim. The priests, elders, scribes, Pharisees, rulers, and captains bellowed round the cross like wild cattle, fed in the fat and solitary pastures of Bashan, full of strength and fury; they stamped and foamed around the innocent One, and longed to gore him to death with their cruelties. Conceive of the Lord Jesus as a helpless, unarmed, naked man, cast into the midst of a herd of infuriated wild bulls. They were brutal as bulls, many, and strong, and the Rejected One was all alone, and bound naked to the tree. His position throws great force into the earnest entreaty, "Be not far from me."

13 They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.

22: 13 **They gaped upon me with their mouths, as a ravening and a roaring lion.** Like hungry cannibals they opened their blasphemous mouths as if they were about to swallow the man whom they abhorred. They could not vomit forth their anger fast enough through the ordinary aperture of their mouths, and therefore set the doors of their lips wide open like those who gape. Like roaring lions they howled out their fury, and longed to tear the Saviour in pieces, as wild beasts raven over their prey. Our Lord's faith must have passed through a most severe conflict.
while he found himself abandoned to the tender mercies of the wicked, but he came off victorious by prayer; the very dangers to which he was exposed being used to add prevalence to his entreaties.

14 I am poured out like water, and all my bones are out of joint: my heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels.

22: 14 Turning from his enemies, our Lord describes his own personal condition in language which should bring the tears into every loving eye.

I am poured out like water. He was utterly spent, like water poured upon the earth; his heart failed him, and had no more firmness in it than running water, and his whole being was made a sacrifice, like a libation poured out before the Lord. He had long been a fountain of tears; in Gethsemane his heart welled over in sweat, and on the cross he gushed forth with blood; he poured out his strength and spirit, so that he was reduced to the most feeble and exhausted state.

All my bones are out of joint, as if distended upon a rack. Is it not most probable that the fastenings of the hands and feet, and the jar occasioned by fixing the cross in the earth, may have dislocated the bones of the Crucified One? If this is not intended, we must refer the expression to that extreme weakness which would occasion relaxation of the muscles and a general sense of parting asunder throughout the whole system.

My heart is like wax; it is melted in the midst of my bowels. Excessive debility and intense pain made his inmost life to feel like wax melted in the heat. The Greek liturgy uses the expression, thine unknown sufferings, and well it may. The fire of Almighty wrath would have consumed our souls for ever in hell; it was no light work to bear as a substitute the heat of an anger so justly terrible. Dr. Gill wisely observes, "if the heart of Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, melted at it, what heart can endure, or hands be strong, when God deals with them in his wrath?"

15 My strength is dried up like a potshernd; and my tongue cleaveth to my jaws; and thou hast brought me into the dust of death.

22: 15. My strength is dried up like a potsherd. Most complete debility is here portrayed; Jesus likens himself to a broken piece of earthenware, or an earthen pot, baked in the fire till the last particle of moisture is driven out of the clay. No doubt a high degree of feverish burning afflicted the body of our Lord. All his strength was dried up in the tremendous flames of avenging justice, even as the paschal lamb was roasted in the fire.

My tongue cleaveth to my jaws; thirst and fever fastened his tongue to his jaws. Dryness and a horrible clamminess tormented his mouth, so that he could scarcely speak.

Thou hast brought me into the dust of death; so tormented in every single part as to feel dissolved into separate atoms, and each atom full of misery; the full price of our redemption was paid, and no part of the Surety's body or soul escaped its share of agony. The words may set forth
Jesus as having wrestled with Death until he rolled into the dust with his antagonist. Behold the humiliation of the Son of God! The Lord of Glory stoops to the dust of death. Amid the moldering relics of mortality Jesus condescends to lodge! Bishop Mant's version of the two preceding verses is forcible and accurate:—

"Pour'd forth like water is my frame;  
My bones asunder start;  
As wax that feels the searching flame,  
Within me melts my heart.  
My wither'd sinews shrink unstrung  
Like potsherd dried and dead:  
Cleaves to my jaws my burning tongue  
The dust of death my bed."

16   For dogs have compassed me: the assembly of the wicked have inclosed me: they pierced my hands and my feet.

22: 16 We are to understand every item of this sad description as being urged by the Lord Jesus as a plea for divine help; and this will give us a high idea of his perseverance in prayer.

*For dogs have compassed me.* Here he marks the more ignoble crowd, who, while less strong than their brutal leaders, were not less ferocious, for there they were howling and barking like unclean and hungry dogs. Hunters frequently surround their game with a circle, and gradually encompass them with an ever-narrowing ring of dogs and men. Such a picture is before us. In the centre stands, not a panting stag, but a bleeding, fainting man, and around him are the enraged and unpitying wretches who have hounded him to his doom. Here we have the "hind of the morning" of whom the psalm so plaintively sings, hunted by bloodhounds, all thirsting to devour him.

*The assembly of the wicked have inclosed me:* thus the Jewish people were unchurched, and that which called itself an assembly of the righteous is justly for its sins marked upon the forehead as an assembly of the wicked. This is not the only occasion when professed churches of God have become synagogues of Satan, and have persecuted the Holy One and the Just.

*They pierced my hands and my feet.* This can by no means refer to David, or to any one but Jesus of Nazareth, the once crucified but now exalted Son of God. Pause, dear reader, and view the wounds of thy Redeemer.

17   I may tell all my bones: they look and stare upon me.

22: 17 So emaciated was Jesus by his fastings and sufferings that he says,

*I may tell all my bones.* He could count and recount them. The posture of the body on the cross, Bishop Horne thinks, would so distend the flesh and skin as to make the bones visible, so that they might be numbered. The zeal of his Father's house had eaten him up; like a good soldier he
had endured hardness. Oh that we cared less for the body's enjoyment and ease and more for our
Father's business! It were better to count the bones of an emaciated body than to bring leanness
into our souls.

_They look and stare upon me._ Unholy eyes gazed insultingly upon the Savior’s nakedness, and
shocked the sacred delicacy of his holy soul. The sight of the agonizing body ought to have
ensured sympathy from the throng, but it only increased their savage mirth, as they gloated their
cruel eyes upon his miseries. Let us blush for human nature, and mourn in sympathy with our
Redeemer's shame. The first Adam made us all naked, and therefore the second Adam became
naked that he might clothe our naked souls.

18  They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture.

22: 18 _They part my garments among them, and cast lots upon my vesture._ The garments of the
executed were the perquisites of the executioners in most cases, but it was not often that they cast
lots at the division of the spoil; this incident shows how clearly David in vision saw the day of
Christ, and how surely the Man of Nazareth is he of whom the prophets spake: "these things,
therefore, the soldiers did." He who gave his blood to cleanse us gave his garments to clothe us.
As Christopher Ness [1621-1705] says, "this precious Lamb of God gave up his golden fleece for
us." How every incident of Jesus' griefs is here stored up in the treasury of inspiration, and
embalmed in the amber of sacred song; we must learn hence to be very mindful of all that
concerns our Beloved, and to think much more of everything which has a connection with him. It
may be noted that the habit of gambling is of all others the most hardening, for men could
practice it even at the cross-foot while besprinkled with the blood of the Crucified. No Christian
will endure the rattle of the dice when he thinks of this.

19  But be not thou far from me, O LORD: O my strength, haste thee to help me.

22: 19 _But be thou not far from me, O Lord._ Invincible faith returns to the charge, and uses the
same means, viz., importunate prayer. He repeats the petition so piteously offered before. He
wants nothing but his God, even in his lowest state. He does not ask for the most comfortable or
nearest presence of God, he will be content if he is not far from him; humble requests speed at
the throne.

_O my strength, haste thee to help me._ Hard cases need timely aid: when necessity justifies it we
may be urgent with God as to time, and cry, "make haste;" but we must not do this out of
willfulness. Mark how in the last degree of personal weakness he calls the Lord "my strength;"
after this fashion the believer can sing, "when I am weak, then am I strong."

20  Deliver my soul from the sword; my darling from the power of the dog.

22: 20 _Deliver my soul from the sword._ By the sword is probably meant entire destruction,
which as a man he dreaded; or perhaps he sought deliverance from the enemies around him, who
were like a sharp and deadly sword to him. The Lord had said, "Awake, O sword," and now from
the terror of that sword the Shepherd would fain be delivered as soon as justice should see fit.
My darling from the power of the dog. Meaning his soul, his life, which is most dear to every man. The original is, "my only one," and therefore is our soul dear, because it is our only soul. Would that all men made their souls their darlings, but many treat them as if they were not worth so much as the mire of the streets. The dog may mean Satan, that infernal Cerberus, that cursed and cursing cur; or else the whole company of Christ's foes, who though many in number were as unanimous as if there were but one, and with one consent sought to rend him in pieces. If Jesus cried for help against the dog of hell, much more may we. Cave canem, “beware of the dog”, for his power is great, and only God can deliver us from him. When he fawns upon us, we must not put ourselves in his power; and when he howls at us, we may remember that God holds him with a chain.

21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns [wild ox].

22: 21 Save me from the lion's mouth: for thou hast heard me from the horns of the unicorns [wild ox]. Having experienced deliverance in the past from great enemies, who were strong as the unicorns, the Redeemer utters his last cry for rescue from death, which is fierce and mighty as the lion. This prayer was heard, and the gloom of the cross departed. Thus faith, though sorely beaten, and even cast beneath the feet of her enemy, ultimately wins the victory. It was so in our Head, it shall be so in all the members. We have overcome the unicorn, we shall conquer the lion, and from both lion and unicorn we shall take the crown.

22 ¶ I will declare thy name unto my brethren: in the midst of the congregation will I praise thee.

22: 22-31. The transition is very marked; from a horrible tempest all is changed into calm. The darkness of Calvary at length passed away from the face of nature, and from the soul of the Redeemer, and beholding the light of his triumph and its future results the Saviour smiled. We have followed him through the gloom, let us attend him in the returning light. It will be well still to regard the words as a part of our Lord's soliloquy upon the cross, uttered in his mind during the last few moments before his death.

22: 22 I will declare thy name unto my brethren. The delights of Jesus are always with his church, and hence his thoughts, after much distraction, return at the first moment of relief to their usual channel; he forms fresh designs for the benefit of his beloved ones. He is not ashamed to call them brethren,

Saying, I will declare thy name unto my brethren, in the midst of the church will I sing praise unto thee. Among his first resurrection words were these, "Go to my brethren." In the verse before us, Jesus anticipates happiness in having communication with his people; he purposes to be their teacher and minister, and fixes his mind upon the subject of his discourse. The name, i.e., the character and conduct of God are by Jesus Christ's gospel proclaimed to all the holy brotherhood; they behold the fullness of the Godhead dwelling bodily in him, and rejoice greatly to see all the infinite perfections manifested in one who is bone of their bone and flesh of their
flesh. What a precious subject is the name of our God! It is the only one worthy of the only Begotten, whose meat and drink it was to do the Father's will. We may learn from this resolution of our Lord, that one of the most excellent methods of showing our thankfulness for deliverances is to tell to our brethren what the Lord has done for us. We mention our sorrows readily enough; why are we so slow in declaring our deliverances?

In the midst of the congregation will I praise thee. Not in a little household gathering merely does our Lord resolve to proclaim his Father's love, but in the great assemblies of his saints, and in the general assembly and church of the first-born. This the Lord Jesus is always doing by his representatives, who are the heralds of salvation, and labour to praise God. In the great universal church Jesus is the One authoritative teacher, and all others, so far as they are worthy to be called teachers, are nothing but echoes of his voice. Jesus, in this second sentence, reveals his object in declaring the divine name, it is that God may be praised; the church continually magnifies Jehovah for manifesting himself in the person of Jesus, and Jesus himself leads the song, and is both precentor and preacher in his church. Delightful are the seasons when Jesus communes with our hearts concerning divine truth; joyful praise is the sure result.

23 Ye that fear the LORD, praise him; all ye the seed of Jacob, glorify him; and fear him, all ye the seed of Israel.

22: 23 Ye that fear the Lord praise him. The reader must imagine the Saviour as addressing the congregation of the saints. He exhorts the faithful to unite with him in thanksgiving. The description of "fearing the Lord" is very frequent and very instructive; it is the beginning of wisdom, and is an essential sign of grace. "I am a Hebrew and I fear God" was Jonah's confession of faith. Humble awe of God is so necessary a preparation for praising him that none are fit to sing to his honour but such as reverence his word; but this fear is consistent with the highest joy, and is not to be confounded with legal bondage, which is a fear which perfect love casteth out. Holy fear should always keep the key of the singing pew. Where Jesus leads the tune none but holy lips may dare to sing.

All ye the seed of Jacob glorify him. The genius of the gospel is praise. Jew and Gentile saved by sovereign grace should be eager in the blessed work of magnifying the God of our salvation. All saints should unite in the song; no tongue may be silent, no heart may be cold. Christ calls us to glorify God, and can we refuse?

And fear him, all ye the seed of Israel. The spiritual Israel all do this, and we hope the day will come when Israel after the flesh will be brought to the same mind. The more we praise God the more reverently shall we fear him, and the deeper our reverence the sweeter our songs. So much does Jesus value praise that we have it here under his dying hand and seal that all the saints must glorify the Lord.

24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted; neither hath he hid his face from him; but when he cried unto him, he heard.

22: 24 For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted. Here is good matter and motive for praise. The experience of our covenant Head and Representative should encourage all of us to bless the God of grace. Never was man so afflicted as our Saviour in body
and soul from friends and foes, by heaven and hell, in life and death; he was the foremost in the ranks of the afflicted, but all those afflictions were sent in love, and not because his Father despised and abhorred him. 'Tis true that justice demanded that Christ should bear the burden which as a substitute he undertook to carry, but Jehovah always loved him, and in love laid that load upon him with a view to his ultimate glory and to the accomplishment of the dearest wish of his heart. Under all his woes our Lord was honourable in the Father's sight, the matchless jewel of Jehovah's heart.

_Neither hath he hid his face from him._ That is to say, the hiding was but temporary, and was soon removed; it was not final and eternal.

But when he cried unto him, he heard. Jesus was heard in that he feared. He cried _in extremis_ [in extreme agony] and _de profundis_, and was speedily answered; he therefore bids his people join him in singing a _Gloria in excelsis_. [glory in the highest]. Every child of God should seek refreshment for his faith in this testimony of the Man of Sorrows. What Jesus here witnesses is as true to-day as when it was first written. It shall never be said that any man's affliction or poverty prevented his being an accepted suppliant at Jehovah's throne of grace. The meanest applicant is welcome at mercy's door:—

"None that approach  
His throne shall find  
A God unfaithful or unkind."

25  My praise _shall be_ of thee in the great congregation: I will pay my vows before them that fear him.

22: 25 _My praise shall be of thee in the great congregation._ The one subject of our Master's song is the Lord alone. The Lord and the Lord only is the theme which the believer handleth when he gives himself to imitate Jesus in praise. The word in the original is "from thee,"—true praise is of celestial origin. The rarest harmonies of music are nothing unless they are sincerely consecrated to God by hearts sanctified by the Spirit. The clerk says, _"Let us sing to the praise and glory of God;"_ but the choir often sing to the praise and glory of themselves. Oh when shall our service of song be a pure offering? Observe in this verse how Jesus loves the public praises of the saints, and thinks with pleasure of the great congregation. It would be wicked on our part to despise the twos and threes; but, on the other hand, let not the little companies snarl at the greater assemblies as though they were necessarily less pure and less approved, for Jesus loves the praise of the great congregation.

_I will pay my vows before them that fear him._ Jesus dedicates himself anew to the carrying out of the divine purpose in fulfillment of his vows made in anguish. Did our Lord when he ascended to the skies proclaim amid the redeemed in glory the goodness of Jehovah? And was that the vow here meant? Undoubtedly the publication of the gospel is the constant fulfillment of covenant engagements made by our Surety in the councils of eternity. Messiah vowed to build up a spiritual temple for the Lord, and he will surely keep his word. The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever. All the ends of
the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee. For the kingdom is the LORD'S: and he is the governor among the nations. All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul. A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied: they shall praise the LORD that seek him: your heart shall live for ever.

22:26 The meek shall eat and be satisfied. Mark how the dying Lover of our souls solaces himself with the result of his death. The spiritually poor find a feast in Jesus, they feed upon him to the satisfaction of their hearts, they were famished until he gave himself for them, but now they are filled with royal dainties. The thought of the joy of his people gave comfort to our expiring Lord. Note the characters who partake of the benefit of his passion; "the meek," the humble and lowly. Lord, make us so. Note also the certainty that gospel provisions shall not be wasted, they shall eat; and the sure result of such eating, and be satisfied.

They shall praise the Lord that seek him. For a while they may keep a fast, but their thanksgiving days must and shall come.

Your heart shall live for ever. Your spirits shall not fail through trial, you shall not die of grief, immortal joys shall be your portion. Thus Jesus speaks even from the cross to the troubled seeker. If his dying words are so assuring, what consolation may we not find in the truth that he ever liveth to make intercession for us! They who eat at Jesus' table receive the fulfillment of the promise, "Whosoever eateth of this bread shall live for ever."

27 All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the LORD: and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee.

22:27 In reading this verse one is struck with the Messiah's missionary spirit. It is evidently his grand consolation that Jehovah will be known throughout all places of his dominion.

All the ends of the world shall remember and turn unto the Lord. Out from the inner circle of the present church the blessing is to spread in growing power until the remotest parts of the earth shall be ashamed of their idols, mindful of the true God, penitent for their offences, and unanimously earnest for reconciliation with Jehovah. Then shall false worship cease, and all the kindreds of the nations shall worship before thee, O thou only living and true God. This hope which was the reward of Jesus is a stimulus to those who fight his battles. It is well to mark the order of conversion as here set forth;
they shall "remember"—this is reflection, like the prodigal who came unto himself; "and turn unto Jehovah"—this is repentance, like Manasseh who left his idols and "worship"—this is holy service, as Paul adored the Christ whom once he abhorred.

28 For the kingdom is the LORD's: and he is the governor among the nations.

22:28 For the kingdom is the Lord's. As an obedient Son the dying Redeemer rejoiced to know that his Father's interests would prosper through his pains. "The Lord reigneth" was his song as it is ours. He who by his own power reigns supreme in the domains of creation and providence, has set up a kingdom of grace, and by the conquering power of the cross that kingdom will grow until all people shall own its sway and proclaim that

And he is the governor among the nations. Amid the tumults and disasters of the present the Lord reigneth; but in the halcyon days of peace the rich fruit of his dominion will be apparent to every eye. Great Shepherd, let thy glorious kingdom come.

29 All they that be fat upon earth shall eat and worship: all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him: and none can keep alive his own soul.

22:29 All they that be fat upon earth, the rich and great are not shut out. Grace now finds the most of its jewels among the poor, but in the latter days the mighty of the earth "shall eat," shall taste of redeeming grace and dying love, and shall "worship" with all their hearts the God who deals so bountifully with us in Christ Jesus. Those who are spiritually fat with inward prosperity shall be filled with the marrow of communion, and shall worship the Lord with peculiar fervor. In the covenant of grace Jesus has provided good cheer for our high estate, and he has taken equal care to console us in our humiliation, for the next sentence is,

all they that go down to the dust shall bow before him. There is relief and comfort in bowing before God when our case is at its worst; even amid the dust of death prayer kindles the lamp of hope. While all who come to God by Jesus Christ are thus blessed, whether they be rich or poor, none of those who despise him may hope for a blessing.

None can keep alive his own soul. This is the stern counterpart of the gospel message of "look and live." There is no salvation out of Christ. We must hold life, and have life as Christ's gift, or we shall die eternally. This is very solid evangelical doctrine, and should be proclaimed in every corner of the earth, that like a great hammer it may break in pieces all self-confidence.

30 A seed shall serve him; it shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation.

22:30 A seed shall serve him. Posterity shall perpetuate the worship of the Most High. The kingdom of truth on earth shall never fail. As one generation is called to its rest, another will arise in its stead. We need have no fear for the true apostolic succession; that is safe enough.

It shall be accounted to the Lord for a generation. He will reckon the ages by the succession of the saints, and set his accounts according to the families of the faithful. Generations of sinners
come not into the genealogy of the skies. God's family register is not for strangers, but for the children only.

31 They shall come, and shall declare his righteousness unto a people that shall be born, that he hath done this.

**Psalm 23**

**A Psalm of David**

There is no inspired title to this psalm, and none is needed, for it records no special event, and needs no other key than that which every Christian may find in his own bosom. It is David's Heavenly Pastoral; a surpassing ode, which none of the daughters of music can excel. The
clarion of war here gives place to the pipe of peace, and he who so lately bewailed the woes of
the Shepherd tunefully rehearses the joys of the flock. Sitting under a spreading tree, with his
flock around him, like John Bunyan's shepherd-boy in the Valley of Humiliation, we picture
David singing this unrivalled pastoral with a heart as full of gladness as it could hold; or, if the
psalm be the product of his after-years, we are sure that his soul returned in contemplation to the
lonely water-brooks which rippled among the pastures of the wilderness, where in early days she
had been wont to dwell. This is the pearl of psalms whose soft and pure radiance delights every
eye; a pearl of which Helicon need not be ashamed, though Jordan claims it. Of this delightful
song it may be affirmed that its piety and its poetry are equal, its sweetness and its spirituality are
unsurpassed.

The position of this psalm is worthy of notice. It follows the twenty-second, which is peculiarly
the Psalm of the Cross. There are no green pastures, no still waters on the other side of the
twenty-second psalm. It is only after we have read,

"My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me?" that we come to

"The Lord is my Shepherd." We must by experience know the value of blood-shedding, and see
the sword awakened against the Shepherd, before we shall be able truly to know the Sweetness
of the good Shepherd's care.

It has been said that what the nightingale is among birds, that is this divine ode among the
psalms, for it has sung sweetly in the ear of many a mourner in his night of weeping, and has
bidden him hope for a morning of joy. I will venture to compare it also to the lark, which sings as
it mounts, and mounts as it sings, until it is out of sight, and even then is not out of hearing. Note
the last words of the psalm—"I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever;" these are celestial
notes, more fitted for the eternal mansions than for these dwelling places below the clouds. Oh
that we may enter into the spirit of the psalm as we read it, and then we shall experience the days
of heaven upon the earth!

1 The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want.

23 1. The Lord is my shepherd. What condescension is this, that the infinite Lord assumes
towards his people the office and character of a Shepherd! It should be the subject of grateful
admiration that the great God allows himself to be compared to anything which will set forth his
great love and care for his own people. David had himself been a keeper of sheep, and
understood both the needs of the sheep and the many cares of a shepherd. He compares himself
to a creature weak, defenseless, and foolish, and he takes God to be his Provider, Preserver,
Director, and, indeed, his everything. No man has a right to consider himself the Lord's sheep
unless his nature has been renewed for the scriptural description of unconverted men does not
picture them as sheep, but as wolves or goats. A sheep is an object of property, not a wild
animal; its owner sets great store by it, and frequently it is bought with a great price. It is well to
know, as certainly David did, that we belong to the Lord. There is a noble tone of confidence
about this sentence. There is no "if" nor "but," nor even "I hope so;" but he says,

The Lord is my shepherd. We must cultivate the spirit of assured dependence upon our
heavenly Father. The sweetest word of the whole is that monosyllable, "My." He does not say,
"The Lord is the shepherd of the world at large, and leadeth forth the multitude as his flock," but "The Lord is my shepherd;" if he be a Shepherd to no one else, he is a Shepherd to me; he cares for me, watches over me, and preserves me. The words are in the present tense. Whatever be the believer's position, he is even now under the pastoral care of Jehovah. The next words are a sort of inference from the first statement—they are sententious and positive—"I shall not want." I might want otherwise, but when the Lord is my Shepherd he is able to supply my needs, and he is certainly willing to do so, for his heart is full of love, and therefore

I shall not want. I shall not lack for temporal things. Does he not feed the ravens, and cause the lilies to grow? How, then, can he leave his children to starve? I shall not want for spirituals, I know that his grace will be sufficient for me. Resting in him he will say to me,

"As thy day so shall thy strength be." I may not possess all that I wish for, but

I shall not want. Others, far wealthier and wiser than I, may want, but "I shall not." "The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing." It is not only "I do not want," but "I shall not want." Come what may, if famine should devastate the land, or calamity destroy the city,

I shall not want. Old age with its feebleness shall not bring me any lack, and even death with its gloom shall not find me destitute. I have all things and abound; not because I have a good store of money in the bank, not because I have skill and wit with which to win my bread, but because

The Lord is my shepherd. The wicked always want, but the righteous never; a sinner's heart is far from satisfaction, but a gracious spirit dwells in the palace of content.

2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters.

23:2 He maketh me to lie down in green pastures: he leadeth me beside the still waters. The Christian life has two elements in it, the contemplative and the active, and both of these are richly provided for. First, the contemplative.

"He maketh me to lie down in green pastures." What are these "green pastures" but the Scriptures of truth—always fresh, always rich, and never exhausted? There is no fear of biting the bare ground where the grass is long enough for the flock to lie down in it. Sweet and full are the doctrines of the gospel; fit food for souls, as tender grass is natural nutriment for sheep. When by faith we are enabled to find rest in the promises, we are like the sheep that lie down in the midst of the pasture; we find at the same moment both provender and peace, rest and refreshment, serenity and satisfaction. But observe:

He maketh me to lie down. It is the Lord who graciously enables us to perceive the preciousness of his truth, and to feed upon it. How grateful ought we to be for the power to appropriate the promises! There are some distracted souls who would give worlds if they could but do this. They know the blessedness of it, but they cannot say that this blessedness is theirs. They know the "green pastures," but they are not made to "lie down" in them. Those believers who have for years enjoyed a "full assurance of faith" should greatly bless their gracious God.
The second part of a vigorous Christian's life consists in gracious activity. We not only think, but we act. We are not always lying down to feed, but are journeying onward toward perfection; hence we read,

he leadeth me beside the still waters. What are these "still waters" but the influences and graces of his blessed Spirit? His Spirit attends us in various operations, like waters—in the plural—to cleanse, to refresh, to fertilize, to cherish. They are "still waters," for the Holy Ghost loves peace, and sounds no trumpet of ostentation in his operations. He may flow into our soul, but not into our neighbor’s, and therefore our neighbor may not perceive the divine presence; and though the blessed Spirit may be pouring his floods into one heart, yet he that sitteth next to the favored one may know nothing of it.

"In sacred silence of the mind
My heaven, and there my God I find."

Still waters run deep. Nothing more noisy than an empty drum. That silence is golden indeed in which the Holy Spirit meets with the souls of his saints. Not to raging waves of strife, but to peaceful streams of holy love does the Spirit of God conduct the chosen sheep. He is a dove, not an eagle; the dew, not the hurricane. Our Lord leads us beside these "still waters;" we could not go there of ourselves, we need his guidance, therefore it is said, "he leadeth me." He does not drive us. Moses drives us by the law, but Jesus leads us by his example, and the gentle drawing of his love.

3 He restoreth my soul: he leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake.

23:3 He restoreth my soul. When the soul grows sorrowful he revives it; when it is sinful he sanctifies it; when it is weak he strengthens it. "He" does it. His ministers could not do it if he did not. His Word would not avail by itself.

He restoreth my soul. Are any of us low in grace? Do we feel that our spirituality is at its lowest ebb? He who turns the ebb into the flood can soon restore our soul. Pray to him, then, for the blessing—"Restore thou me, thou Shepherd of my soul!"

He leadeth me in the paths of righteousness for his name's sake. The Christian delights to be obedient, but it is the obedience of love, to which he is constrained by the example of his Master. "He leadeth me." The Christian is not obedient to some commandments and neglectful of others; he does not pick and choose, but yields to all. Observe, that the plural is used—

the paths of righteousness. Whatever God may give us to do we would do it, led by his love. Some Christians overlook the blessing of sanctification, and yet to a thoroughly renewed heart this is one of the sweetest gifts of the covenant. If we could be saved from wrath, and yet remain unregenerate, impenitent sinners, we should not be saved as we desire, for we mainly and chiefly pant to be saved from sin and led in the way of holiness. All this is done out of pure free grace;
for his name's sake. It is to the honour of our great Shepherd that we should be a holy people, walking in the narrow way of righteousness. If we be so led and guided we must not fail to adore our heavenly Shepherd's care.

4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me.

23:4 Yea, though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me. This unspeakably delightful verse has been sung on many a dying bed, and has helped to make the dark valley bright times out of mind. Every word in it has a wealth of meaning.

Yea, though I walk, as if the believer did not quicken his pace when he came to die, but still calmly walked with God. To walk indicates the steady advance of a soul which knows its road, knows its end, resolves to follow the path, feels quite safe, and is therefore perfectly calm and composed. The dying saint is not in a flurry, he does not run as though he were alarmed, nor stand still as though he would go no further, he is not confounded nor ashamed, and therefore keeps to his old pace. Observe that it is not walking in the valley, but through the valley. We go through the dark tunnel of death and emerge into the light of immortality. We do not die, we do but sleep to wake in glory. Death is not the house but the porch, not the goal but the passage to it. The dying article is called a valley. The storm breaks on the mountain, but the valley is the place of quietude, and thus full often the last days of the Christian are the most peaceful of his whole career; the mountain is bleak and bare, but the valley is rich with golden sheaves, and many a saint has reaped more joy and knowledge when he came to die than he ever knew while he lived. And, then, it is not the valley of death, but "the valley of the shadow of death," for death in its substance has been removed, and only the shadow of it remains. Some one has said that when there is a shadow there must be light somewhere, and so there is. Death stands by the side of the highway in which we have to travel, and the light of heaven shining upon him throws a shadow across our path; let us then rejoice that there is a light beyond. Nobody is afraid of a shadow, for a shadow cannot stop a man's pathway even for a moment. The shadow of a dog cannot bite; the shadow of a sword cannot kill; the shadow of death cannot destroy us. Let us not, therefore, be afraid.

I will fear no evil. He does not say there shall not be any evil; he had got beyond even that high assurance, and knew that Jesus had put all evil away; but "I will fear no evil;" as if even his fears, those shadows of evil, were gone for ever. The worst evils of life are those which do not exist except in our imagination. If we had no troubles but real troubles, we should not have a tenth part of our present sorrows. We feel a thousand deaths in fearing one, but the psalmist was cured of the disease of fearing.

I will fear no evil, not even the Evil One himself; I will not dread the last enemy, I will look upon him as a conquered foe, an enemy to be destroyed, "For thou art with me." This is the joy of the Christian!
**Thou art with me.** The little child out at sea in the storm is not frightened like all the other passengers on board the vessel, it sleeps in its mother's bosom; it is enough for it that its mother is with it; and it should be enough for the believer to know that Christ is with him. "Thou art with me; I have, in having thee, all that I can crave: I have perfect comfort and absolute security, for thou art with me."

**Thy rod and thy staff,** by which thou governest and rulest thy flock, the ensigns of thy sovereignty and of thy gracious care—

**they comfort me.** I will believe that thou reignest still. The rod of Jesse shall still be over me as the sovereign succor of my soul. Many persons profess to receive much comfort from the hope that they shall not die. Certainly there will be some who will be "alive and remain" at the coming of the Lord, but is there so very much of advantage in such an escape from death as to make it the object of Christian desire? A wise man might prefer of the two to die, for those who shall not die, but who "shall be caught up together with the Lord in the air," will be losers rather than gainers. They will lose that actual fellowship with Christ in the tomb which dying saints will have, and we are expressly told that they shall have no preference beyond those who are asleep. Let us be of Paul's mind when he said that "To die is gain," and think of "departing to be with Christ, which is far better." This twenty-third psalm is not worn out, and it is as sweet in a believer's ear now as it was in David's time, let novelty-hunters say what they will.

5 Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies: thou anointest my head with oil; my cup runneth over.

23:5 **Thou preparest a table before me in the presence of mine enemies.** The good man has his enemies. He would not be like his Lord if he had not. If we were without enemies we might fear that we were not the friends of God, for the friendship of the world is enmity to God. Yet see the quietude of the godly man in spite of, and in the sight of, his enemies. How refreshing is his calm bravery!

**Thou preparst a table before me.** When a soldier is in the presence of his enemies, if he eats at all he snatches a hasty meal, and away he hastens to the fight. But observe:

**Thou preparst a table,** just as a servant does when she unfolds the damask cloth and displays the ornaments of the feast on an ordinary peaceful occasion. Nothing is hurried, there is no confusion, no disturbance, the enemy is at the door, and yet God prepares a table, and the Christian sits down and eats as if everything were in perfect peace. Oh! the peace which Jehovah gives to his people, even in the midst of the most trying circumstances!

"Let earth be all in arms abroad,
They dwell in perfect peace."

"Thou anointest my head with oil." May we live in the daily enjoyment of this blessing, receiving a fresh anointing for every day's duties. Every Christian is a priest, but he cannot execute the priestly office without unction, and hence we must go day by day to God the Holy Ghost, that we may have our heads anointed with oil. A priest without oil misses the chief qualification for his
office, and the Christian priest lacks his chief fitness for service when he is devoid of new grace from on high.

My cup runneth over. He had not only enough, a cup full, but more than enough, a cup which overflowed. A poor man may say this as well as those in higher circumstances. "What, all this, and Jesus Christ too?" said a poor cottager as she broke a piece of bread and filled a glass with cold water. Whereas a man may be ever so wealthy, but if he be discontented his cup cannot run over; it is cracked and leaks. Content is the philosopher's stone which turns all it touches into gold; happy is he who has found it. Content is more than a kingdom, it is another word for happiness.

6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life: and I will dwell in the house of the LORD for ever.

| 23:6 Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life. | This is a fact as indisputable as it is encouraging and therefore a heavenly verily, or "surely" is set as a seal upon it. This sentence may be read, "only goodness and mercy," for there shall be unmingled mercy in our history. These twin guardian angels will always be with me at my back and my beck. Just as when great princes go abroad they must not go unattended, so it is with the believer. Goodness and mercy follow him always— all the days of his life—the black days as well as the bright days, the days of fasting as well as the days of feasting, the dreary days of winter as well as the bright days of summer. Goodness supplies our needs, and mercy blots out our sins. And I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. A servant abideth not in the house for ever, but the son abideth ever." While I am here I will be a child at home with my God; the whole world shall be his house to me; and when I ascend into the upper chamber, I shall not change my company, nor even change the house; I shall only go to dwell in the upper story of the house of the Lord for ever. May God grant us grace to dwell in the serene atmosphere of this most blessed Psalm! |

Psalm 24

A Psalm of David

Title. A Psalm of David. From the title we learn nothing but the authorship: but this is interesting and leads us to observe the wondrous operations of the Spirit upon the mind of Israels's sweet singer, enabling him to touch the mournful string in Psalm twenty-two, to pour forth gentle notes of peace in Psalm twenty-three, and here to utter majestic and triumphant strains. We can do or sing all things when the Lord strengtheneth us.

This sacred hymn was probably written to be sung when the ark of the covenant was taken up from the house of Obed-edom, to remain within curtains upon the hill of Zion. The words are not
unsuitable for the sacred dance of joy in which David led the way upon that joyful occasion. The eye of the psalmist looked, however, beyond the typical upgoing of the ark to the sublime ascension of the King of glory. We will call it The Song of the Ascension.

Division. The Psalm makes a pair with the fifteenth Psalm. It consists of three parts. The first glorifies the true God, and sings of his universal dominion; the second describes the true Israel, who are able to commune with him; and the third pictures the ascent of the true Redeemer, who has opened heaven's gates for the entrance of his elect.

1 The earth is the LORD's, and the fullness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein.

24:1 How very different is this from the ignorant Jewish notion of God which prevailed in our Savior's day? The Jews said, "The Holy Land is God's, and the seed of Abraham are his only people;" but their great Monarch had long before instructed them, —

The earth is the Lord's, and the fullness thereof. The whole round world is claimed for Jehovah,

and they that dwell therein are declared to be his subjects. When we consider the bigotry of the Jewish people at the time of Christ, and how angry they were with our Lord for saying that many widows were in Israel, but unto none of them was the prophet sent, save only to the widow of Sarepta, and that there were many lepers in Israel, but none of them was healed except Naaman the Syrian,—when we recollect, too, how angry they were at the mention of Paul's being sent to the Gentiles, we are amazed that they should have remained in such blindness, and yet have sung this psalm, which shows so clearly that God is not the God of the Jews only, but of the Gentiles also. What a rebuke is this to those wiseacres who speak of the Negro and other despised races as though they were not cared for by the God of heaven! If a man be but a man the Lord claims him, and who dares to brand him as a mere piece of merchandise! The meanest of men is a dweller in the world, and therefore belongs to Jehovah. Jesus Christ had made an end of the exclusiveness of nationalities. There is neither barbarian, Scythian, bond not free; but we all are one in Christ Jesus. Man lives upon "the earth," and parcels out its soil among his mimic kings and autocrats; but the earth is not man's.

He is but a tenant at will, a leaseholder upon the most precarious tenure, liable to instantaneous ejectment. The great Landowner and true Proprietor holds his court above the clouds, and laughs at the title deeds of worms of the dust. The fee simple is not with the lord of the manor nor the freeholder, but with the Creator. The "fullness" of the earth may mean its harvests, its wealth, its life, or its worship; in all these senses the Most High God is Possessor of all. The earth is full of God; he made it full and he keeps it full, notwithstanding all the demands which living creatures make upon its stores. The sea is full, despite all the clouds which rise from it; the air is full, notwithstanding all the lives which breathe it; the soil is full, though millions of plants derive their nourishment from it.

Under man's tutored hand the world is coming to a greater fullness than ever, but it is all the Lord's; the field and the fruit, the earth and all earth's wonders are Jehovah's. We look also for a sublimer fullness when the true ideal of a world for God shall have been reached in millennial
glories, and then most clearly the earth will be the Lord's and the fullness thereof. These words are now upon London's Royal Exchange, they shall one day be written in letters of light across the sky. The term "world" indicates the habitable regions, wherein Jehovah is especially to be acknowledged as Sovereign.

He who rules the fish of the sea and the fowl of the air should not be disobeyed by man, his noblest creature. Jehovah is the Universal King, all nations are beneath his sway: true Autocrat of all the nations, emperors and czars are but his slaves. Men are not their own, nor may they call their lips, their hearts, or their substance their own; they are Jehovah's rightful servants. This claim especially applies to us who are born from heaven.

We do not belong to the world or to Satan, but by creation and redemption we are the peculiar portion of the Lord. Paul uses this verse twice, to show that no food is unclean, and that nothing is really the property of false gods. All things are God's; no ban is on the face of nature, nothing is common or unclean. The world is all God's world, and the food which is sold in the shambles is sanctified by being my Father's, and I need not scruple to eat thereof.

2 For he hath founded it upon the seas, and established it upon the floods.

24:2 In the second verse we have the reason why the world belongs to God, namely, because he has created it, which is a title beyond all dispute.

*For he hath founded it upon the seas.* It is God who lifts up the earth from out of the sea, so that the dry land, which otherwise might in a moment be submerged, as in the days of Noah, is kept from the floods. The hungry jaws of ocean would devour the dry land if a constant fiat of Omnipotence did not protect it.

*He hath established it upon the floods.* The world is Jehovah's, because from generation to generation he preserves and upholds it, having settled its foundations. Providence and Creation are the two legal seals upon the title-deeds of the great Owner of all things. He who built the house and bears up its foundations has surely a first claim upon it. Let it be noted, however, upon what insecure foundations all terrestrial things are founded. Founded on the seas! Established on the floods! Blessed be God the Christian has another world to look forward to, and rests his hopes upon a more stable foundation than this poor world affords. They who trust in worldly things build upon the sea; but we have laid our hopes, by God's grace, upon the Rock of Ages; we are resting upon the promise of an immutable God, we are depending upon the constancy of a faithful Redeemer. Oh! Ye worldlings, who have built your castles of confidence, your palaces of wealth, and your bowers of pleasure upon the seas, and established them upon the floods; how soon will your baseless fabrics melt, like foam upon the waters! Sand is treacherous enough, but what shall be said of the yet more unstable sea?

3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? Or who shall stand in his holy place?

24:3-6 Here we have the true Israel described. The men who shall stand as courtiers in the palace of the living God are not distinguished by race, but by character; they are not Jews only, nor
Gentiles only, nor any one branch of mankind peculiarly, but a people purified and made meet to dwell in the holy hill of the Lord.

24:3 Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord? It is uphill work for the creature to reach the Creator. Where is the mighty climber who can scale the towering heights? Nor is it height alone; it is glory too. Whose eye shall see the King in his beauty and dwell in his palace? In heaven he reigns most gloriously, who shall be permitted to enter into his royal presence? God has made all, but he will not save all; there is a chosen company who shall have the singular honour of dwelling with him in his high abode. These choice spirits desire to commune with God, and their wish shall be granted them. The solemn enquiry of the text is repeated in another form. Who shall be able to "stand" or continue there? He casteth away the wicked, who then can abide in his house? Who is he that can gaze upon the Holy One, and can abide in the blaze of his glory? Certainly none may venture to commune with God upon the footing of the law, but grace can make us meet to behold the vision of the divine presence. The question before us is one which all should ask for themselves, and none should be at ease till they have received an answer of peace. With careful self-examination let us enquire, "Lord, is it I."

4 He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.

24:4 He that hath clean hands. Outward, practical holiness is a very precious mark of grace. To wash in water with Pilate is nothing, but to wash in innocency is all-important. It is to be feared that many professors have perverted the doctrine of justification by faith in such a way as to treat good works with contempt; if so, they will receive everlasting contempt at the last great day. It is vain to prate of inward experience unless the daily life is free from impurity, dishonesty, violence, and oppression. Those who draw near to God must have "clean hands." What monarch would have servants with filthy hands to wait at his table? They who were ceremonially unclean could not enter into the Lord's house which was made with hands, much less shall the morally defiled be allowed to enjoy spiritual fellowship with a holy God. If our hands are now unclean, let us wash them in Jesus' precious blood, and so let us pray unto God, lifting up pure hands. But "clean hands" would not suffice, unless they were connected with "a pure heart." True religion is heart-work. We may wash the outside of the cup and the platter as long as we please; but if the inward parts be filthy, we are filthy altogether in the sight of God, for our hearts are more truly ourselves than our hands are. We may lose our hands and yet live, but we could not lose our heart and still live; the very life of our being lies in the inner nature, and hence the imperative need of purity within. There must be a work of grace in the core of the heart as well as in the palm of the hand, or our religion is a delusion. May God grant that our inward powers may be cleansed by the sanctifying Spirit, so that we may love holiness and abhor all sin. The pure in heart shall see God, all others are but blind bats; stone-blindness in the eyes arises from stone in the heart. Dirt in the heart throws dust in the eyes. The soul must be delivered from delighting in the groveling toys of earth; the man who is born for heaven

hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity. All men have their joys, by which their souls are lifted up; the worldling lifts up his soul in carnal delights, which are mere empty vanities; but the saint loves more substantial things; like Jehoshaphat, he is lifted up in the ways of the Lord. He who is content with the husks will be reckoned with the swine. If we suck our consolation from the breasts of the
world, we prove ourselves to be its home-born children. Does the world 
satisfy thee? Then thou hast thy reward and thy portion in this life; make much of it, for thou 
shalt know no other joy.

Nor sworn deceitfully. The saints are men of honour still. The Christian man's word is his only 
oath; but that is as good as twenty oaths of other men. False speaking will shut any man out of 
heaven, for a liar shall not enter into God's house, whatever may be his professions or doings. 
God will have nothing to do with liars, except to cast them into the lake of fire. Every liar is a 
child of the devil, and will be sent home to his father. A false declaration, a fraudulent statement, 
a cooked account, a slander, a lie—all these may suit the assembly of the ungodly, but are 
detested among true saints: how could they have fellowship with the God of truth, if they did not 
hate every false way?

5 He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God 
of his salvation.

24:5 It must not be supposed that the persons who are thus described by their inward and 
outward holiness are saved by the merits of their works; but their works are the evidences by 
which they are known. The present verse shows that in the saints grace reigns and grace alone. 
Such men wear the holy livery of the Great King because he has of his own free love clothed 
them therewith. The true saint wears the wedding garment, but he owns that the Lord of the feast 
provided it for him, without money and without price.

He shall receive the blessing from the Lord, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. 
So that the saints need salvation; they receive righteousness, and "the blessing" is a boon from 
God their Saviour. They do not ascend the hill of the Lord as givers but as receivers, and they do 
not wear their own merits, but a righteousness which they have received. Holy living ensures a 
blessing as its reward from the thrice Holy God, but it is itself a blessing of the New Covenant 
and a delightful fruit of the Spirit. God first gives us good works, and then rewards us for them. 
Grace is not obscured by God's demand for holiness, but is highly exalted as we see it decking 
the saint with jewels, and clothing him in fair white linen; all this sumptuous array being a free 
gift of mercy.

6 This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

24:6 This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. These are the 
regeneration, these are in the line of grace; these are the legitimate seed. Yet they are only 
seekers; hence learn that true seekers are very dear in God's esteem, and are entered upon his 
register. Even seeking has a sanctifying influence; what a consecrating power must lie in finding 
and enjoying the Lord's face and favour! To desire communion with God is a purifying thing. Oh 
to hunger and thirst more and more after a clear vision of the face of God; this will lead us to 
purge ourselves from all filthiness, and to walk with heavenly circumspection. He who longs to 
see his friend when he passes takes care to clear the mist from the window, lest by any means his 
friend should go by unobserved.
Really awakened souls seek the Lord above everything, and as this is not the usual desire of mankind, they constitute a generation by themselves; a people despised of men but beloved of God. The expression "O Jacob" is a very difficult one, unless it be indeed true that the God of Jacob here condescendeth to be called Jacob, and takes upon himself the name of his chosen people. The preceding verses correct the inordinate boastings of those Jews who vaunted themselves as the favorites of heaven; they are told that their God is the God of all the earth, and that he is holy, and will admit none but holy ones into his presence. Let the mere professor as he reads these verses listen to the voice which saith, "without holiness no man shall see the Lord."

Selah. Lift up the harp and voice, for a nobler song is coming; a song of our Well-beloved.

7 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; and be ye lift up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

24:7 These last verses reveal to us the great representative man, who answered to the full character laid down, and therefore by his own right ascended the holy hill of Zion. Our Lord Jesus Christ could ascend into the hill of the Lord because his hands were clean and his heart was pure, and if we by faith in him are conformed to his image we shall enter too. We have here a picture of our Lord's glorious ascent. We see him rising from amidst the little group upon Olivet, and as the cloud receives him, angels reverently escort him to the gates of heaven. The ancient gates of the eternal temple are personified and addressed in song by the attending cohorts of rejoicing spirits.

"Lo his triumphal chariot waits,  
And angels chant the solemn lay.  
'Lift up your heads, ye heavenly gates;  
Ye everlasting doors, give way."

They are called upon "to lift up their heads," as though with all their glory they were not great enough for the All-glorious King. Let all things do their utmost to honour so great a Prince; let the highest heaven put on unusual loftiness in honour of

the King of Glory. He who, fresh from the cross and the tomb, now rides through the gates of the New Jerusalem is higher than the heavens; great and everlasting as they are, those gates of pearl are all unworthy of him before whom the heavens are not pure, and who chargeth his angels with folly. "Lift up your heads, O ye gates."

8 Who is this King of glory? The LORD strong and mighty, the LORD mighty in battle.

24:8 The watchers at the gate hearing the song look over the battlements and ask,

Who is this King of glory? A question full of meaning and worthy of the meditations of eternity. Who is he in person, nature, character, office and work? What is his pedigree? What his rank and what his race? The answer given in a mighty wave of music is,
**The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle.** We know the might of Jesus by the battles which he has fought, the victories which he has won over sin, and death, and hell, and we clap our hands as we see him leading captivity captive in the majesty of his strength. Oh for a heart to sing his praises! Mighty hero, be thou crowned for ever King of kings and Lord of lords.

9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.

**24:9 Lift up your heads, O ye gates; even lift them up, ye everlasting doors; and the King of glory shall come in.** The words are repeated with a pleasing variation. There are times of deep earnest feeling when repetitions are not vain but full of force. Doors were often taken from their hinges when Easterns would show welcome to a guest, and some doors were drawn up and down like a portcullis, and may possibly have protruded from the top; thus literally lifting up their heads. The picture is highly poetical, and shows how wide heaven's gate is set by the ascension of our Lord. Blessed be God, the gates have never been shut since. The opened gates of heaven invite the weakest believer to enter. Dear reader, it is possible that you are saying, "I shall never enter into the heaven of God, for I have neither clean hands nor a pure heart." Look then to Christ, who has already climbed the holy hill. He has entered as the forerunner of those who trust him. Follow in his footsteps, and repose upon his merit. He rides triumphantly into heaven, and you shall ride there too if you trust him. "But how can I get the character described?" say you. The Spirit of God will give you that. He will create in you a new heart and a right spirit. Faith in Jesus is the work of the Holy Spirit, and has all virtues wrapped up in it. Faith stands by the fountain filled with blood, and as she washes therein, clean hands and a pure heart, a holy soul and a truthful tongue are given to her.

24:9. The historical allusion of the psalmist is primarily to the ascension of the Ark of the Covenant into Jerusalem where it was to be permanently kept. The historical fact symbolizes the ascension of Christ into the heavenly Jerusalem where He sits as the representative of His people. S.E.M.

10 Who is this King of glory? The LORD of hosts, he is the King of glory. Selah.

**24:10** The closing note is inexpressibly grand. Jehovah of hosts, Lord of men and angels, Lord of the universe, Lord of the worlds, is the King of glory. All true glory is concentrated upon the true God, for all other glory is but a passing pageant, the painted pomp of an hour. The ascended Saviour is here declared to be the Head and Crown of the universe, the King of Glory. Our Immanuel is hymned in sublimest strains. Jesus of Nazareth is Jehovah Sabbath.
Psalm 25

TITLE. A Psalm of David. David is pictured in this Psalm as in a faithful miniature. His holy trust, his many conflicts, his great transgression, his bitter repentance, and his deep distresses are all here; so that we see the very heart of "the man after God's own heart." It is evidently a composition of David's later days, for he mentions the sins of his youth, and from its painful references to the craft and cruelty of his many foes, it will not be too speculative a theory to refer it to the period when Absalom was heading the great rebellion against him. This has been styled the second of the seven Penitential Psalms. It is the mark of a true saint that his sorrows remind him of his sins, and his sorrow for sin drives him to his God.

SUBJECT AND DIVISION. The twenty-two verses of this Psalm begin in the original with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet in their proper order. It is the first instance we have of an inspired acrostic or alphabetical song. This method may have been adopted by the writer to assist the memory; and the Holy Spirit may have employed it to show us that the graces of style and the arts of poetry may lawfully be used in his service. Why should not all the wit and ingenuity of man be sanctified to noblest ends by being laid upon the altar of God? From the singularity of the structure of the Psalm, it is not easy to discover any marked divisions; there are great changes of thought, but there is no variation of subject; the moods of the writer's mind are twofold—prayer and meditation; and as these appear in turns, we should thus divide the verses. Prayer
1 Unto thee, O LORD, do I lift up my soul.

25:1 Unto thee, O Lord. See how the holy soul flies to its God like a dove to its cote. When the storm winds are out, the Lord's vessels put about and make for their well remembered harbor of refuge. What a mercy that the Lord will condescend to hear our cries in time of trouble, although we may have almost forgotten him in our hours of fancied prosperity.

Unto thee, O Jehovah, do I lift up my soul. It is but a mockery to uplift the hands and the eyes unless we also bring our souls into our devotions. True prayer may be described as the soul rising from earth to have fellowship with heaven; it is taking a journey upon Jacob's ladder, leaving our cares and fears at the foot, and meeting with a covenant God at the top. Very often the soul cannot rise, she has lost her wings, and is heavy and earth bound; more like a burrowing mole than a soaring eagle. At such dull seasons we must not give over prayer, but must, by God's assistance, exert all our powers to lift up our hearts. Let faith be the lever and grace be the arm, and the dead lump will yet be stirred. But what a lift it has sometimes proved! With all our tugging and straining we have been utterly defeated, until the heavenly loadstone of our Savior's love has displayed its omnipotent attractions, and then our hearts have gone up to our Beloved like mounting flames of fire.

2 O my God, I trust in thee: let me not be ashamed, let not mine enemies triumph over me.

25:2 O my God. This title is more dear than the name Jehovah, which is used in the first sentence. Already the sweet singer has drawn nearer to his heavenly helper, for he makes bold to grasp him with the hand of assured possession, calling him, my God. Oh the more than celestial music of that word—"My God!"

It is to be observed that the psalmist does not deny expression to those gracious feelings with which God had favored him; he does not fall into loathsome mock modesty, but finding in his soul a desire to seek the Lord he avows it; believing that he had a rightful interest in Jehovah he declares it, and knowing that he had confidence in his God he professes it;

O my God, I trust in thee. Faith is the cable which binds our boat to the shore, and by pulling at it we draw ourselves to the land; faith unites us to God, and then draws us near to him. As long as the anchor of faith holds there is no fear in the worst tempest; if that should fail us there would be no hope left. We must see to it that our faith is sound and strong, for otherwise prayer cannot prevail with God. Woe to the warrior who throws away his shield; what defense can be found for him who finds no defense in his God?
Let me not be ashamed. Let no my disappointed hopes make me feel ashamed of my former testimonies of thy faithfulness. Many were on the watch for this. The best of men have their enemies, and should pray against them that they may not see their wicked desires accomplished. Let not mine enemies triumph over me. Suffer no wicked mouth to make blasphemous mirth out of my distresses by asking, Where is thy God? There is a great jealousy in believers for the honour of God, and they cannot endure that unbelievers should taunt them with the failure of their expectations from the God of their salvation. All other trusts will end in disappointment and eternal shame, but our confidence shall never be confounded.

3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed: let them be ashamed which transgress without cause.

25:3 Yea, let none that wait on thee be ashamed. Suffering enlarges the heart by creating the power to sympathize. If we pray eagerly for ourselves, we shall not long be able to forget our fellow sufferers. None pity the poor like those who have been or are still poor, none have such tenderness for the sick as those who have been long in ill health themselves. We ought to be grateful for occasional griefs if they preserve us from chronic hard-heartedness; for of all afflictions, an unkind heart is the worst, it is a plague to its possessor, and a torment to those around him. Prayer when it is of the Holy Ghost's teaching is never selfish; the believer does not sue for monopolies for himself, but would have all in like case to partake of divine mercy with him. The prayer may be viewed as a promise; our Heavenly Father will never let his trustful children find him untrue or unkind. He will ever be mindful of his covenant.

Let them be ashamed which transgress without cause. David had given his enemies no provocation; their hatred was wanton. Sinners have no justifiable reason or valid excuse for transgressing; they benefit no one, not even themselves by their sins; the law against which they transgress is not harsh or unjust; God is not a tyrannical ruler, providence is not a bondage: men sin because they will sin, not because it is either profitable or reasonable to do so. Hence shame is their fitting reward. May they blush with penitential shame now, or else they will not be able to escape the everlasting contempt and the bitter shame which is the portion of fools in the world to come.

4 Shew me thy ways, O LORD; teach me thy paths.

25:4 Shew me thy ways, O Lord. Unsanctified natures clamor for their own way, but gracious spirits cry, "Not my will, but thine be done." We cannot at all times discern the path of duty, and at such times it is our wisdom to apply to the Lord himself. Frequently the dealings of God with us are mysterious, and then also we may appeal to him as his own interpreter, and in due time he will make all things plain. Moral, providential and mental forms of guidance are all precious gifts of a gracious God to a teachable people. The second petition, teach me thy paths, appears to mean more than the first, and may be illustrated by the case of a little child who should say to his father, "Father, first tell me which is the way, and then teach my little trembling feet to walk in
5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me: for thou art the God of my salvation; on thee do I wait all the day.

25:5 Lead me in thy truth, and teach me. The same request as in the last verse. The little child having begun to walk, asks to be still led onward by its parent's helping hand, and to be further instructed in the alphabet of truth. Experimental teaching is the burden of this prayer. Lead me according to thy truth; and prove thyself faithful; lead me into truth that I may know its preciousness, lead me by the way of truth that I may manifest its spirit. David knew much, but he felt his ignorance and desired to be still in the Lord's school; four times over in these two verses he applies for a scholarship in the college of grace. It were well for many professors if instead of following their own devices, and cutting out new paths of thought for themselves, they would enquire for the good old ways of God's own truth, and beseech the Holy Ghost to give them sanctified understandings and teachable spirits.

For thou art the God of my salvation. The Three One Jehovah is the Author and Perfector of salvation to his people. Reader, is he the God of your salvation? Do you find in the Father's election, in the Son's atonement, and in the Spirit's quickening all the grounds of your eternal hopes? If so, you may use this as an argument for obtaining further blessings; if the Lord has ordained to save you, surely he will not refuse to instruct you in his ways. It is a happy thing when we can address the Lord with the confidence which David here manifests, it gives us great power in prayer, and comfort in trial.

On thee do I wait all the day. Patience is the fair handmaid and daughter of faith; we cheerfully wait when we are certain that we shall not wait in vain. It is our duty and our privilege to wait upon the Lord in service, in worship, in expectancy, in trust all the days of our life. Our faith will be tried faith, and if it be of the true kind, it will bear continued trial without yielding. We shall not grow weary of waiting upon God if we remember how long and how graciously he once waited for us.

6 Remember, O LORD, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindness; for they have been ever of old.

25:6 Remember, O Lord, thy tender mercies and thy lovingkindnesses. We are usually tempted in seasons of affliction to fear that our God has forgotten us, or forgotten his usual kindness towards us; hence the soul doth as it were put the Lord in remembrance, and beseech him to recollect those deeds of love which once he wrought towards it. There is a holy boldness which ventures thus to deal with the Most High, let us cultivate it; but there is also an unholy unbelief which suggests our fears, let us strive against it with all our might. What gems are those two expressions, tender mercies and lovingkindnesses! They are the virgin honey of language; for sweetness no words can excel them; but as for the gracious favors which are intended by them, language fails to describe them.

"When all thy mercies, O my God,
If the Lord will only do unto us in the future as in the past, we shall be well content. We seek no change in the divine action, we only crave that the river of grace may never cease to flow.

For they have been ever of old. A more correct translation would be "from eternity." David was a sound believer in the doctrine of God's eternal love. The Lord's lovingkindnesses are no novelties. When we plead with him to bestow them upon us, we can urge use and custom of the most ancient kind. In courts of law men make much of precedents, and we may plead them at the throne of grace.

"Faith," saith David Dickson (1583-1662), "must make use of experiences and read them over unto God, out of the register of a sanctified memory, as a recorder to him who cannot forget." With an unchangeable God it is a most effectual argument to remind him of his ancient mercies and his eternal love. By tracing all that we enjoy to the fountain head of everlasting love we shall greatly cheer our hearts, and those do us but sorry service who try to dissuade us from meditating upon election and its kindred topics.

7 Remember not the sins of my youth, nor my transgressions: according to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O LORD.

25:7 Remember not the sins of my youth. Sin is the stumbling block. This is the thing to be removed. Lord, pass an act of oblivion for all my sins, and especially for the hot blooded wanton follies of my younger years. Those offences which we remember with repentance God forgets, but if we forget them, justice will bring them forth to punishment. The world winks at the sins of younger men, and yet they are none so little after all; the bones of our youthful feasting at Satan's table will stick painfully in our throats when we are old men. He who presumes upon his youth is poisoning his old age. How large a tear may wet this page as some of us reflect upon the past!

Nor my transgressions. Another word for the same evils. Sincere penitents cannot get through their confessions at a gallop; they are constrained to use many bemoanings, for their swarming sins smite them with so innumerable griefs. A painful sense of any one sin provokes the believer to repentance for the whole mass of his iniquities. Nothing but the fullest and clearest pardon will satisfy a thoroughly awakened conscience. David would have his sins not only forgiven, but forgotten.

According to thy mercy remember thou me for thy goodness' sake, O Lord. David and the dying thief breathe the same prayer, and doubtless they grounded it upon the same plea, viz., the
free grace and unmerited goodness of Jehovah. We dare not ask to have our portion measured from the balances of justice, but we pray to be dealt with by the hand of mercy.

8 Good and upright is the LORD: therefore will he teach sinners in the way.

25:8-10. These three verses are a meditation upon the attributes and acts of the Lord. He who toils in the harvest field of prayer should occasionally pause awhile and refresh himself with a meal of meditation.

25:8 Good and upright is the Lord: therefore will he teach sinners in the way. Here the goodness and rectitude of the divine character are beheld in friendly union; he who would see them thus united in bonds of perfect amity must stand at the foot of the cross and view them blended in the sacrifice of the Lord Jesus. It is no less true than wonderful that through the atonement the justice of God pleads as strongly as his grace for the salvation of the sinners whom Jesus died to save. Moreover, as a good man naturally endeavors to make others like himself, so will the Lord our God in his compassion bring sinners into the way of holiness and conform them to his own image; thus the goodness of our God leads us to expect the reclaiming of sinful men. We may not conclude from God's goodness that he will save those sinners who continue to wander in their own ways, but we may be assured that he will renew transgressors' hearts and guide them into the way of holiness. Let those who desire to be delivered from sin take comfort from this. God himself will condescend to be the teacher of sinners. What a ragged school is this for God to teach in! God's teaching is practical; he teaches sinners not only the doctrine but the way.

9 The meek will he guide in judgment: and the meek will he teach his way.

25:9 The meek will he guide in judgment. Meek spirits are in high favour with the Father of the meek and lowly Jesus, for he sees in them the image of his only begotten Son. They know their need of guidance, and are willing to submit their own understandings to the divine will, and therefore the Lord condescends to be their guide. Humble spirits are in this verse endowed with a rich inheritance; let them be of good cheer. Trouble puts gentle spirits to their wit's ends, and drives them to act without discretion, but grace comes to the rescue, enlightens their minds to follow that which is just, and helps them to discern the way in which the Lord would have them to go. Proud of their own wisdom fools will not learn, and therefore miss their road to heaven, but lowly hearts sit at Jesus’ feet, and find the gate of glory, for

“the meek will he teach his way”. Blessed teacher! Favored scholar! Divine lesson! My soul, be thou familiar with the whole.

10 All the paths of the LORD are mercy and truth unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies.

25:10 This is a rule without exception. God is good to those that be good. Mercy and faithfulness shall abound towards those who through mercy are made faithful. Whatever outward appearances may threaten we should settle it steadfastly in our minds that while grace enables us to obey the Lord's will we need not fear that Providence
will cause us any real loss. There shall be mercy in every unsavory morsel, and faithfulness in every bitter drop; let not our hearts be troubled, but let us rest by faith in the immutable covenant of Jehovah, which is ordered in all things and sure. Yet this is not a general truth to be trampled upon by swine, it is a pearl for a child's neck. Gracious souls, by faith resting upon the finished work of the Lord Jesus, keep the covenant of the Lord, and, being sanctified by the Holy Spirit, they walk in his testimonies; these will find all things working together for their good, but to the sinner there is no such promise. Keepers of the covenant shall be kept by the covenant; those who follow the Lord's commandments shall find the Lord's mercy following them.

11 For thy name's sake, O LORD, pardon mine iniquity; for it is great.

25:11 This sentence of prayer would seem out of place were it not that prayer is always in its place, whether in season or out of season. Meditation having refreshed the Psalmist, he falls to his weighty work again, and wrestles with God for the remission of his sin.

For thy name's sake, O Lord. Here is a blessed, never failing plea. Not for our sakes or our merit's sake, but to glorify thy mercy, and to show forth the glory of thy divine attributes.

Pardon mine iniquity. It is confessed, it is abhorred, it is consuming my heart with grief; Lord forgive it; let thine own lips pronounce my absolution.

For it is great. It weighs so heavily upon me that I pray thee remove it. Its greatness is no difficulty with thee, for thou art a great God, but the misery which it causes to me is my argument with thee for speedy pardon. Lord, the patient is sore sick, therefore heal him. To pardon a great sinner will bring thee great glory, therefore for thy name's sake pardon me. Observe how this verse illustrates the logic of faith, which is clean contrary to that of a legal spirit; faith looks not for merit in the creature, but hath regard to the goodness of the Creator; and instead of being staggered by the demerits of sin it looks to the precious blood, and pleads all the more vigorously because of the urgency of the case.

12 What man is he that feareth the LORD? Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose.

25:12 What man is he that feareth the LORD? Let the question provoke self examination. Gospel privileges are not for every pretender. Art thou of the seed royal or no?

Him shall he teach in the way that he shall choose. Those whose hearts are right shall not err for want of heavenly direction. Where God sanctifies the heart he enlightens the head. We all wish to choose our way; but what a mercy is it when the Lord directs that choice, and makes free will to be goodwill! If we make our will God's will, God will let is have our will. God does not violate our will, but leaves much to our choice; nevertheless, he instructs our wills, and so we choose that which is well pleasing in his sight. The will should be subject to law; there is a way which we should choose, but so ignorant are we that we need to be taught, and so willful that none but God himself can teach us effectually.

13 His soul shall dwell at ease; and his seed shall inherit the earth.
25:13 He who fears God has nothing else to fear.

His soul shall dwell at ease. He shall lodge in the chamber of content. One may sleep as soundly in the little bed in the corner as in the Great Bed of Ware; it is not abundance but content that gives true ease. Even here, having learned by grace both to abound and be empty, the believer dwells at ease; but how profound will be the ease of his soul forever! There he will enjoy the *otium cum dignitate*: ease and glory shall go together. Like a warrior whose battles are over, or a husbandman whose barns are full, his soul shall take its ease, and be merry forever.

His seed shall inherit the earth. God remembers Isaac for the sake of Abraham, and Jacob for the sake of Isaac. Good men's sons have a goodly portion to begin the world with, but many of them, alas! Turn a father's blessing into a curse. The promise is not broken because in some instances men willfully refuse to receive it; moreover, it is in its spiritual meaning that it now holds good; our spiritual seed do inherit all that was meant by "the earth," or Canaan; they receive the blessing of the new covenant. May the Lord make us the joyful parents of many spiritual children, and we shall have no fears about their maintenance, for the Lord will make each one of them princes in all the earth.

14 The secret of the LORD is with them that fear him; and he will shew them his covenant.

25:14 The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him. Some read it the friendship: it signifies familiar intercourse, confidential intimacy, and select fellowship. This is a great secret. Carnal minds cannot guess what is intended by it, and even believers cannot explain it in words, for it must be felt to be known. The higher spiritual life is necessarily a path which the eagle's eye hath not known, and which the lion's whelp has not traveled; neither natural wisdom nor strength can force a door into this inner chamber. Saints have the key of heaven's hieroglyphics; they can unriddle celestial enigmas. They are initiated into the fellowship of the skies; they have heard words which it is not possible for them to repeat to their fellows.

And he will shew them his covenant. Its antiquity, security, righteousness, fullness, graciousness and excellence, shall be revealed to their hearts and understandings, and above all, their own part in it shall be sealed to their souls by the witness of the Holy Spirit. The designs of love which the Lord has to his people in the covenant of grace, he has been pleased to show to believers in the Book of Inspiration, and by his Spirit he leads us into the mystery, even the hidden mystery of redemption. He who does not know the meaning of this verse, will never learn it from a commentary; let him look to the cross, for the secret lies there.

15 Mine eyes are ever toward the LORD; for he shall pluck my feet out of the net.
25:15 *Mine eyes are ever toward the Lord.* The writer claims to be fixed in his trust, and constant in his expectation; he looks in confidence, and waits in hope. We may add to this look of faith and hope the obedient look of service, the humble look of reverence, the admiring look of wonder, the studious look of meditation, and the tender look of affection. Happy are those whose eyes are never removed from their God. "The eye, "says Solomon, "is never satisfied with seeing," but this sight is the most satisfying in the world.

For he shall pluck my feet out of the net. Observe the conflicting condition in which a gracious soul may be placed, his eyes are in heaven and yet his feet are sometimes in a net; his nobler nature ceases not to behold the glories of God, while his baser parts are enduring the miseries of the world. A net is the common metaphor for temptation. The Lord often keeps his people from falling into it, and if they have fallen he rescues them. The word "pluck" is a rough word, and saints who have fallen into sin find that the means of their restoration are not always easy to the flesh; the Lord plucks at us sharply to let us feel that sin is an exceeding bitter thing. But what a mercy is here: Believer, be very grateful for it. The Lord will deliver us from the cunning devices of our cruel enemy, and even if through infirmity we have fallen into sin, he will not leave us to be utterly destroyed but will pluck us out of our dangerous state; though our feet are in the net, if our eyes are up unto God, mercy certainly will interpose.

16 Turn thee unto me, and have mercy upon me; for I *am* desolate and afflicted.

25:16 His own eyes were fixed upon God, but he feared that the Lord had averted his face from him in anger. Oftentimes unbelief suggests that God has turned his back upon us. If we know that we turn to God we need not fear that he will turn from us, but may boldly cry, *Turn thee unto me.* The ground of quarrel is always in ourselves, and when that is removed there is nothing to prevent our full enjoyment of communion with God. *Have mercy upon me.* Saints still must stand upon the footing of mercy; notwithstanding all their experience they cannot get beyond the publican's prayer, *Have mercy upon me. For I *am* desolate and afflicted.* He was lonely and bowed down. Jesus was in the days of his flesh in just such a condition; none could enter into the secret depths of his sorrows, he trod the winepress alone, and hence he is able to succor in the fullest sense those who tread the solitary path.

"Christ leads me through
no darker rooms
*Than he went through before; He that into God's kingdom comes,*
*Must enter by this door."

17 The troubles of my heart are enlarged: *O* bring thou me out of my distresses.

25:17 *The troubles of my heart are enlarged.* When trouble penetrates the heart it is trouble indeed. In the case before us, the heart was swollen with grief like a lake surcharged with water by enormous floods; this is used as an argument for deliverance, and it is a potent one. When the darkest hour of the
night arrives we may expect the dawn; when the sea is at its lowest ebb the tide must surely turn; and when our troubles are enlarged to the greatest degree, then we may hopefully pray, *O bring thou me out of my distresses.*

18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain; and forgive all my sins.

**25:18 Look upon mine affliction and my pain.** Note the many trials of the saints; here we have no less than six words all descriptive of woe. "Desolate, and afflicted, troubles enlarged, distresses, affliction, and pain." But note yet more the submissive and believing spirit of a true saint; all he asks for is, "Lord, look upon my evil plight;" he does not dictate, or even express a complaint; a look from God will content him, and that being granted he asks no more. Even more noteworthy is the way in which the believer under affliction discovers the true source of all the mischief, and lays the axe at the root of it.

*Forgive all my sins,* is the cry of a soul that is more sick of sin than of pain, and would sooner be forgiven than healed. Blessed is the man to whom sin is more unbearable than disease, he shall not be long before the Lord shall both forgive his iniquity and heal his diseases. Men are slow to see the intimate connection between sin and sorrow, a grace taught heart alone feels it.

19 Consider mine enemies; for they are many; and they hate me with cruel hatred.

**25:19 Consider mine enemies.** Watch them, weigh them, check them, defeat them.

*For they are many.* They need the eyes of Argus to watch them, and the arms of Hercules to match them, but the Lord is more than sufficient to defeat them. The devils of hell and the evils of earth are all vanquished when the Lord makes bare his arm.

*They hate me with cruel hatred.* It is the breath of the serpent's seed to hate; their progenitor was a hater, and they themselves must needs imitate him. No hate so cruel as that which is unreasonable and unjust. A man can forgive one who had injured him, but one whom he has injured he hates implacably. "Behold, I send you forth as sheep in the midst of wolves," is still our Master's word to us.

20 O keep my soul, and deliver me: let me not be ashamed; for I put my trust in thee.

**25:20 O keep my soul out of evil, and deliver me** when I fall into it. This is another version of the prayer, "Lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil."

*Let me not be ashamed.* This is the one fear which like a ghost haunted the psalmist's mind. He trembled lest his faith should become the subject of ridicule through the extremity of his affliction. Noble hearts can brook anything but shame. David was of such a chivalrous spirit, that he could endure any torment rather than be put to dishonor.
For I put my trust in thee. And therefore the name of God would be compromised if his servants were deserted; this the believing heart can by no means endure.

21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me; for I wait on thee.

25:21 Let integrity and uprightness preserve me. What better practical safeguards can a man require? If we do not prosper with these as our guides, it is better for us to suffer adversity. Even the ungodly world admits that "honesty is the best policy." The heir of heaven makes assurance doubly sure, for apart from the rectitude of his public life, he enlists the guardian care of heaven in secret prayer: for I wait on thee. To pretend to wait on God without holiness of life is religious hypocrisy, and to trust to our own integrity without calling upon God is presumptuous atheism. Perhaps the integrity and uprightness referred to are those righteous attributes of God, which faith rests upon as a guarantee that the Lord will not forfeit his word.

22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles.

25:22 Redeem Israel, O God, out of all his troubles. This is a very comprehensive prayer, including all the faithful and all their trials. Sorrow had taught the psalmist sympathy, and given him communion with the tried people of God; he therefore remembers them in his prayers. Israel, the tried, the wrestling, the conquering hero, fit representative of all the saints. Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness, in wars with Canaanites, in captivity, fit type of the church militant on earth. Jesus is the Redeemer from trouble as well as sin, he is a complete Redeemer, and from every evil he will rescue every saint. Redemption by blood is finished: O God, send us redemption by power. Amen and Amen.
Psalm 26

A Psalm of David

TITLE. The sweet singer of Israel appears before us in this Psalm as one enduring reproach; in this he was the type of the great Son of David, and is an encouraging example to us to carry the burden of slander to the throne of grace. It is an ingenious surmise that this appeal to heaven was written by David at the time of the assassination of Ishbosheth, by Baanah and Rechab, to protest his innocence of all participation in that treacherous murder; the tenor of the Psalm certainly agrees with the supposed occasion, but it is not possible with such a slender clue to go beyond conjecture.

DIVISION. Unity of subject is so distinctly maintained, that there are no sharp divisions. David Dickson (1583-1622) has given an admirable summary in these words: — "He appeals to God", the supreme Judge, in the testimony of a good conscience, bearing him witness; first, of his endeavor to walk uprightly as a believer, Ps 26:1-3; secondly, of his keeping himself from the contagion of the evil counsel, sinful causes, and examples of the wicked, Ps 26:4-5; thirdly, of his purpose still to behave himself holy and righteously, out of love to be partaker of the public privileges of the Lord's people in the congregation, Ps 26:6-8 Whereupon he prayeth to be free of the judgment coming upon the wicked, Ps 26:9-10 according as he had purposed to eschew their sins, Ps 26:11 and he closes the prayer with comfort and assurance of being heard, Ps 26:12.

1 Judge me, O LORD; for I have walked in mine integrity: I have trusted also in the LORD; therefore I shall not slide.
26:1 *Judge me, O Jehovah.* A solemn appeal to the just tribunal of the heart searching God, warranted by the circumstances of the writer, so far as regarded the particular offences with which he was wrongly charged. Worried and worn out by the injustice of men, the innocent spirit flies from its false accusers to the throne of Eternal Right. He had need have a clear case who dares to carry his suit into the King's Bench of heaven. Such an appeal as this is not to be rashly made on any occasion; and as to the whole of our walk and conversation, it should never be made at all, except as we are justified in Christ Jesus: a far more fitting prayer for a sinful mortal is the petition, "Enter not into judgment with thy servant."

*For I have walked in mine integrity.* He held integrity as his principle, and walked in it as his practice. David had not used any traitorous or unrighteous means to gain the crown, or to keep it; he was conscious of having been guided by the noblest principles of honour in all his actions with regard to Saul and his family. What a comfort it is to have the approbation of one's own conscience! If there be peace within the soul, the blustering storms of slander which howl around us are of little consideration. When the little bird in my bosom sings a merry song, it is no matter to me if a thousand owls hoot at me from without.

*I have trusted also in the Lord.* Faith is the root and sap of integrity. He who leans upon the Lord is sure to walk in righteousness. David knew that God's covenant had given him the crown, and therefore he took no indirect or unlawful means to secure it; he would not slay his enemy in the cave, nor suffer his men at arms to smite him when he slept unguarded on the plain. Faith will work hard for the Lord, and in the Lord's way, but she refuses so much as to lift a finger to fulfill the devices of unrighteous cunning. Rebecca acted out a great falsehood in order to fulfill the Lord's decree in favour of Jacob—this was unbelief; but Abraham left the Lord to fulfill his own purposes, and took the knife to slay his son—this was faith. Faith trusts God to accomplish his own decrees. Why should I steal when God has promised to supply my need? Why should I avenge myself when I know that the Lord has espoused my cause? Confidence in God is a most effectual security against sin.

*Therefore I shall not slide.* Slippery as the way is, so that I walk like a man upon ice, yet faith keeps my heels from tripping, and will continue to do so. The doubtful ways of policy are sure sooner or later to give a fall to those who run therein, but the ways of honesty, though often rough, are always safe. We cannot trust in God if we walk crookedly; but straight paths and simple faith bring the pilgrim happily to his journey's end.

2 Examine me, O LORD, and prove me; try my reins and my heart.

26:2 There are three modes of trial here challenged, which are said in the original to refer to trial by touch, trial by smell, and trial by fire. The psalmist was so clear from the charge laid against him, that he submitted himself unconditionally to any form of examination which the Lord might see fit to employ.

*Examine me, O Lord.* Look me through and through; make a minute survey; put me to the question, cross examine my evidence.

*And prove me.* Put me again to trial; and see if I would follow such wicked designs as my enemies impute to me.
Try my reins and my heart. Assay me as metals are assayed in the furnace, and do this to my most secret parts, where my affections hold their court; see, O God, whether or no I love murder, and treason, and deceit. All this is a very bold appeal, and made by a man like David, who feared the Lord exceedingly, it manifests a most solemn and complete conviction of innocence. The expressions here used should teach us the thoroughness of the divine judgment, and the necessity of being in all things profoundly sincere, lest we be found wanting at the last. Our enemies are severe with us with the severity of spite, and this a brave man endures without fear; but God's severity is that of unswerving right. Who shall stand against such a trial? The sweet singer says, "Who can stand before his cold?" and we may well enquire, "Who can stand before the heat of his justice?"

3 For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes: and I have walked in thy truth.

26:3 For thy lovingkindness is before mine eyes. An object of memory and a ground of hope. A sense of mercy received sets a fair prospect before the faithful mind in its gloomiest condition, for it yields visions of mercies yet to come, visions not visionary but real. Dwell, dear reader, upon that celestial word lovingkindness. It has a heavenly savour. Is it not an unmatchable word, unexcelled, unrivalled? The goodness of the Lord to us should be before our eyes as a motive actuating our conduct; we are not under the bondage of the law, but we are under the sweet constraints of grace, which are far more mighty, although far more gentle. Men sin with the law before their eyes, but divine love, when clearly seen, sanctifies the conversation. If we were not so forgetful of the way of mercy in which God walks toward us, we should be more careful to walk in the ways of obedience toward him.

And I have walked in thy truth. The psalmist was preserved from sin by his assurance of the truthfulness of God's promise, which truth he endeavored to imitate as well as to believe. Observe from this verse that an experience of divine love will show itself in a practical following of divine truth; those who neglect either the doctrinal or practical parts of truth must not wonder if they lose the experimental enjoyment of it. Some talk of truth, it is better to walk in it. Some vow to do well in future, but their resolutions come to nothing; only the regenerate man can say, "I have walked in thy truth."

4 I have not sat with vain persons, neither will I go in with dissemblers.

26:4-5 So far from being himself an open offender against the laws of God, the psalmist had not even associated with the lovers of evil. He had kept aloof from the men of Belial. A man is known by his company, and if we have kept ourselves apart from the wicked, it will always be evidence in our favour should our character be impugned. He who was never in the parish is not likely to have stolen the corn. He who never went to sea is clearly not the man who scuttled the ship.

26:4 I have not sat with vain persons. True citizens have no dealings with traitors. David had no seat in the parliament of triflers. They were not his boon companions at feasts, nor his advisers in
council, nor his associates in conversation. We must needs see, and speak, and trade, with men of the world, but we must on no account take our rest and solace in their empty society. Not only the profane, but the vain are to be shunned by us. All those who live for this life only are vain, chaffy, frothy men, quite unworthy of a Christian's friendship. Moreover as this vanity is often allied with falsehood, it is well to save ourselves altogether from this untoward generation, lest we should be led from bad to worse and from tolerating the vain should come to admire the wicked.

**Neither will I go in with dissemblers.** Since I know that hypocritical piety is double iniquity, I will cease all acquaintance with pretenders. If I must need walk the same street, I will not enter the same door and spend my time in their society. The congregation of the hypocrites is not one with which we should cultivate communion; their ultimate rendezvous will be the lowest pit of hell, let us drop their acquaintance now! For we shall not desire it soon. They hang their beads around their necks and carry the devil in their hearts. This clause is in the future tense, to indicate that the writer felt no desire to begin an acquaintance with the characters whom up till then he had shunned. We must maintain the separated path with more and more circumspection as we see the great redemption day approaching. Those who would be transfigured with Jesus, must not be disfigured by conformity to the world. The resolution of the psalmist suggests, that even among professed followers of truth we must make distinctions, for as there are vain persons out of the church, so there are dissemblers in it and both are to be shunned with scrupulous decision.

5 I have hated the congregation of evil doers; and will not sit with the wicked.

**26: 5 I have hated the congregation of evil doers.** A severe sentence, but not too severe. A man who does not hate evil terribly, does not love good heartily. Men, as men, we must always love, for they are our neighbours, and therefore to be loved as ourselves; but evil doers, as such, are traitors to the Great King, and no loyal subject can love traitors. What God hates we must hate. The congregation or assembly of evil doers, signifies violent men in alliance and conclave for the overthrow of the innocent; such synagogues of Satan are to be held in abhorrence. What a sad reflection it is that there should be a congregation of evil doers as well as a congregation of the upright, a church of Satan as well as a church of God; a seed of the serpent as well as a seed of the woman; an old Babylon as well as a new Jerusalem: a great whore sitting upon many waters, to be judged in wrath, as well as a chaste bride of the Lamb to be crowned at his coming.

**And will not sit with the wicked.** Saints have a seat at another table, and will never leave the King's dainties for the husks of the swine trough. Better to sit with the blind, and the halt, and the lame, at the table of mercy, than with the wicked in their feasts of ungodliness, yea, better to sit on Job's dunghill than on Pharaoh's throne. Let each reader see well to his company, for such as we keep in this world, we are likely to keep in the next.

6 I will wash mine hands in innocency: so will I compass thine altar, O LORD:
26:6 *I will wash mine hands in innocency.* He would publicly avow himself to be altogether clear of the accusations laid against him, and if any fault in other matters could be truthfully alleged against him, he would for the future abstain from it. The washing of the hands is a significant action to set forth our having no connection with a deed, as we still say, "*I wash my hands of the whole business.*" As to perfect innocence, David does not here claim it, but he avows his innocence of the crimes whereof he was slanderously accused; there is, however, a sense in which we may be washed in absolute innocence, for the atoning blood makes us clean every whit. We ought never to rest satisfied short of a full persuasion of our complete cleansing by Jesus' precious blood.

*S o w i l l I c o m p a s s t h i n e a l t a r , O L o r d.* Priests unto God must take great care to be personally cleansed; the brazen laver was as needful as the golden altar; God's worship requires us to be holy in life. He who is unjust to man cannot be acceptably religious towards God. We must not bring our thank offerings with hands defiled with guilt. To love justice and purity is far more acceptable to God, than ten thousands of the fat of fed beasts. We see from this verse that holy minds delight in the worship of the Lord, and find their sweetest solace at his altar; and that it is their deepest concern never to enter upon any course of action which would unfit them for the most sacred communion with God. Our eye must be upon the altar which sanctifies both the giver and the gift, yet we must never draw from the atoning sacrifice an excuse for sin, but rather find in it a most convincing argument for holiness.

7 That I may publish with the voice of thanksgiving, and tell of all thy wondrous works.

26:7 *T h a t I m a y p u b l i s h w i t h t h e v o i c e o f t h a n k s g i v i n g.* David was so far instructed that he does not mention the typical offering, but discerns the spiritual offering which was intended thereby, not the groans of bullocks, but songs of gratitude the spiritual worshipper presents. To sound abroad the worthy praises of the God of all grace should be the everyday business of a pardoned sinner. Let men slander us as they will, let us not defraud the Lord of his praises; let dogs bark, but let us like the moon shine on.

And tell of all thy wondrous works. God's people should not be tongue tied.

The wonders of divine grace are enough to make the tongue of the dumb sing. God's works of love are wondrous if we consider the unworthiness of their objects, the costliness of their method, and the glory of their result. And as men find great pleasure in discoursing upon things remarkable and astonishing, so the saints rejoice to tell of the great things which the Lord hath done for them.

8 LORD, I have loved the habitation of thy house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth.

26:8 *L o r d , I h a v e l o v e d t h e h a b i t a t i o n o f t h y h o u s e.* Into the abodes of sin he would not enter, but the house of God he had long loved, and loved it still. We were sad children if we did not love our Father's dwelling place. Though we own no sacred buildings, yet the church of the living God is the house of God, and true Christians delight in her ordinances, services, and assemblies. O that all our days were Sabbaths!
And the place where thine honour dwelleth. In his church where God is had in honour at all times, where he reveals himself in the glory of his grace, and is proclaimed by his people as the Lord of all. We come not together as the Lord's people to honour the preacher, but to give glory to God; such an occupation is most pleasant to the saints of the Most High. What are those gatherings where God is not honored, are they not an offence to his pure and holy eyes, and are they not a sad stumbling block to the people of God? It brings the scalding tear upon our cheek to hear sermons in which the honour of God is so far from being the preacher's object, that one might almost imagine that the preacher worshipped the dignity of manhood, and thought more of it than of the Infinite Majesty of God.

9 Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody men:

Gather not my soul with sinners. Lord, when, like fruit, I must be gathered, put me not in the same basket with the best of sinners, much less with the worst of them. The company of sinners is so distasteful to us here, that we cannot endure the thought of being bound up in the same bundle with them to all eternity. Our comfort is, that the Great Husbandman discerns the tares from the wheat, and will find a separate place for distinct characters. In the former verses we see that the psalmist kept himself clear of profane persons, and this is to be understood as a reason why he should not be thrust into their company at the last. Let us think of the doom of the wicked, and the prayer of the text will forcibly rise to our lips; meanwhile, as we see the rule of judgment by which like is gathered to its like, we who have passed from death unto life have nothing to fear.

Nor my life with bloody men. Our soul sickens to hear them speak; their cruel dispatches, in which they treat the shooting of their fellow men as rare sport, are horrifying to us; Lord, let us not be shut up in the same prison with them; nay, the same paradise with such men would be a hell, if they remained as they are now.

10 In whose hands is mischief, and their right hand is full of [filled with] bribes.

In whose hands is mischief. They have both hands full of it, plotting it and carrying it out.

And their right hand, with which they are most dexterous, is full of bribes; like thieves who would steal with impunity, they carry a sop for the dogs of justice. He who gives bribes is every way as guilty as the man who takes them, and in the matter of our parliamentary elections the rich villain who give the bribe is by far the worse. Bribery, in any form or shape, should be as detestable to a Christian as carrion to a dove, or garbage to a lamb. Let those whose dirty hands are fond of bribes remember that neither death nor the devil can be bribed to let them escape their well earned doom.

11 But as for me, I will walk in mine integrity: redeem me, and be merciful unto me.
26:11 Here is the lover of godliness entering his personal protest against unrighteous gain. He is a Nonconformist, and is ready to stand alone in his Nonconformity. Like a live fish, he swims against the stream. Trusting in God, the psalmist resolves that the plain way of righteousness shall be his choice, and those who will, may prefer the tortuous paths of violence and deceit. Yet, he is by no means a boaster, or a self-righteous vaunter [announcer] of his own strength, for he cries for redemption and pleads for mercy. Our integrity is not absolute nor inherent, it is a work of grace in us, and is marred by human infirmity; we must, therefore, resort to the redeeming blood and to the throne of mercy, confessing that though we are saints among men, we must still bow as sinners before God.

12 My foot standeth in an even place: in the congregations will I bless the LORD.

26:12 The song began in the minor, but it has now reached the major key. Saints often sing themselves into happiness. The even place upon which our foot stands is the sure, covenant faithfulness, eternal promise and immutable oath of the Lord of Hosts; there is no fear of falling from this solid basis, or of its being removed from under us. Established in Christ Jesus, by being vitally united to him, we have nothing left to occupy our thoughts but the praises of our God. Let us not forsake the assembling of ourselves together, and when assembled, let us not be slow to contribute our portion of thanksgiving. Each saint is a witness to divine faithfulness, and should be ready with his testimony.

As for the slanderers, let them howl outside the door while the children sing within.
Psalm 27

A Psalm of David

TITLE AND SUBJECT. Nothing whatever can be drawn from the title as to the time when this Psalm was written, for the heading, "A Psalm of David," is common to so many of the Psalms; but if one may judge from the matter of the song, the writer was pursued by enemies, Ps 27:2-3, was shut out from the house of the Lord, Ps 27:4, was just parting from father and mother, Ps 27:10, and was subject to slander, Ps 27:12; do not all these meet in the time when Doeg, the Edomite, spake against him to Saul? It is a song of cheerful hope, well fitted for those in trial who have learned to lean upon the Almighty arm. The Psalm may with profit be read in a threefold way, as the language of David, of the Church, and of the Lord Jesus. The plenitude of Scripture will thus appear the more wonderful.

DIVISION. The poet first sounds forth his sure confidence in his God, Ps 27:1-3, and his love of communion with him, Ps 27:4-6. He then betakes himself to prayer, Ps 27:7-12, and concludes with an acknowledgment of the sustaining power of faith in his own case, and an exhortation to others to follow his example.

1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?

27:1 The Lord is my light and my salvation. Here is personal interest, "my light," "my salvation;" the soul is assured of it, and therefore, declaring it boldly. "My light; "—into the soul at the new birth divine light is poured as the precursor of salvation; where there is not enough
light to see our own darkness and to long for the Lord Jesus, there is no evidence of salvation. Salvation finds us in the dark, but it does not leave us there; it gives light to those who sit in the valley of the shadow of death. After conversion our God is our joy, comfort, guide, teacher, and in every sense our light; he is light within, light around, light reflected from us, and light to be revealed to us. Note, it is not said merely that the Lord gives light, but that he "is" light; nor that he gives salvation, but that he is salvation; he, then, who by faith has laid hold upon God has all covenant blessings in his possession. Every light is not the sun, but the sun is the father of all lights. This being made sure as a fact, the argument drawn from it is put in the form of a question,

**Whom shall I fear?** A question which is its own answer. The powers of darkness are not to be feared, for the Lord, our light, destroys them; and the damnation of hell is not to be dreaded by us, for the Lord is our salvation. This is a very different challenge from that of boastful Goliath, for it is based upon a very different foundation; it rests not upon the conceited vigor of an arm of flesh, but upon the real power of the omnipotent I AM.

**The Lord is the strength of my life.** Here is a third glowing epithet, to show that the writer's hope was fastened with a threefold cord which could not be broken. We may well accumulate terms of praise where the Lord lavishes deeds of grace. Our life derives all its strength from him who is the author if it; and if he deigns to make us strong we cannot be weakened by all the machinations of the adversary.

**Of whom shall I be afraid?** The bold question looks into the future as well as the present. "If God be for us, "who can be against us, either now or in time to come?

2 When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me [approached against me] to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.

**27:2** This verse records a past deliverance, and is an instance of the way in which experience should be employed to reassure our faith in times of trial. Each word is instructive.

**When the wicked.** It is a hopeful sign for us when the wicked hate us; if our foes were godly men it would be a sore sorrow, but as for the wicked their hatred is better than their love.

**Even mine enemies and my foes.** There were many of them, they were of different sorts, but they were unanimous in mischief and hearty in hatred. *Came upon me*—advanced to the attack, leaping upon the victim like a lion upon its prey.

**To eat up my flesh.** like cannibals they would make a full end of the man, tear him limb from limb, and make a feast for their malice. The enemies of our souls are not deficient in ferocity, they yield no quarter, and ought to have none in return. See in what danger David was; in the grip and grasp of numerous, powerful, and cruel enemies, and yet observe his perfect safety and their utter discomfiture!
They stumbled and fell. God's breath blew them off their legs. There were stones in the way which they never reckoned upon, and over these they made an ignominious tumble. This was literally true in the case of our Lord in Gethsemane, when those who came to take him went backward and fell to the ground; and herein he was a prophetic representative of all wrestling believers who, rising from their knees shall, by the power of faith, throw their foes upon their faces.

3 Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.

27:3 Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear. Before the actual conflict, while as yet the battle is untried, the warrior's heart, being held in suspense, is very liable to become fluttered. The encamping host often inspires greater dread than the same host in actual affray. Young tells us of some—"Who feel a thousand deaths in fearing one." Doubtless the shadow of anticipated trouble is, to timorous minds, a more prolific source of sorrow than the trouble itself, but faith puts a strengthening plaster to the back of courage, and throws out of the window the dregs of the cup of trembling. Though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident. When it actually comes to push of pike, faith's shield will ward off the blow; and if the first brush should be but the beginning of a war, yet faith's banners will wave in spite of the foe. Though battle should succeed battle, and one campaign should be followed by another, the believer will not be dismayed at the length of the conflict. Reader, this third verse is the comfortable and logical inference from the second, confidence is the child of experience. Have you been delivered out of great perils? Then set up your ensign, wait at your watch fire, and let the enemy do his worst.

4 One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty [delight] of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.

27:4 One thing. Divided aims tend to distraction, weakness, disappointment. The man of one book is eminent, the man of one pursuit is successful. Let all our affections be bound up in one affection, and that affection set upon heavenly things.

Have I desired—what we cannot at once attain, it is well to desire. God judges us very much by the desire of our hearts. He who rides a lame horse is not blamed by his master for want of speed, if he makes all the haste he can, and would make more if he could; God takes the will for the deed with his children.

Of the Lord. This is the right target for desires, this is the well into which to dip our buckets, this is the door to knock at, the bank to draw upon; desire of men, and lie upon the dunghill with Lazarus: desire of the Lord, and to be carried of angels into Abraham's bosom. Our desires of the Lord should be sanctified, humble, constant, submissive, fervent, and it is well if, as with the psalmist, they are all molten into one mass. Under David's painful circumstances we might have expected him to desire repose, safety, and a thousand other good things, but no, he has set his heart on the pearl, and leaves the rest.
That will I seek after. Holy desires must lead to resolute action. The old proverb says, "Wishers and wouders are never good housekeepers," and "wishing never fills a sack." Desires are seed which must be sown in the good soil of activity, or they will yield no harvest. We shall find our desires to be like clouds without rain, unless followed up by practical endeavors.

That I may dwell in the house of the Lord all the days of my life. For the sake of communion with the King, David longed to dwell always in the palace; so far from being wearied with the services of the Tabernacle, he longed to be constantly engaged in them, as his life long pleasure. He desired above all things to be one of the household of God, a home born child, living at home with his Father. This is our dearest wish, only we extend it to those days of our immortal life which have not yet dawned. We pine for our Father's house above, the home of our souls; if we may but dwell there for ever, we care but little for the goods or ills of this poor life. "Jerusalem the golden" is the one and only goal of our heart's longings.

To behold the beauty of the Lord. An exercise both for earthly and heavenly worshippers. We must not enter the assemblies of the saints in order to see and be seen, or merely to hear the minister; we must repair to the gatherings of the righteous, intent upon the gracious object of learning more of the loving Father, more of the glorified Jesus, more of the mysterious Spirit, in order that we may the more lovingly admire, and the more reverently adore our glorious God. What a word is that, "the beauty of the Lord!" Think of it, dear reader! Better far—behold it by faith! What a sight will that be when every faithful follower of Jesus shall behold "the King in his beauty!" Oh, for that infinitely blessed vision!

And to enquire in his temple. We should make our visits to the Lord's house enquirers' meetings. Not seeking sinners alone, but assured saints should be enquirers. We must enquire as to the will of God and how we may do it; as to our interest in the heavenly city, and how we may be more assured of it. We shall not need to make enquiries in heaven, for there we shall know even as we are known; but meanwhile we should sit at Jesus' feet, and awaken all our faculties to learn of him.

5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.

27:5 This verse gives an excellent reason for the psalmist's desire after communion with God, namely, that he was thus secured in the hour of peril.

For in the time of trouble, that needy time, that time when others forsake me, he shall hide me in his pavilion: he shall give me the best of shelter in the worst of danger. The royal pavilion was erected in the centre of the army, and around it all the mighty men kept guard at all hours; thus in that divine sovereignty which almighty power is sworn to maintain, the believer peacefully is hidden, hidden not by himself furtively, but by the king, who hospitably entertains him.
In the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me. Sacrifice aids sovereignty in screening the elect from harm. No one of old dared to enter the most holy place on pain of death; and if the Lord has hidden his people there, what foe shall venture to molest them?

He shall set me up upon a rock. Immutability, eternity, and infinite power here come to the aid of sovereignty and sacrifice. How blessed is the standing of the man whom God himself sets on high above his foes, upon an impregnable rock which never can be stormed! Well may we desire to dwell with the Lord who so effectually protects his people.

6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.

27:6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me. He is quite sure of it. Godly men of old prayed in faith, nothing wavering, and spoke of their answer to their prayers as a certainty. David was by faith so sure of a glorious victory over all those who beset him, that he arranged in his own heart what he would do when his foes lay all prostrate before him; that arrangement was such as gratitude suggested.

Therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy. That place for which he longed in his conflict, should see his thankful joy in his triumphant return. He does not speak of jubilations to be offered in his palace, and feastings in his banqueting halls, but holy mirth he selects as most fitting for so divine a deliverance.

I will sing. This is the most natural mode of expressing thankfulness.

Yea, I will sing praises unto the Lord. The vow is confirmed by repetition, and explained by addition, which addition vows all the praise unto Jehovah. Let who will be silent, the believer when his prayer is heard, must and will make his praise to be heard also; and let who will sing unto the vanities of the world, the believer reserves his music for the Lord alone.

7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.

27:7 Hear, O Lord, when I cry with my voice. The pendulum of spirituality swings from prayer to praise. The voice which in the last verse was tuned to music is here turned to crying. As a good soldier, David knew how to handle his weapons, and found himself much at home with the weapon of "all prayer." Note his anxiety to be heard. Pharisees care not a fig for the Lord's hearing them, so long as they are heard of men, or charm their own pride with their sounding devotions; but with a genuine man, the Lord's ear is everything. The voice may be profitably used even in private prayer; for though it is unnecessary, it is often helpful, and aids in preventing distractions.

Have mercy also upon me. Mercy is the hope of sinners and the refuge of saints. All acceptable petitioners dwell much upon this attribute. And answer me. We may expect answers to prayer,
and should not be easy without them any more than we should be if we had written a letter to a friend upon important business, and had received no reply.

8 When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.

27:8 In this verse we are taught that if we would have the Lord hear our voice, we must be careful to respond to his voice. The true heart should echo the will of God as the rocks among the Alps repeat in sweetest music the notes of the peasant's horn. Observe, that the command was in the plural, to all the saints, Seek ye; but the man of God turned it into the singular by a personal application,

Thy face, Lord, will I seek. The voice of the Lord is very effectual where all other voices fail.

When thou saidst, then my heart, my inmost nature was moved to an obedient reply. Note the promptness of the response—no sooner said than done; as soon as God said "seek," the heart said,

I will seek. Oh, for more of this holy readiness! Would to God that we were more plastic to the divine hand, more sensitive of the touch of God's Spirit.

27:8 seek ye my face. God is said to have a "face" to illustrate His presence. He is said to have "eyes" (Prov. 15:3) to illustrate that everything is known to Him and is beheld by Him. He is said to have "ears" (Isa. 59:1) to show His ability and readiness to hear His people when they call unto Him. He is spoken of as having a "nose" to show that He accepts His people in Christ as a sweet smelling savor, or to illustrate His rejection of people as something that is odious in His presence. A "mouth" is ascribed to Him (Isa. 1:20) to illustrate His commands and promises. His "arms" are for the purpose of showing His power and strength. In this manner the perfection of God shows that He is able to meet every need of His people and to have full sufficiency in all things.

9 Hide not thy face far from me; put not thy servant away in anger: thou hast been my help; leave me not, neither forsake me, O God of my salvation.

27:9 Hide not thy face far from me. The word "far" is not in the original, and is a very superfluous addition of the translators, since even the least hiding of the Lord's face is a great affliction to a believer. The command to seek the Lord's face would be a painful one if the Lord, by withdrawing himself, rendered it impossible for the seeker to meet with him. A smile from the Lord is the greatest of comforts, his frown the worst of ills.

Put not thy servant away in anger. Other servants had been put away when they proved unfaithful, as for instance, his predecessor Saul; and this made David, while conscious of many faults, most anxious that divine long suffering should continue him in favour. This is a most appropriate prayer for us under a similar sense of unworthiness.
Thou hast been my help. How truly can we join in this declaration; for many years, in circumstances of varied trial, we have been upheld by our God, and must and will confess our obligation. "Ingratitude," it is said, "is natural to fallen man," but to spiritual men it is unnatural and detestable.

Leave me not, neither forsake me. A prayer for the future, and an inference from the past. If the Lord had meant to leave us, why did he begin with us? Past help is but a waste of effort if the soul now be deserted. The first petition, "leave me not," may refer to temporary desertsions, and the second word to the final withdrawal of grace, both are to be prayed against; and concerning the second, we have immutable promises to urge.

O God of my salvation. A sweet title worthy of much meditation.

10 When my father and my mother forsake me, then the LORD will take me up.

27:10. When my father and my mother forsake me. These dear relations will be the last to desert me, but if the milk of human kindness should dry up even from their breasts, there is a Father who never forgets. Some of the greatest of the saints have been cast out by their families, and persecuted for righteousness' sake.

Then the Lord will take me up. Will espouse my cause, will uplift me from my woes, will carry me in his arms, will elevate me above my enemies, will at last receive me to his eternal dwelling place.

11 Teach me thy way, O LORD, and lead me in a plain path, because of mine enemies.

27:11 Teach me thy way, O Lord. He does not pray to be indulged with his own way, but to be informed as to the path in which the righteous Jehovah would have him walk. This prayer evinces an humble sense of personal ignorance, great teachableness of spirit, and cheerful obedience of heart.

Lead me in a plain path. Help is here sought as well as direction; we not only need a map of the way, but a guide to assist us in the journey. A path is here desired which shall be open, honest, straightforward, in opposition to the way of cunning, which is intricate, tortuous, dangerous. Good men seldom succeed in fine speculations and doubtful courses; plain simplicity is the best spirit for an heir of heaven: let us leave shifty tricks and political expediencies to the citizens of the world—the New Jerusalem owns plain men for its citizens. Esau was a cunning hunter, Jacob was a plain man, dwelling in tents.

Because of mine enemies. These will catch us if they can, but the way of manifest, simple honesty is safe from their rage. It is wonderful to observe how honest simplicity baffles and outwits the craftiness of wickedness. Truth is wisdom. "Honesty is the best policy."
12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies: for false witnesses are risen up against me, and such as breathe out cruelty.

27:12 Deliver me not over unto the will of mine enemies; or I should be like a victim cast to the lions, to be rent in pieces and utterly devoured. God be thanked that our foes cannot have their way with us, or Smithfield would soon be on a blaze again.

For false witnesses are risen up against me. Slander is an old fashioned weapon out of the armory of hell, and is still in plentiful use; and no matter how holy a man may be, there will be some who will defame him. "Give a dog an ill name, and hang him;" but glory be to God, the Lord's people are not dogs, and their ill names do not injure them.

And such as breathe out cruelty. It is their vital breath to hate the good; they cannot speak without cursing them; such was Paul before conversion. They who breathe out cruelty may well expect to be sent to breathe their native air in hell; let persecutors beware!

13 I had fainted, unless I had believed to see the goodness of the LORD in the land of the living.

27:13 Faintness of heart is a common infirmity; even he who slew Goliath was subject to its attacks. Faith puts its bottle of cordial to the lip of the soul, and so prevents fainting. Hope is heaven's balm for present sorrow. In this land of the dying, it is our blessedness to be looking and longing for our fair portion in the land of the living, whence the goodness of God has banished the wickedness of man, and where holy spirits charm with their society those persecuted saints who were vilified and despised among men. We must believe to see, not see to believe; we must wait the appointed time, and stay our soul's hunger with foretastes of the Lord's eternal goodness which shall soon be our feast and our song.

14 Wait on the LORD: be of good courage, and he shall strengthen thine heart: wait, I say, on the LORD.

27:14 Wait on the Lord. Wait at his door with prayer; wait at his foot with humility; wait at his table with service; wait at his window with expectancy. Suitors often win nothing but the cold shoulder from earthly patrons after long and obsequious waiting; he speeds best whose patron is in the skies.

Be of good courage. A soldier's motto. Be it mine. Courage we shall need, and for the exercise of it we have as much reason as necessity, if we are soldiers of King Jesus.

And he shall strengthen thine heart. He can lay the plaster right upon the weak place. Let the heart be strengthened, and the whole machine of humanity is filled with power; a strong heart makes a strong arm. What strength is this which God himself gives to the heart? Read the "Book of Martyrs," and see its glorious deeds of prowess; go to God rather, and get such power thyself.
Wait, I say, on the Lord. David, in the words "I say," sets his own private seal to the word which, as an inspired man, he had been moved to write.

It is his testimony as well as the command of God, and indeed he who writes these scanty notes has himself found it so sweet, so reviving, so profitable to draw near to God, that on his own account he also feels bound to write, "Wait, I SAY, on the Lord."

Psalm 28
A Psalm of David

TITLE AND SUBJECT. Again, the title "A Psalm of David," is too general to give us any clue to the occasion on which it was written. Its position, as following the twenty-seventh, seems to have been designed, for it is a most suitable pendant and sequel to it. It is another of those "songs in the night" of which the pen of David was so prolific. The thorn at the breast of the nightingale was said by the old naturalists to make it sing: David's griefs made him eloquent in holy psalmody. The main pleading of this Psalm is that the suppliant may not be confounded with the workers of iniquity for whom he expresses the utmost abhorrence; it may suit any slandered saint, who being misunderstood by men, and treated by them as an unworthy character, is anxious to stand aright before the bar of God. The Lord Jesus may be seen here pleading as the representative of his people.

DIVISION. The first and second verses earnestly entreat audience of the Lord in a time of dire emergency. From Ps 28:2-5, the portion of the wicked is described and deprecated. In Ps 28:6-8, praise is given for the Lord's mercy in hearing prayer, and the Psalm concludes with a general petition for the whole host of militant believers.

1 Unto thee will I cry, O LORD my rock; be not silent to me: lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit.

28:1 Unto thee will I cry, O Lord, my rock. A cry is the natural expression of sorrow, and is a suitable utterance when all other modes of appeal fail us; but the cry must be alone directed to the Lord, for to cry to man is to waste our entreaties upon the air. When we consider the readiness of the Lord to hear, and his ability to aid, we shall see good reason for directing all our appeals at once to the God of our salvation, and shall use language of firm resolve like that in the text,

I will cry. The immutable Jehovah is our rock, the immovable foundation of all our hopes and our refuge in time of trouble: we are fixed in our determination to flee to him as our stronghold in every hour of danger. It will be in vain to call to the rocks in the day of judgment, but our rock attends to our cries.

Be not silent to me. Mere formalists may be content without answers to their prayers, but genuine suppliants cannot; they are not satisfied with the results of prayer itself in calming the mind and subduing the will—they must go further and obtain actual replies from heaven, or they cannot rest; and those replies they long to receive at once, if possible; they dread even a little of God's silence. God's voice is often so terrible that it shakes the wilderness; but his silence is equally full of awe to an eager suppliant. When God seems to close his ear, we must not therefore close our mouths, but rather cry with more earnestness; for when our note grows shrill with eagerness and grief, he will not long deny us a hearing. What a dreadful case should we be in if the Lord should become for ever silent to our prayers!

This thought suggested itself to David, and he turned it into a plea, thus teaching us to argue and reason with God in our prayers.
Lest, if thou be silent to me, I become like them that go down into the pit. Deprived of the God who answers prayer, we should be in a more pitiable plight than the dead in the grave, and should soon sink to the same level as the lost in hell. We must have answers to prayer: ours is an urgent case of dire necessity; surely the Lord will speak peace to our agitated minds, for he never can find it in his heart to permit his own elect to perish.

2 Hear the voice of my supplications, when I cry unto thee, when I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle.

28:2 This is much to the same effect as the first verse, only that it refers to future as well as present pleadings. Hear me! Hear me!

Hear the voice of my supplications! This is the burden of both verses. We cannot be put off with a refusal when we are in the spirit of prayer; we labour, use importunity, and agonize in supplications until a hearing is granted us. The word "supplications," in the plural, shows the number, continuance, and variety of a good man's prayers, while the expression "hear the voice," seems to hint that there is an inner meaning, or heart voice, about which spiritual men are far more concerned than for their outward and audible utterances. A silent prayer may have a louder voice than the cries of those priests who sought to awaken Baal with their shouts.

When I lift up my hands toward thy holy oracle: which holy place was the type of our Lord Jesus; and if we would gain acceptance, we must turn ourselves evermore to the blood besprinkled mercy seat of his atonement. Uplifted hands have ever been a form of devout posture, and are intended to signify a reaching upward towards God, a readiness, an eagerness to receive the blessing sought after. We stretch out empty hands, for we are beggars; we lift them up, for we seek heavenly supplies; we lift them towards the mercy seat of Jesus, for there our expectation dwells. O that whenever we use devout gestures, we may possess contrite hearts, and so speed well with God.

3 Draw me not away with the wicked, and with the workers of iniquity, which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts.

28:3 Draw me not away with the wicked. They shall be dragged off to hell like felons of old drawn on a hurdle to Tyburn [a stream in London, which runs underground from South Hampstead through St. James's Park to meet the River Thames at Westminster], like logs drawn to the fire, like fagots to the oven. David fears lest he should be bound up in their bundle, drawn to their doom; and the fear is an appropriate one for every godly man. The best of the wicked are dangerous company in time, and would make terrible companions for eternity; we must avoid them in their pleasures, if we would not be confounded with them in their miseries.

And with the workers of iniquity. These are overtly sinful, and their judgment will be sure; Lord, do not make us to drink of their cup. Activity is found with the wicked even if it be lacking to the righteous. Oh! to be "workers" for the Lord.
Which speak peace to their neighbours, but mischief is in their hearts. They have learned the manners of the place to which they are going: the doom of liars is their portion forever, and lying is their conversation on the road. Soft words, oily with pretended love, are the deceitful meshes of the infernal net in which Satan catches the precious life; many of his children are learned in his abominable craft, and fish with their father's nets, almost as cunningly as he himself could do it. It is a sure sign of baseness when the tongue and the heart do not ring to the same note. Deceitful men are more to be dreaded than wild beasts: it were better to be shut up in a pit with serpents than to be compelled to live with liars. He who cries "peace" too loudly, means to sell it if he can get his price. "Good wine need no bush:" if he were so very peaceful he would not need to say so; he means mischief, make sure of that.

4 Give them according to their deeds, and according to the wickedness of their endeavors: give them after the work of their hands; render to them their desert.

28:4 When we view the wicked simply as such, and not as our fellow men, our indignation against sin leads us entirely to coincide with the acts of divine justice which punish evil, and to wish that justice might use her power to restrain by her terrors the cruel and unjust; but still the desires of the present verse, as our version renders it, are not readily made consistent with the spirit of the Christian dispensation, which seeks rather the reformation than the punishment of sinners. If we view the words before us as prophetic, or as in the future tense, declaring a fact, we are probably nearer to the true meaning than that given in our version. Ungodly reader, what will be your lot when the Lord deals with you according to your desert, and weighs out to you his wrath, not only in proportion to what you have actually done, but according to what you would have done if you could. Our endeavors are taken as facts; God takes the will for the deed, and punishes or rewards accordingly. Not in this life, but certainly in the next, God will repay his enemies to their faces, and give them the wages of their sins. Not according to their fawning words, but after the measure of their mischievous deeds, will the Lord mete out vengeance to them that know him not.

5 Because they regard not the works of the LORD, nor the operation of his hands, he shall destroy them, and not build them up.

28:5 Because they regard not the works of the Lord, nor the operation of his hands. God works in creation—nature teems with proofs of his wisdom and goodness, yet purblind atheists refuse to see him: he works in providence, ruling and overruling, and his hand is very manifest in human history, yet the infidel will not discern him: he works in grace—remarkable conversions are still met with on all hands, yet the ungodly refuse to see the operations of the Lord. Where angels wonder, carnal men despise. God condescends to teach, and man refuses to learn.

He shall destroy them: he will make them "behold, and wonder, and perish." If they would not see the hand of judgment upon others, they shall feel it upon themselves. Both soul and body shall be overwhelmed with utter destruction for ever and ever.

And not build them up. God's cure is positive and negative; his sword has two edges, and cuts right and left. Their heritage of evil shall prevent the ungodly receiving any good; the ephah [a
dry measure of grain] shall be too full of wrath to contain a grain of hope. They have become like old, rotten, decayed houses of timber, useless to the owner, and harboring all manner of evil, and, therefore, the Great Builder will demolish them utterly. Incorrigible offenders may expect speedy destruction: they who will not mend, shall be thrown away as worthless. Let us be very attentive to all the lessons of God's word and work, lest being found disobedient to the divine will, we be made to suffer the divine wrath.

6 Blessed be the LORD, because he hath heard the voice of my supplications.

28:6 Blessed be the Lord. Saints are full of benedictions; they are a blessed people, and a blessing people; but they give their best blessings, the fat of their sacrifices, to their glorious Lord. Our Psalm was prayer up to this point, and now it turns to praise. They who pray well, will soon praise well: prayer and praise are the two lips of the soul; two bells to ring out sweet and acceptable music in the ears of God; two angels to climb Jacob's ladder: two altars smoking with incense; two of Solomon's lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh; they are two young roes that are twins, feeding upon the mountain of myrrh and the hill of frankincense.

Because he hath heard the voice of my supplications. Real praise is established upon sufficient and constraining reasons; it is not irrational emotion, but rises, like a pure spring, from the deeps of experience. Answered prayers should be acknowledged. Do we not often fail in this duty? Would it not greatly encourage others, and strengthen ourselves, if we faithfully recorded divine goodness, and made a point of extolling it with our tongue? God's mercy is not such an inconsiderable thing that we may safely venture to receive it without so much as thanks. We should shun ingratitude, and live daily in the heavenly atmosphere of thankful love.

7 The LORD is my strength and my shield; my heart trusted in him, and I am helped: therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him.

28:7 Here is David's declaration and confession of faith, coupled with a testimony from his experience. The Lord is my strength. The Lord employs his power on our behalf, and moreover, infuses strength into us in our weakness. The psalmist, by an act of appropriating faith, takes the omnipotence of Jehovah to be his own. Dependence upon the invisible God gives great independence of spirit, inspiring us with confidence more than human.

And my shield. Thus David found both sword and shield in his God. The Lord preserves his people from unnumbered ills; and the Christian warrior, sheltered behind his God, is far more safe than the hero when covered with his shield of brass or triple steel.

My heart trusted in him, and I am helped. Heart work is sure work; heart trust is never disappointed. Faith must come before help, but help will never be long behindhand. Every day the believer may say, "I am helped," for the divine assistance is vouchsafed us every moment, or we should go back unto perdition; when more manifest help is needed, we have but to put faith into exercise, and it will be given us.
Therefore my heart greatly rejoiceth; and with my song will I praise him. The heart is mentioned twice to show the truth of his faith and his joy. Observe the adverb "greatly," we need not be afraid of being too full of rejoicing at the remembrance of grace received. We serve a great God, let us greatly rejoice in him. A song is the soul's fittest method of giving vent to its happiness, it were well if we were more like the singing lark, and less like the croaking raven. When the heart is glowing, the lips should not be silent. When God blesses us, we should bless him with all our heart.

8 The LORD is their strength, and he is the saving strength [strength of salvation] of his anointed.

28:8 The Lord is their strength. The heavenly experience of one believer is a pattern of the life of all. To all the militant church, without exception, Jehovah is the same as he was to his servant David, "the least of them shall be as David." They need the same aid and they shall have it, for they are loved with the same love, written in the same book of life, and one with the same anointed Head.

And he is the saving strength of his anointed. Here behold king David as the type of our Lord Jesus, our covenant Head, our anointed Prince, through whom all blessings come to us. He has achieved full salvation for us, and we desire saving strength from him, and as we share in the unction which is so largely shed upon him, we expect to partake of his salvation. Glory be unto the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has magnified the power of his grace in his only begotten Son, whom he has anointed to be a Prince and a Saviour unto his people.

9 Save thy people, and bless thine inheritance: feed them also, and lift them up for ever.

28:9 This is a prayer for the church militant, written in short words, but full of weighty meaning. We must pray for the whole church, and not for ourselves alone.

Save thy people. Deliver them from their enemies, preserve them from their sins, succor them under their troubles, rescue them from their temptations, and ward off from them every ill. There is a plea hidden in the expression, "thy people;" for it may be safely concluded that God's interest in the church, as his own portion, will lead him to guard it from destruction.

Bless thine inheritance. Grant positive blessings, peace, plenty, prosperity, happiness; make all thy dearly purchased and precious heritage to be comforted by thy Spirit. Revive, refresh, enlarge, and sanctify thy church. Feed them also. Be a shepherd to thy flock, let their bodily and spiritual wants be plentifully supplied. By thy word, and ordinances, direct, rule, sustain, and satisfy those who are the sheep of thy hand.

And lift them up for ever. Carry them in thine arms on earth, and then lift them into thy bosom in heaven. Elevate their minds and thoughts, spiritualize their affections, make them heavenly, Christ like, and full of God. O Lord, answer this our petition, for Jesus' sake.
Psalm 29

A Psalm of David

TITLE. The title affords us no information beyond the fact that David is the author of this sublime song.

SUBJECT. It seems to be the general opinion of modern annotators, that this Psalm is meant to express the glory of God as heard in the pealing thunder, and seen in the equinoctial tornado. Just as the eighth Psalm is to be read by moonlight, when the stars are bright, as the nineteenth needs the rays of the rising sun to bring out its beauty, so this can be best rehearsed beneath the black wing of tempest, by the glare of the lightning, or amid that dubious dusk which heralds the war of elements. The verses march to the tune of thunderbolts. God is everywhere conspicuous, and all the earth is hushed by the majesty of his presence. The word of God in the law and gospel is here also depicted in its majesty of power. True ministers are sons of thunder, and the voice of God in Christ Jesus is full of majesty. Thus we have God's works and God's word joined together: let no man put them asunder by a false idea that theology and science can by any possibility oppose each other. We may, perhaps, by a prophetic glance, behold in this Psalm the dread tempests of the latter days, and the security of the elect people.

DIVISION. The first two verses are a call to adoration. From Ps 29:3-10 the path of the tempest is traced, the attributes of God's word are rehearsed, and God magnified in all the terrible grandeur of his power; and the last verse sweetly closes the scene with the assurance that the omnipotent Jehovah will give both strength and peace to his people. Let heaven and earth pass away, the Lord will surely bless his people.
1 Give unto the LORD, O ye [sons of the] mighty, give unto the LORD glory and strength.

29:1 Give, i.e., ascribe. Neither men nor angels can confer anything upon Jehovah, but they should recognize his glory and might, and ascribe it to him in their songs and in their hearts.

Unto the Lord, and unto him alone, must honour be given. Natural causes, as men call them, are God in action, and we must not ascribe power to them, but to the infinite Invisible who is the true source of all.

O ye mighty. Ye great ones of earth and of heaven, kings and angels, join in rendering worship to the blessed and only Potentate; ye lords among men need thus to be reminded, for ye often fail where humbler men are ardent; but fail no longer, bow your heads at once, and loyally do homage to the King of kings. How frequently do grandees and potentates think it beneath them to fear the Lord; but, when they have been led to extol Jehovah, their piety has been the greatest jewel in their crowns.

Give unto the Lord glory and strength, both of which men are too apt to claim for themselves, although they are the exclusive prerogatives of the self existent God. Let crowns and swords acknowledge their dependence upon God. Not to your arms, O kings, give ye the glory, nor look for strength to your hosts of warriors, for all your pomp is but as a fading flower, and your might is as a shadow which declineth.

When shall the day arrive when kings and princes shall count it their delight to glorify their God? "All worship be to God only," let this be emblazoned on every coat of arms.

2 Give unto the LORD the glory [honor] due unto his name; worship the LORD in the beauty of holiness.

29:2 Give unto the Lord the glory due unto his name. A third time the admonition is given, for men are backward in glorifying God, and especially great men, who are often too much swollen with their own glory to spare time to give God his rightful praise, although nothing more is asked of them than is most just and right. Surely men should not need so much pressing to give what is due, especially when the payment is so pleasant. Unbelief and distrust, complaining and murmuring, rob God of his honour; in this respect, even the saints fail to give due glory to their King.

Worship the Lord, bow before him with devout homage and sacred awe, and let your worship be such as he appoints. Of old, worship was cumbered with ceremonial, and men gathered around one dedicated building, whose solemn pomp was emblematic of the beauty of holiness; but now our worship is spiritual, and the architecture of the house and the garments of the worshippers are matters of no importance; the spiritual beauty of inward purity and outward holiness being far more precious in the eyes of our thrice holy God. O for grace ever to worship with holy motives and in a holy manner, as becometh saints!
The call to worship in these two verses chimes in with the loud pealing thunder, which is the church bell of the universe ringing kings and angels, and all the sons of earth to their devotions.

3 The voice of the LORD is upon the waters: the God of glory thundereth: the LORD is upon many waters.

29:3 The voice of the Lord is upon the waters. The thunder is not only poetically but instructively called “the voice of God,” since it peals from on high; it surpasses all other sounds, it inspires awe, it is entirely independent of man, and has been used on some occasions as the grand accompaniment of God's speech to Adam's sons. There is a peculiar terror in a tempest at sea, when deep calleth unto deep, and the raging sea echoes to the angry sky. No sight more alarming than the flash of lightning around the mast of the ship; and no sound more calculated to inspire reverent awe than the roar of the storm. The children of heaven have often enjoyed the tumult with humble joy peculiar to the saints, and even those who know not God have been forced into unwilling reverence while the storm has lasted.

The glory of God thundereth. Thunder is in truth no mere electric phenomenon, but is caused by the interposition of God himself. Even the old heathen spake of Jupiter Tonans [the supreme god of the Romans, the counterpart of the Greek's, Zeus] the name for; but our modern wise men will have us believe in laws and forces, and anything or nothing so they may be rid of God. Electricity of itself can do nothing, it must be called and sent upon its errand; and until the almighty Lord commissions it, its bolt of fire is inert and powerless. As well might a rock of granite, or a bar of iron fly in the midst of heaven, as the lightning go without being sent by the great First Cause.

The Lord is upon many waters. Still the Psalmist's ear hears no voice but that of Jehovah, resounding from the multitudinous and dark waters of the upper ocean of clouds, and echoing from the innumerable billows of the storm tossed sea below. The waters above and beneath the firmament are astonished at the eternal voice. When the Holy Spirit makes the divine promise to be heard above the many waters of our soul's trouble, then is God as glorious in the spiritual world as in the universe of matter. Above us and beneath us all is the peace of God when he gives us quiet.

4 The voice of the LORD is powerful; the voice of the LORD is full of majesty.

29:4 The voice of the Lord is powerful. An irresistible power attends the lightning of which the thunder is the report. In an instant, when the Lord wills it, the force of electricity produces amazing results. A writer upon this subject, speaks of these results as including a light of the intensity of the sun in his strength, a heat capable of fusing the most compact metals, a force in a moment paralyzing the muscles of the most powerful animals; a power suspending the all pervading gravity of the earth, and an energy capable of decomposing and recomposing the closest affinities of the most intimate combinations. Well does W. M. Thompson (1859) speak of "the unconquerable lightning," for it is the chief of the ways of God in physical forces, and none can measure its power. As the voice of God in nature is so powerful, so is it in grace; the reader will do well to draw a parallel, and he will find much in the gospel which may be illustrated by the thunder of the Lord in the
tempest. His voice, whether in nature or revelation, shakes both earth and heaven; see that ye refuse not him that speaketh. If his voice be thus mighty, what must his hand be! beware lest ye provoke a blow.

_The voice of the Lord is powerful; the voice of the Lord is full of majesty._ The King of kings speaks like a king. As when a lion roareth, all the beasts of the forest are still, so is the earth hushed and mute while Jehovah thundereth marvelously. "It is listening fear and dumb amazement all." As for the written word of God, its majesty is apparent both in its style, its matter, and its power over the human mind; blessed be God, it is the majesty of mercy wielding a silver scepter; of such majesty the word of our salvation is full to overflowing.

5 The voice of the LORD breaketh the cedars; yea, the LORD breaketh the cedars of Leb-a-non.

29:5 _The voice of the Lord breaketh the cedars._ "Black from the stroke above, the smouldering pine Stands a sad shattered trunk." Noble trees fall prostrate beneath the mysterious bolt, or stand in desolation as mementos of its power. Lebanon itself is not secure, high as it stands, and ancient as are its venerable woods:

_Yea, the Lord breaketh the cedars of Lebanon._ The greatest and most venerable of trees or men, may not reckon upon immunity when the Lord is abroad in his wrath. The gospel of Jesus has a like dominion over the most inaccessible of mortals; and when the Lord sends the word, it breaks hearts far stouter than the cedars.

6 He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Leb-a-non and Sir-i-on like a young unicorn.

29:6 _He maketh them also to skip like a calf; Lebanon and Sirion like a young unicorn._ Not only the trees, but the mountains themselves move as though they frisked and leaped like young bulls or antelopes. As our own poets would mention hills and valleys known to them, so the Psalmist hears the crash and roar among the ranges of Libanus, and depicts the tumult in graphic terms. Thus sings one of our own countrymen: —

"Amid Carnavon's mountains rages loud
The repercussive roar:
with mighty crash
Into the flashing deep,
From the rude rocks

Of Penmaen Mawr,
heaped hideous to the sky,
Tumble the smitten cliffs;
and Snowdon's peak,
Dissolving, instant yields
his wintry load."
The glorious gospel of the blessed God has more than equal power over the rocky obduracy and mountainous pride of man. The voice of our dying Lord rent the rocks and opened the graves: his living voice still works the like wonders. Glory be to his name, the hills of our sins leap into his grave, and are buried in the red sea of his blood, when the voice of his intercession is heard.

29:6
LEBANON (le-ba'-na; white), refers to a mountain range of Syria. Rainfall is abundant in November and March to help produce dense forests.

SIRION (sir'-e-on; coat of mail), is the name by which Mount Hermon was known to the Sidonians.

UNICORN. This animal is mentioned in nine passages in the bible. The animal was very powerful (Num. 23:22; 24:8), a tremendous eater, had a pair of strong horns, was well known, was not able to be domesticated (Job 39:9), could not be used for agricultural purposes (Job 39:10), was dynamic while young (Psa. 29:6), and could be used for sacrifices (Isa. 34:7). An alternate translation is "wild ox." The unicorn may have been the auroch which refers to cattle six feet at the shoulder. A profile picture would make it to appear to have a single horn, a unicorn. S. E. M.

7 The voice of the LORD divideth the flames of fire.

29:7 The voice of the Lord divideth the flames of fire. As when sparks fly from the anvil by blows of a ponderous hammer, so the lightning attends the thundering strokes of Jehovah.

"At first heard solemn
over the verge of heaven,
The tempest growls;
but as it nearer comes,
And rolls its awful burden on the wind,
The lightnings flash a larger curve,
and more
The noise astounds:
till overhead a sheet
Of livid flame discloses wide;
then shuts
And opens wider;
shuts and opens still
Expansive, wrapping ether in a blaze."
The thunder seems to divide one flash from another, interposing its deepening roar between the flash which precedes it and the next. That the flashes are truly flames of fire is witnessed by their frequently falling upon houses, churches, etc., and wrapping them in a blaze. How easily could the Lord destroy his rebellious creatures with his hot thunderbolts! How gracious is the hand which spares such great offenders, when to crush them would be so easy! Flames of fire attend the voice of God in the gospel, illuminating and melting the hearts of men: by those he consumes our lusts and kindles in us a holy flame of ever-aspiring love and holiness. Pentecost is a suggestive commentary upon this verse.

8 The voice of the LORD shaketh the wilderness; the LORD shaketh the wilderness of Ka-desh.

29:8 As the storm traveled, it burst over the desert.

The voice of the Lord shaketh the wilderness; the Lord shaketh the wilderness of Kadesh. God courts not the applause of men—his grandest deeds are wrought where man's inquisitive glance is all unknown. Where no sound of man was heard, the voice of God was terribly distinct. The vast and silent plains trembled with affright. Silence did homage to the Almighty voice. Low lying plains must hear the voice of God as well as lofty mountains; the poor as well as the mighty must acknowledge the glory of the Lord. Solitary and barren places are to be gladdened by the gospel's heavenly sound. What a shaking and overturning power there is in the word of God! Even the conservative desert quivers into progress when God decrees it.

29:8 KADESH-BARNEA (ka"-desh-bar'-ne-ah), was located on the border of Edom (Num. 20:16) 70 miles from Hebron and 50 miles from Beersheba in the Wilderness of Zin. Because of their fear and rebellion at Kadesh (Deut. 9:23), the Hebrews were forced to wander in the Wilderness of Paran for 38 years. Kadesh became their headquarters while they moved about during these years. S.E.M.

9 The voice of the LORD maketh the hinds to calve, and discovereth the forests: and in his temple doth every one speak of his glory.

29:9 The voice of the Lord maketh the hinds to calve, those timid creatures, in deadly fear of the tempest, drop their burdens in an untimely manner. Perhaps a better reading is, "the oaks to tremble," especially as this agrees with the next sentence, and discovereth the forests. The dense shades of the forest are lit up with the lurid glare of the lightning, and even the darkest recesses are for a moment laid bare.

"The gloomy woods
Start at the flash,
and from their deep recesses
Wide flaming out, their trembling inmates shake."
Our first parents sought a refuge among the trees, but the voice of the Lord soon found them out, and made their hearts to tremble. There is no concealment from the fire glance of the Almighty—one flash of his angry eye turns midnight into noon. The gospel has a like revealing power in dark hearts, in a moment it lights up every dark recess of the heart's ungodliness, and bids the soul tremble before the Lord. In his temple doth everyone speak of his glory. Those who were worshipping in the temple, were led to speak of the greatness of Jehovah as they heard the repeated thunder claps. The whole world is also a temple for God, and when he rides abroad upon the wings of the wind, all things are vocal in his praise. We too, the redeemed of the Lord, who are living temples for his Spirit, as we see the wonders of his power in creation, and feel them in grace, unite to magnify his name. No tongue may be dumb in God's temple when his glory is the theme. The original appears to have the force of "every one crieth Glory," as though all things were moved by a sense of God's majesty to shout in ecstasy, "Glory, glory." Here is a good precedent for our Methodist friends and for the Gogonians [singers of glory] of the zealous Welsh.

10 The LORD sitteth upon the flood; yea, the LORD sitteth King for ever.

29:10 The Lord sitteth upon the flood. Flood follows tempest, but Jehovah is ready for the emergency. No deluge can undermine the foundation of his throne. He is calm and unmoved, however much the deep may roar and be troubled: his government rules the most unstable and boisterous of created things. Far out on the wild waste of waters, Jehovah "plants his footsteps in the sea, and rides upon the storm,"

Yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever. Jesus has the government upon his shoulders eternally: our interests in the most stormy times are safe in his hands. Satan is not a king, but Jehovah Jesus is; therefore let us worship him, and rejoice evermore.

11 The LORD will give strength unto his people; the LORD will bless his people with peace.

29:11 Power was displayed in the hurricane whose course this Psalm so grandly pictures; and now, in the cool calm after the storm, that power is promised to be the strength of the chosen. He who wings the unerring bolt, will give to his redeemed the wings of eagles; he who shakes the earth with his voice, will terrify the enemies of his saints, and give his children peace. Why are we weak when we have divine strength to flee to? Why are we troubled when the Lord's own peace is ours? Jesus the mighty God is our peace—what a blessing is this today! What a blessing it will be to us in that day of the Lord which will be in darkness and not light to the ungodly! Dear reader, is not this a noble Psalm to be sung in stormy weather? Can you sing amid the thunder? Will you be able to sing when the last thunders are let loose, and Jesus judges quick and dead? If you are a believer, the last verse is your heritage, and surely that will set you singing.
Psalm 30

A Psalm and Song at the dedication of the house of David

TITLE. A Psalm and Song at the Dedication of the House of David; or rather, A Psalm; a Song of Dedication for the House. By David. A song of faith since the house of Jehovah, here intended, David never lived to see. A Psalm of praise, since a sore judgment had been stayed, and a great sin forgiven. From our English version it would appear that this Psalm was intended to be sung at the building of that house of cedar which David erected for himself, when he no longer had to hide himself in the Cave of Adullam, but had become a great king. If this had been the meaning, it would have been well to observe that it is right for the believer when removing, to dedicate his new abode to God. We should call together our Christian friends, and show that where we dwell, God Dwells, and where we have a tent, God has an altar. But as the song refers to the temple, for which it was David's joy to lay by in store, and for the site of which he purchased in his later days the floor of Ornan, we must content ourselves with remarking the holy faith which foresaw the fulfillment of the promise made to him concerning Solomon. Faith can sing—

"Glory to thee for all the grace
I have not tasted yet."

Throughout this Psalm there are indications that David had been greatly afflicted, both personally and relatively, after having, in his presumption, fancied himself secure. When God's children prosper one way, they are generally tried another, for few of us can bear unmingled prosperity. Even the joys of hope need to be mixed with the pains of experience, and the more surely so when comfort breeds carnal security and self confidence. Nevertheless, pardon soon followed repentance, and God's mercy was glorified. The Psalm is a song, and not a complaint. Let it be read in the light of the last days of David, when he had numbered the people, and God had chastened him, and then in mercy had hidden the angel sheathe his sword. On the [threshing] floor of Ornan [Araunah], the poet received the inspiration which glows in this delightful ode. It is the Psalm of the numbering of the people, and of the dedication temple which commemorated the staying of the plague.

DIVISION. In Ps 30:1-3, David extols the Lord for delivering him. Ps 30:4-5 he invites the saints to unite with him in celebrating divine compassion. In Ps 30:6-7 he confesses the fault for which he was chastened, Ps 30:8-10 repeats the supplication which he offered, and concludes with commemorating his deliverance and vowing eternal praise.
1 I will extol thee, O LORD; for thou hast lifted me up, and hast not made my foes to rejoice over me.

| 30:1 I will extol thee. I will have high and honorable conceptions of thee, and give them utterance in my best music. Others may forget thee, murmur at thee, despise thee, blaspheme thee, but "I will extol thee," for I have been favored above all others. I will extol thy name, thy character, thine attributes, thy mercy to me, thy great forbearance to my people; but, especially will I speak well of thyself; "I will extol thee," O Jehovah; this shall be my cheerful and constant employ. |

For thou hast lifted me up. Here is an antithesis, "I will exalt thee, for thou hast exalted me." I would render according to the benefits received. The Psalmist's praise was reasonable. He had a reason to give for the praise that was in his heart. He had been drawn up like a prisoner from a dungeon, like Joseph out of the pit, and therefore he loved his deliverer. Grace has uplifted us from the pit of hell, from the ditch of sin, from the Slough of Despond, from the bed of sickness, from the bondage of doubts and fears: have we no song to offer for all this? How high has our Lord lifted us? Lifted us up into the children's place, to be adopted into the family; lifted us up into union with Christ, "to sit together with him in heavenly places." Lift high the name of our God, for he has lifted us up above the stars. |

And hast not made my foes to rejoice over me. This was the judgment which David most feared out of the three evils; he said, let me fall into the hand of the Lord, and not into the hand of man. Terrible indeed were our lot if we were delivered over to the will of our enemies. Blessed be the Lord, we have been preserved from so dire a fate. The devil and all our spiritual enemies have not been permitted to rejoice over us; for we have been saved from the fowler's snare. Our evil companions, who prophesied that we should go back to our old sins, are disappointed. Those who watched for our halting, and would fain say, "Aha! Aha! So would we have it!" have watched in vain until now. O happy they whom the Lord keeps so consistent in character that the lynx eyes of the world can see no real fault in them. Is this our case? let us ascribe all the glory to him who has sustained us in our integrity. |

2 O LORD my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me.

| 30:2 O Lord my God, I cried unto thee, and thou hast healed me. David sent up prayers for himself and for his people when visited with the pestilence. He went at once to head quarters, and not roundabout to fallible means. God is the best physician, even for our bodily infirmities. We do very wickedly and foolishly when we forget God. It was a sin in Asa that he trusted to physicians and not to God. If we must have a physician, let it be so, but still let us go to our God first of all; and, above all, remember that there can be no power to heal in medicine of itself; the healing energy must flow from the divine hand. If our watch is out of order, we take it to the watchmaker; if our body or soul be in an evil plight, let us resort to him who created them, and has unfailing skill to put them in right condition. As for our spiritual diseases, nothing can heal these evils but the touch of the Lord Christ: if we do but touch the hem of his garment, we shall be made whole, while if we embrace all other physicians in our arms, they can do us no service. "O Lord my God." Observe the covenant name which faith uses—"my God." Thrice happy is he who can claim the Lord himself to be his portion. Note how David's faith ascends the scale; he
sang "O Lord" in the first verse, but it is "O Lord my God," in the second. Heavenly heart music is an ascending thing, like the pillars of smoke which rose from the altar of incense.

I cried unto thee. I could hardly pray, but I cried; I poured out my soul as a little child pours out its desires. I cried to my God: I knew to whom to cry; I did not cry to my friends, or to any arm of flesh. Hence the sure and satisfactory result—

Thou hast healed me. I know it. I am sure of it. I have the evidence of spiritual health within me now: glory be to thy name! Every humble suppliant with God who seeks release from the disease of sin, shall speed as well as the Psalmists did, but those who will not so much as seek a cure, need not wonder if their wounds putrefy and their soul dies.

3 O LORD, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave: thou hast kept me alive, that I should not go down to the pit.

30:3 O Lord, thou hast brought up my soul from the grave. Mark, it is not "I hope so; " but it is, "Thou hast; thou hast; thou hast"—three times over. David is quite sure, beyond a doubt, that God has done great things for him, whereof he is exceeding glad. He had descended to the brink of the sepulchre, and yet was restored to tell of the forbearance of God; nor was this all, he owned that nothing but grace had kept him from the lowest hell, and this made him doubly thankful. To be spared from the grave is much; to be delivered from the pit is more; hence there is growing cause for praise, since both deliverances are alone traceable to the glorious right hand of the Lord, who is the only preserver of life, and the only Redeemer of our souls from hell.

4 Sing unto the LORD, O ye saints of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.

30:4 Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his. "Join my song; assist me to express my gratitude."
He felt that he could not praise God enough himself, and therefore he would enlist the hearts of others.

Sing unto the Lord, O ye saints of his. David would not fill his choir with reprobates, but with sanctified persons, who could sing from their hearts. He calls to you, ye people of God, because ye are saints: and if sinners are wickedly silent, let your holiness constrain you to sing. You are his saints—chosen, blood bought, called, and set apart for God; sanctified on purpose that you should offer the daily sacrifice of praise. Abound ye in this heavenly duty.

Sing unto the Lord. It is a pleasing exercise; it is a profitable engagement. Do not need to be stirred up so often to so pleasant a service.

And give thanks. Let your songs be grateful songs, in which the Lord's mercies shall live again in joyful remembrance. The very remembrance of the past should tune our harps, even if present joys be lacking.
At the remembrance of his holiness. Holiness is an attribute which inspires the deepest awe, and demands a reverent mind; but still give thanks at the remembrance of it. "Holy, holy, holy!" is the song of seraphim and cherubim; let us join it—not dolefully, as though we trembled at the holiness of God, but cheerfully, as humbly rejoicing in it.

5 For his anger endureth but a moment; in his favour is life: weeping may endure for a night, but joy cometh in the morning.

30:5 For his anger endureth but a moment. David here alludes to those dispensations of God's providence which are the chastisement ordered in his paternal government towards his erring children, such as the plague which fell upon Jerusalem for David's sins; these are but short judgments, and they are removed as soon as real penitence sues for pardon and presents the great and acceptable sacrifice. What a mercy is this, for if the Lord's wrath smoked for a long season, flesh would utterly fail before him. God puts up his rod with great readiness as soon as its work is done; he is slow to anger and swift to end it. If his temporary and fatherly anger be so severe that it has need be short, what must be the terror of eternal wrath exercised by the Judge towards his adversaries?

In his favour is life. As soon as the Lord looked favorably upon David, the city lived, and the king's heart lived too. We die like withered flowers when the Lord frowns, but his sweet smile revives us as the dews refresh the field. His favour not only sweetens and cheers life, but it is life itself, the very essence of life. Who would know life, let him seek the favour of the Lord.

Weeping may endure for a night; but nights are not for ever. Even in the dreary winter the daystar lights his lamp. It seems fit that in our nights the dews of grief should fall. When the Bridegroom's absence makes it dark within, it is meet that the widowed soul should pine for a renewed sight of the Well beloved.

But joy cometh in the morning. When the Sun of Righteousness comes, we wipe our eyes, and joy chases out intruding sorrow. Who would not be joyful that knows Jesus? The first beams of the morning brings us comfort when Jesus is the day dawn, and all believers know it to be so. Mourning only lasts to morning: when the night is gone the gloom shall vanish. This is adduced as a reason for saintly singing, and forcible reason it is; short nights and merry days call for the psaltery and harp.

6 And in my prosperity I said, I shall never be moved.

30:6 In my prosperity. When all his foes were quiet, and his rebellious son dead and buried, then was the time of peril. Many a vessel founders in a calm. No temptation is so bad as tranquility.

I said, I shall never be moved. Ah! David, you said more than was wise to say, or even to think, for God has founded the world upon the floods, to show us what a poor, mutable, moveable, inconstant world it is. Unhappy he who builds upon it! He builds himself a dungeon for his hopes. Instead of conceiving that we shall never be moved, we ought to remember that we shall very soon be removed altogether. Nothing is abiding beneath the moon. Because I happen to be prosperous today, I must not fancy that I shall be in my high estate tomorrow. As in a wheel, the
uppermost spokes descend to the bottom in due course, so it is with mortal conditions. There is a constant revolution: many who are in the dust today shall be highly elevated tomorrow; while those who are now aloft shall soon grind the earth. Prosperity had evidently turned the psalmist's head, or he would not have been so self confident. He stood by grace, and yet forgot himself, and so met with a fall. Reader, is there not much of the same proud stuff in all our hearts? let us beware lest the fumes of intoxicating success get into our brains and make fools of us also.

7 LORD, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong: thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled.

30:7 Lord, by thy favour thou hast made my mountain to stand strong. He ascribed his prosperity to the Lord's favour—so far good, it is well to own the hand of the Lord in all our stability and wealth. But observe that the good in a good man is not unmixed good, for this was alloyed with carnal security. His state he compares to a mountain, a molehill would have been nearer—we never think too little of ourselves. He boasted that his mountain stood strong, and yet he had before, in Psalm 29, spoken of Sirion and Lebanon as moving like young unicorns. Was David's state more firm than Lebanon? Ah, vain conceit, too common to us all! How soon the bubble bursts when God's people get conceit into their heads, and fancy that they are to enjoy immutability beneath the stars, and constancy upon this whirling orb. How touchingly and teachingly God corrected his servant's mistake:

Thou didst hide thy face, and I was troubled. There was no need to come to blows, a hidden face was enough. This proves, first, that David was a genuine saint, for no hiding of God's face on earth would trouble a sinner; and, secondly, that the joy of the saint is dependent upon the presence of his Lord. No mountain, however firm, can yield us rest when our communion with God is broken, and his face is concealed. However, in such a case, it is well to be troubled. The next best thing to basking in the light of God's countenance is to be thoroughly unhappy when that bliss is denied us.

"Lord, let me weep for nought for sin! And after none but thee! And then I would—O that I might, A constant weeper be!"

8 I cried to thee, O LORD; and unto the LORD I made supplication.

30:8 I cried to thee, O Lord. Prayer is the unfailing resource of God's people. If they are driven to their wit's end, they may still go to the mercies seat. When an earthquake makes our mountain tremble, the throne of grace still stands firm, and we may come to it. Let us never forget to pray, and let us never doubt the success of prayer. The hand which wounds can heal: let us turn to him who smiles us, and he will be entreated of us. Prayer is better solace than Cain's building a city, or Saul's seeking for music. Mirth and carnal amusements are a sorry prescription for a mind distracted and despairing: prayer will succeed where all else fails.
9 What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth?

30:9 In this verse we learn the form and method of David's prayer. It was an argument with God, an urging of reasons, a pleading of his cause. It was not a statement of doctrinal opinions, nor a narration of experience, much less a sly hit at other people under pretence of praying to God, although all these things and worse have been substituted for holy supplication at certain prayer meetings. He wrestled with the angel of the covenant with vehement pleadings, and therefore he prevailed. Head and heart, judgment and affections, memory and intellect were all at work to spread the case aright before the Lord of love.

What profit is there in my blood, when I go down to the pit? Wilt thou not lose a songster from thy choir, and one who loves to magnify thee?

Shall the dust praise thee? Shall it declare thy truth? Will there not be one witness the less to thy faithfulness and veracity? Spare, then, thy poor unworthy one for thine own name sake!

10 Hear, O LORD, and have mercy upon me: LORD, be thou my helper.

30:10 Hear, O Lord, and have mercy upon me. A short and comprehensive petition, available at all seasons, let us use it full often. It is the publican's prayer; be it ours. If God hears prayer, it is a great act of mercy; our petitions do not merit a reply.

Lord, be thou my helper. Another compact, expressive, ever fitting prayer. It is suitable to hundreds of the cases of the Lord's people; it is well becoming in the minister when he is going to preach, to the sufferer upon the bed of pain, to the toiler in the field of service, to the believer under temptation, to the man of God under adversity; when God helps, difficulties vanish. He is the help of his people, a very present help in trouble. The two brief petitions of this verse are commended as ejaculations to believers full of business, denied to those longer seasons of devotion which are the rare privilege of those whose days are spent in retirement.

11 Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing: thou hast put off my sackcloth, and girded me with gladness;

30:11 Observe the contrast, God takes away the mourning of his people; and what does he give them instead of it? Quiet and peace? Aye, and a great deal more than that.

Thou hast turned for me my mourning into dancing. He makes their hearts to dance at the sound of his name. He takes off their sackcloth. That is good. What a delight to be rid of the habiliments of woe! But what then? He clothes us. And how? With some common dress? Nay, but with that royal vestment which is the array of glorified spirits in heaven.
Thou hast girded me with gladness. This is better than to wear garments of silk or cloth of gold, bedight with embroidery and bespangled with gems. Many a poor man wears this heavenly apparel wrapped around his heart, though fustian and corduroy are his only outward garb; and such a man needs not envy the emperor in all his pomp. Glory be to thee, O God, if, by a sense of full forgiveness and present justification, thou hast enriched my spiritual nature, and filled me with all the fullness of God.

12 To the end that my glory may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. O LORD my God, I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

30: 12 To the end—namely, with this view and intent—

that my glory—that is, my tongue or my soul—

may sing praise to thee, and not be silent. It would be a shameful crime, if, after receiving God's mercies, we should forget to praise him. God would not have our tongues lie idle while so many themes for gratitude are spread on every hand. He would have no dumb children in the house. They are all to sing in heaven, and therefore they should all sing on earth. Let us sing with the poet:

"I would begin the music here,
And so my soul should rise:
Oh for some heavenly notes to bear
My passions to the skies."

O Lord my God,
I will give thanks unto thee for ever.

"I will praise him in life;
I will praise him in death;
I will praise him as long
as he lendeth me breath;
And say when the death dew
lays cold on my brow,
If ever I loved thee,
my Jesus, it is now."
Psalm 31

To the chief Musician
A Psalm of David

TITLE. To the Chief Musician—a Psalm of David. The dedication to the chief musician proves that this song of mingled measures and alternate strains of grief and woe was intended for public singing, and thus a deathblow is given to the notion that nothing but praise should be sung. Perhaps the Psalms, thus marked, might have been set aside as too mournful for temple worship, if special care had not been taken by the Holy Spirit to indicate them as being designed for the public edification of the Lord's people. May there not also be in Psalms thus designated a peculiar distinct reference to the Lord Jesus? He certainly manifests himself very clearly in the twenty-second, which bears this title; and in the one before us we plainly hear his dying voice in the fifth verse. Jesus is chief everywhere, and in all the holy songs of his saints he is the chief musician. The surmises that Jeremiah penned this Psalm need no other answer than the fact that it is "a Psalm of David."

SUBJECT. The psalmist in dire affliction appeals to his God for help with much confidence and holy importunity, and ere long finds his mind so strengthened that he magnifies the Lord for his great goodness. Some have thought that the occasion in his troubled life which led to this Psalm, was the treachery of the men of Keilah, and we have felt much inclined to this conjecture; but after reflection it seems to us that its very mournful tone, and its allusion to his iniquity demand a later date, and it may be more satisfactory to illustrate it by the period when Absalom had rebelled, and his courtiers were fled from him, while lying lips spread a thousand malicious rumors against him. It is perhaps quite as well that we have no settled season mentioned, or we might have been so busy in applying it to David's case as to forget its suitability to our own.

 DIVISION. There are no great lines of demarcation; throughout the strain undulates, falling into valleys of mourning, and rising with hills of confidence. However, we may for convenience arrange it thus: David testifying his confidence in God pleads for help, Ps 31:1-6; expresses gratitude for mercies received, Ps 31:7-8; particularly describes his case, Ps 31:9-13; vehemently pleads for deliverance, Ps 31:14-18; confidently and thankfully expects a blessing, Ps 31:19-22; and closes by showing the bearing of his case upon all the people of God.

1 In thee, O LORD, do I put my trust; let me never be ashamed: deliver me in thy righteousness.

31:1 In thee, O Lord, do I put my trust. Nowhere else do I fly for shelter, let the tempest howl as it may. The psalmist has one refuge, and that the best one. He casts out the great sheet anchor of his faith in the time of storm. Let other things be doubtful, yet the fact that he relies on Jehovah, David lays down most positively; and he begins with it, lest by stress of trial he should
afterwards forget it. This avowal of faith is the fulcrum by means of which he labors to uplift and remove his trouble; he dwells upon it as a comfort to himself and a plea with God. No mention is made of merit, but faith relies upon divine favour and faithfulness, and upon that alone.

**Let me never be ashamed.** How can the Lord permit the man to be ultimately put to shame who depends alone upon him? This would not be dealing like a God of truth and grace. It would bring dishonour upon God himself if faith were not in the end rewarded. It will be an ill day indeed for religion when trust in God brings no consolation and no assistance.

**Deliver me in thy righteousness.** Thou are not unjust to desert a trustful soul, or to break thy promises; thou wilt vindicate the righteousness of thy mysterious providence, and give me joyful deliverance. Faith dares to look even to the sword of justice for protection: while God is righteous, faith will not be left to be proved futile and fanatical. How sweetly the declaration of faith in this first verse sounds, if we read it at the foot of the cross, beholding the promise of the Father as yea and amen through the Son; viewing God with faith's eye as he stands revealed in Jesus crucified.

2 Bow down thine ear to me; deliver me speedily: be thou my strong rock, for an house of defense to save me.

**31:2 Bow down thine ear to me.** Condescend to my low estate; listen to me attentively as one who would hear every word. Heaven with its transcendent glories of harmony might well engross the divine ear, but yet the Lord has an hourly regard to the weakest moanings of his poorest people.

**Deliver me speedily.** We must not set times or seasons, yet in submission we may ask for swift as well as sure mercy. God's mercies are often enhanced in value by the timely haste which he uses in their bestowal; if they came late they might be too late—but he rides upon a cherub, and flies upon the wings of the wind when he intends the good of his beloved.

**Be thou my strong rock.** Be my Engedi, my Adullam; my immutable, immovable, impregnable, sublime, resort.

**For an house of defense to save me,** wherein I may dwell in safety, not merely running to thee for temporary shelter, but abiding in thee for eternal salvation. How very simply does the good man pray, and yet with what weight of meaning! he uses no ornamental flourishes, he is too deeply in earnest to be otherwise than plain: it were well if all who engage in public prayer would observe the same rule.

3 For thou art my rock and my fortress; therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.
31:3 For thou art my rock and my fortress. Here the tried soul avows yet again its full confidence in God. Faith's repetitions are not vain. The avowal of our reliance upon God in times of adversity is a principle method of glorifying him. Active service is good, but the passive confidence of faith is not one jot less esteemed in the sight of God. The words before us appear to embrace and fasten upon the Lord with a fiducial [faith founded on trust] grip which is not to be relaxed. The two personal pronouns, like sure nails, lay hold upon the faithfulness of the Lord. O for grace to have our heart fixed in firm unstaggering belief in God! The figure of a rock and a fortress may be illustrated to us in these times by the vast fortress of Gibraltar, often besieged by our enemies, but never wrested from us: ancient strongholds, though far from impregnable by our modes of warfare, were equally important in those remoter ages—when in the mountain fastnesses, feeble bands felt themselves to be secure. Note the singular fact that David asked the Lord to be his rock Ps 31:2 because he was his rock; and learn from it that we may pray to enjoy in experience what we grasp by faith. Faith is the foundation of prayer.

Therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me. The psalmist argues like a logician with his fors and therefores. Since I do sincerely trust thee, saith he, O my God, be my director. To lead and to guide are two things very like each other, but patient thought will detect different shades of meaning, especially as the last may mean provide for me. The double word indicates an urgent need—we require double direction, for we are fools, and the way is rough. Lead me as a soldier, guide me as a traveler! lead me as a babe, guide me as a man; lead me when thou art with me, but guide me even if thou be absent; lead me by thy hand, guide me by thy word. The argument used is one which is fetched from the armory of free grace: not for my own sake, but for thy name's sake guide me. Our appeal is not to any fancied virtue in our own names, but to the glorious goodness and graciousness, which shines resplendent in the character of Israel's God. It is not possible that the Lord should suffer his own honour to be tarnished, but this would certainly be the case if those who trusted him should perish. This was Moses' plea, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?"

4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me: for thou art my strength.

31:4 Pull me out of the net that they have laid privily for me. The enemies of David were cunning as well as mighty; if they could not conquer him by power, they would capture him by craft. Our own spiritual foes are of the same order—they are of the serpent's brood, and seek to ensnare us by their guile. The prayer before us supposes the possibility of the believer being caught like a bird; and, indeed, we are so foolish that this often happens. So deftly does the fowler do his work that simple ones are soon surrounded by it. The text asks that even out of the meshes of the net the captive one may be delivered; and this is a proper petition, and one which can be granted; between from the jaws of the lion and out of the belly of hell can eternal love rescue the saint. It may need a sharp pull to save a soul from the net of temptation, and a mighty pull to extricate a man from the snares of malicious cunning, but the Lord is equal to every emergency, and the most skillfully placed nets of the hunter shall never be able to hold his chosen ones. Woe unto those who are so clever at net laying: they who tempt others shall be destroyed themselves. Villains who lay traps in secret shall be punished in public.
For thou art my strength. What an inexpressible sweetness is to be found in these few words! How joyfully may we enter upon labors, and how cheerfully may we endure sufferings when we can lay hold upon celestial power. Divine power will rend asunder all the toils of the foe, confound their politics and frustrate their knavish tricks; he is a happy man who has such matchless might engaged upon his side. Our own strength would be of little service when embarrassed in the nets of base cunning, but the Lord's strength is ever available; we have but to invoke it, and we shall find it near at hand. If by faith we are depending alone upon the strength of the strong God of Israel, we may use our holy reliance as a plea in supplication.

5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit: thou hast redeemed me, O LORD God of truth.

31:5 Into thine hand I commit my spirit. These living words of David were our Lord's dying words, and have been frequently used by holy men in their hour of departure. Be assured that they are good, choice, wise, and solemn words; we may use them now and in the last tremendous hour. Observe, the object of the good man's solicitude in life and death is not his body or his estate, but his spirit; this is his jewel, his secret treasure; if this be safe, all is well. See what he does with his pearl! He commits it to the hand of his God; it came from him, it is his own, he has aforetime sustained it, he is able to keep it, and it is most fit that he should receive it. All things are safe in Jehovah's hands; what we entrust to the Lord will be secure, both now and in that day of days towards which we are hastening. Without reservation the good man yields himself to his heavenly Father's hand; it is enough for him to be there; it is peaceful living and glorious dying to repose in the care of heaven. At all times we should commit and continue to commit our all to Jesus' sacred care, then, though life may hang on a thread, and adversities may multiply as the sands of the sea, our soul shall dwell at ease, and delight itself in quiet resting places.

Thou hast redeemed me, O Lord God of truth. Redemption is a solid base for confidence. David had not known Calvary as we have done, but temporal redemption cheered him; and shall not eternal redemption yet more sweetly console us? Past deliverances are strong pleas for present assistance. What the Lord has done he will do again, for he changes not. He is a God of veracity, faithful to his promises, and gracious to his saints; he will not turn away from his people.

6 I have hated them that regard lying vanities: but I trust in the LORD.

31:6 I have hated them that regard lying vanities. Those who will not lean upon the true arm of strength, are sure to make to themselves vain confidences. Man must have a god, and if he will not adore the only living and true God, he makes a fool of himself, and pays superstitious regard to a lie, and waits with anxious hope upon a base delusion. Those who did this were none of David's friends; he had a constant dislike to them: the verb includes the present as well as the past tense. He hated them for hating God; he would not endure the presence of idolaters; his heart was set against them for their stupidity and wickedness. He had no patience with their superstitious observances, and calls their idols vanities of emptiness, nothings of nonentity. Small courtesy is more than Romanists and Puseyists
deserve for their fooleries. Men who make gods of their riches, their persons, their wits, or anything else, are to be shunned by those whose faith rests upon God in Christ Jesus; and so far from being envied, they are to be pitied as depending upon utter vanities.

But I trust in the Lord. This might be very unfashionable, but the psalmist dared to be singular. Bad example should not make us less decided for the truth, but the rather in the midst of general defection we should grow the more bold. This adherence to his trust in Jehovah is the great plea employed all along: the troubled one flies into the arms of his God, and ventures everything upon the divine faithfulness.

Note

Puseyites. The term was used in a disparaging way after Edward Bouverie Pusey, a leader in the Oxford Movement. The Oxford Movement was a loose affiliation of High Church Anglicans, most of them members of the University of Oxford, who sought to demonstrate that the Church of England was a direct descendant of the Christian church established by the Apostles. It was also known as the Tractarian Movement after its series of publications, Tracts for the Times (1833-1841). S.E.M.

7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy: for thou hast considered my trouble; thou hast known my soul in adversities;

31:7 I will be glad and rejoice in thy mercy. For mercy past he is grateful, and for mercy future, which he believingly anticipates, he is joyful. In our most importunate intercessions, we must find breathing time to bless the Lord: praise is never a hindrance to prayer, but rather a lively refreshment therein. It is delightful at intervals to hear the notes of the high sounding cymbals when the dolorous sackbut rules the hour. Those two words, glad and rejoice, are an instructive reduplication, we need not stint ourselves in our holy triumph; this wine we may drink in bowls without fear of excess.

For thou hast considered my trouble. Thou hast seen it, weighed it, directed it, fixed a bound to it, and in all ways made it a matter of tender consideration. A man's consideration means the full exercise of his mind; what must God's consideration be?

Thou hast known my soul in adversities. God owns his saints when others are ashamed to acknowledge them; he never refuses to know his friends. He thinks not the worse of them for their rags and tatters. He does not misjudge them and cast them off when their faces are lean with sickness, or their hearts heavy with despondency. Moreover, the Lord Jesus knows us in our pangs in a peculiar sense, by having a deep sympathy towards us in them all; when no others can enter into our griefs, from want of understanding them experimentally, Jesus dives into the lowest depths with us, comprehending the direst of our woes, because he has felt the same. Jesus is a physician who knows every case; nothing is new to him. When we are so bewildered as not to know our own state, he knows us altogether. He has known us and will know us: O for grace to know more of him!
"Man, know thyself," is a good philosophic precept, but "Man, thou art known of God," is a superlative consolation. Adversities in the plural—"Many are the afflictions of the righteous."

8 And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy: thou hast set my feet in a large room.

31:8 And hast not shut me up into the hand of the enemy. To be shut up in one's hand is to be delivered over absolutely to his power; now, the believer is not in the hand of death or the devil, much less is he in the power of man. The enemy may get a temporary advantage over us, but we are like men in prison with the door open; God will not let us be shut up, he always provides a way of escape.

Thou hast set my feet in a large room. Blessed be God for liberty: civil liberty is valuable, religious liberty is precious, spiritual liberty is priceless. In all troubles we may praise God if these are left. Many saints have had their greatest enlargements of soul when their affairs have been in the greatest straits. Their souls have been in a large room when their bodies have been lying in Bonner's coal hole, or in some other narrow dungeon. Grace has been equal to every emergency; and more than this, it has made the emergency an opportunity for displaying itself.

9 Have mercy upon me, O LORD, for I am in trouble: mine eye is consumed with grief, yea, my soul and my belly.

31:9 Have mercy upon me, O Lord, for I am in trouble. Now, the man of God comes to a particular and minute description of his sorrowful case. He unbosoms his heart, lays bare his wounds, and expresses his inward desolation. This first sentence pithily comprehends all that follows, it is the text for his lamenting discourse. Misery moves mercy—no more reasoning is needed.

Have mercy is the prayer; the argument is as prevalent as it is plain and personal, "I am in trouble."

Mine eye is consumed with grief. Dim and sunken eyes are plain indicators of failing health. Tears draw their salt from our strength, and floods of them are very apt to consume the source from which they spring. God would have us tell him the symptoms of our disease, not for his information, but to show our sense of need.

Yea, my soul and my belly (or body). Soul and body are so intimately united, that one cannot decline without the other feeling it. We, in these days, are not strangers to the double sinking which David describes: we have been faint with physical suffering, and distracted with mental distress: when two such seas meet, it is well for us that the Pilot at the helm is at home in the midst of the water floods, and makes storms to become the triumph of his art.

10 For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing: my strength faileth because of mine iniquity, and my bones are consumed.
For my life is spent with grief, and my years with sighing. It had become his daily occupation to mourn; he spent all his days in the dungeon of distress. The sap and essence of his existence was being consumed, as a candle is wasted while it burns. His adversities were shortening his days, and digging for him an early grave. Grief is a sad market to spend all our wealth of life in, but a far more profitable trade may be driven there than in Vanity Fair; it is better to go to the house of mourning than the house of feasting. Black is good wear. The salt of tears is a healthy medicine. Better spend our years in sighing than in sinning. The two members of the sentence before us convey the same idea; but there are no idle words in Scripture, the reduplication is the fitting expression of fervency and importunity.

My strength faieth because of mine iniquity. David sees to the bottom of his sorrow, and detects sin lurking there. It is profitable trouble which leads us to trouble ourselves about our iniquity. Was this the psalmist's foulest crime which now gnawed at his heart, and devoured his strength? Very probably it was so. Sinful morsels, though sweet in the mouth, turn out to be poison in the bowels: if we wantonly give a portion of our strength to sin, it will by and by take the remainder from us. We lose both physical, mental, moral, and spiritual vigor by iniquity. And my bones are consumed. Weakness penetrated the innermost parts of his system, the firmest parts of his frame felt the general decrepitude. A man is in a piteous plight when he comes to this.

I was a reproach among all mine enemies, but especially among my neighbours, and a fear to mine acquaintance: they that did see me without fled from me.

I was a reproach among all mine enemies. They were pleased to have something to throw at me; my mournful estate was music to them, because they maliciously interpreted it to be a judgment from heaven upon me. Reproach is little thought of by those who are not called to endure it, but he who passes under its lash knows how deep it wounds. The best of men may have the bitterest foes, and be subject to the most cruel taunts.

But especially among my neighbours. Those who are nearest can stab the sharpest. We feel most the slights of those who should have shown us sympathy. Perhaps David's friends feared to be identified with his declining fortunes, and therefore turned against him in order to win the mercy if not the favour of his opponents. Self-interest rules the most of men: ties the most sacred are soon snapped by its influence, and actions of the utmost meanness are perpetrated without scruple.

And a fear to mine acquaintance. The more intimate before, the more distant did they become. Our Lord was denied by Peter, betrayed by Judas, and forsaken by all in the hour of his utmost need. All the herd turn against a wounded deer. The milk of human kindness curdles when a despised believer is the victim of slanderous accusations.

They that did see me without fled from me. Afraid to be seen in the company of a man so thoroughly despised, those who once courted his society hastened from him as though he had
been infected with the plague. How villainous a thing is slander which can thus make an eminent saint, once the admiration of his people,
to become the general butt, the universal aversion of mankind! To what extremities of dishonour may innocence be reduced!

12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind: I am like a broken vessel.

31:12 I am forgotten as a dead man out of mind. All David's youthful prowess was now gone from remembrance; he had been the savior of his country, but his services were buried in oblivion. Men soon forget the deepest obligations; popularity is evanescent to the last degree: he who is in every one's mouth today may be forgotten by all tomorrow. A man had better be dead than be smothered in slander. Of the dead we say nothing but good, but in the psalmist's case they said nothing but evil. We must not look for the reward of philanthropy this side of heaven, for men pay their best servants but sorry wages, and turn them out of doors when no more is to be got out of them.

I am like a broken vessel, a thing useless, done for, worthless, cast aside, forgotten. Sad condition for a king! Let us see herein the portrait of the King of kings in his humiliation, when he made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant.

13 For I have heard the slander of many: fear was on every side: while they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life.

31:13 For I have heard the slander of many. One slanderous viper is death to all comfort— what must be the venom of a whole brood? What the ear does not hear the heart does not rue; but in David's case the accusing voices were loud enough to break in upon his quiet—foul mouths had grown so bold, that they poured forth their falsehoods in the presence of their victim. Shimei was but one of a class, and his cry of "Go up, thou bloody man," was but the common speech of thousands of the sons of Belial. All Beelzebub's pack of hounds may be in full cry against a man, and yet he may be the Lord's anointed. Fear was on every side. He was encircled with fearful suggestions, threatenings, remembrances, and forebodings; no quarter was clear from incessant attack.

While they took counsel together against me, they devised to take away my life. The ungodly act in concert in their onslauts upon the excellent of the earth: it is to be wondered at that sinners should often be better agreed than saints, and generally set about their wicked work with much more care and foresight than the righteous exhibit in holy enterprises. Observe the cruelty of a good man's foes! they will be content with nothing less than his blood—for this they plot and scheme. Better fall into the power of a lion than under the will of malicious persecutors, for the beast may spare its prey if it be fed to the full, but malice is unrelenting and cruel as a wolf. Of all fiends the most cruel is envy. How sorely was the psalmist bestead when the poisoned arrows of a thousand bows were all aimed at his life! Yet in all this his faith did not fail him, nor did his God forsake him. Here is encouragement for us.

14 But I trusted in thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my God.
### Psalm 31:14-18

In this section of the Psalm he renews his prayers, urging the same pleas as at first: earnest wrestlers attempt over and over again the same means of gaining their point.

#### 31:14 But I trusted in thee, O Lord.
Notwithstanding all afflicting circumstances, David's faith maintained its hold, and was not turned aside from its object. What a blessed saving clause is this! So long as our faith, which is our shield, is safe, the battle may go hard, but its ultimate result is no matter of question; if that could be torn from us, we should be as surely slain as were Saul and Jonathan upon the high places of the field.

#### I said, Thou art my God.
He proclaimed aloud his determined allegiance to Jehovah. He was no fair weather believer, he could hold to his faith in a sharp frost, and wrap it about him as a garment fitted to keep out all the ills of time. He who can say what David did need not envy Cicero his eloquence:

\[ \text{Thou art my God,} \]

has more sweetness in it than any other utterance which human speech can frame. Note that this adhesive faith is here mentioned as an argument with God to honour his own promise by sending a speedy deliverance.

#### 31:15 My times are in thy hand.
The sovereign arbiter of destiny holds in his own power all the issues of our life; we are not waifs and strays upon the ocean of fate, but are steered by infinite wisdom towards our desired haven. Providence is a soft pillow for anxious heads, an anodyne for care, a grave for despair.

\[ \text{Deliver me from the hand of mine enemies, and from them that persecute me.} \]

It is lawful to desire escape from persecution if it be the Lord's will; and when this may not be granted us in the form which we desire, sustaining grace will give us deliverance in another form, by enabling us to laugh to scorn all the fury of the foe.

#### 31:16 Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.
Give me the sunshine of heaven in my soul, and I will defy the tempests of earth. Permit me to enjoy a sense of thy favour, O Lord, and a consciousness that thou art pleased with my manner of life, and all men may frown and slander as they will. It is always enough for a servant if he pleases his master; others may be dissatisfied, but he is not their servant, they do not pay him his wages, and their opinions have no weight with him.

\[ \text{Save me for thy mercies' sake.} \]

The good man knows no plea but mercy; whoever might urge legal pleas David never dreamed of it.
17 Let me not be ashamed, O LORD; for I have called upon thee: let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.

31:17 *Let me not be ashamed, O Lord; for I have called upon thee.* Put not my prayers to the blush! Do not fill profane mouths with jeers at my confidence in my God.

*Let the wicked be ashamed, and let them be silent in the grave.* Cause them to their amazement to see my wrongs righted and their own pride horribly confounded. A milder spirit rules our prayers under the gentle reign of the Prince of Peace, and, therefore, we can only use such words as these in their prophetic sense, knowing as we do full well, that shame and the silence of death are the best portion that ungodly sinners can expect. That which they desired for despised believers shall come upon themselves by a decree of retributive justice, at which they cannot cavil—"As he loved mischief, so let it come upon him."

18 Let the lying lips be put to silence; which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.

31:18 *Let the lying lips be put to silence.* A right good and Christian prayer; who but a bad man would give liars more license than need be? May God silence them either by leading them to repentance, by putting them to thorough shame, or by placing them in positions where what they may say will stand for nothing.

*Which speak grievous things proudly and contemptuously against the righteous.* The sin of slanderers lies partly in the matter of their speech; "they speak grievous things; "things cutting deep into the feelings of good men, and wounding them sorely in that tender place—their reputations. The sin is further enhanced by the manner of their speech; they speak proudly and contemptuously; they talk as if they themselves were the cream of society, and the righteous the mere scum of vulgarity. Proud thoughts of self are generally attended by debasing estimates of others. The more room we take up ourselves, the less we can afford our neighbours. What wickedness it is that unworthy characters should always be the loudest in railing at good men! They have no power to appreciate moral worth of which they are utterly destitute, and yet they have the effrontery to mount the judgment seat, and judge the men compared with whom they are as so much chaff. Holy indignation may well prompt us to desire anything which may rid the world of such unbearable impertinence and detestable arrogance.

19 *Oh how great is thy goodness,* which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee; *which* thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men!

31:19-22. Being full of faith, the psalmist gives glory to God for the mercy which he is assured will be his position.

31:19 *Oh how great is thy goodness.* Is it not singular to find such a joyful sentence in connection with so much sorrow? Truly the life of faith is a miracle. When faith led David to his God, she set him singing at once. He does not tell us how great was God's goodness, for he could
not; there are no measures which can set forth the immeasurable goodness of Jehovah, who is goodness itself. Holy amazement uses interjections where adjectives utterly fail. Notes of exclamation suit us when words of explanation are of no avail. If we cannot measure we can marvel; and though we may not calculate with accuracy, we can adore with fervency.

**Which thou hast laid up for them that fear thee.** The psalmist in contemplation divides goodness into two parts, that which is in store and that which is wrought out. The Lord has laid up in reserve for his people supplies beyond all count. In the treasury of the covenant, in the field of redemption, in the caskets of the promises, in the granaries of providence, the Lord has provided for all the needs which can possibly occur to his chosen. We ought often to consider the laid up goodness of God which has not yet been distributed to the chosen, but is already provided for them: if we are much in such contemplations, we shall be led to feel devout gratitude, such as glowed in the heart of David.

**Which thou hast wrought for them that trust in thee before the sons of men.** Heavenly mercy is not all hidden in the storehouse; in a thousand ways it has already revealed itself on behalf of those who are bold to avow their confidence in God; before their fellow men this goodness of the Lord has been displayed, that a faithless generation might stand rebuked. Overwhelming are the proofs of the Lord's favour to believers, history teems with amazing instances, and our own lives are full of prodigies of grace. We serve a good Master. Faith receives a large reward even now, but looks for her full inheritance in the future. Who would not desire to take his lot with the servants of a Master whose boundless love fills all holy minds with astonishment?

20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.

**31:20 Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man.** Pride is a barbed weapon: the proud man's contumely is iron which entereth into the soul; but those who trust in God, are safely housed in the Holy of Holies, the innermost court, into which no man may dare intrude; here in the secret dwelling place of God the mind of the saint rests in peace, which the foot of pride cannot disturb. Dwellers at the foot of the cross of Christ grow callous to the sneers of the haughty. The wounds of Jesus distil a balsam which heals all the scars which the jagged weapons of contempt can inflict upon us; in fact, when armed with the same mind which was in Christ Jesus, the heart is invulnerable to all the darts of pride.

**Thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues.** Tongues are more to be dreaded than beasts of prey—and when they strive, it is as though a whole pack of wolves were let loose; but the believer is secure even in this peril, for the royal pavilion of the King of kings shall afford him quiet shelter and serene security. The secret tabernacle of sacrifice, and the royal pavilion of sovereignty afford a double security to the Lord's people in their worst distresses. Observe the immediate action of God,
Thou shalt hide,

Thou shalt keep, the Lord himself is personally present for the rescue of his afflicted.

21 Blessed be the LORD: for he hath shewed me his marvelous kindness in a strong city.

31:21 Blessed be the Lord. When the Lord blesses us we cannot do less than bless him in return.

For he hath shewed me his marvelous kindness in a strong city. Was this in Mahanaim, where the Lord gave him victory over the hosts of Absalom? Or did he refer to Rabbath of Ammon, where he gained signal triumphs? Or, best of all, was Jerusalem the strong city where he most experienced the astonishing kindness of his God? Gratitude is never short of subjects; her Ebenezers stand so close together as to wall up her path to heaven on both sides. Whether in cities or in hamlets our blessed Lord has revealed himself to us, we shall never forget the hallowed spots: the lonely mount of Hermon, or the village of Emmaus, or the rock of Patmos, or the wilderness of Horeb, are all alike renowned when God manifests himself to us in robes of love.

22 For I said in my haste, I am cut off from before thine eyes: nevertheless thou hearest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee.

31:22 Confession of faults is always proper; and when we reflect upon the goodness of God, we ought to be reminded of our own errors and offences.

For I said in my haste. We generally speak amiss when we are in a hurry. Hasty words are but for a moment on the tongue, but they often lie for years on the conscience.

I am cut off from before thine eyes. This was an unworthy speech; but unbelief will have a corner in the heart of the firmest believer, and out of that corner it will vent many spiteful things against the Lord if the course of providence be not quite so smooth as nature might desire. No saint ever was, or ever could be, cut off from before the eyes of God, and yet no doubt many have thought so, and more than one has said so. For ever be such dark suspicions banished from our minds.

Nevertheless thou hearest the voice of my supplications when I cried unto thee. What a mercy that if we believe not, yet God abideth faithful, hearing prayer even when we are laboring under doubts which dishonour his name. If we consider the hindrances in the way of our prayers, and the poor way in which we present them, it is a wonder of wonders that they ever prevail with heaven.

23 O love the LORD, all ye his saints: for the LORD preserveth the faithful, and plentifully rewardeth the proud doer.

31:23 O love the Lord, all ye his saints. A most affecting exhortation, showing clearly the deep love of the writer to his God: there is the more beauty in the expression, because it reveals love toward a smiting God, love which many waters could not quench. To bless him who gives is
easy, but to cling to him who takes away is a work of grace. All the saints are benefited by the sanctified miseries of one, if they are led by earnest exhortations to love their Lord the better. If saints do not love the Lord, who will? Love is the universal debt of all the saved family: who would wish to be exonerated from its payment?

> “Reasons for love are given, for believing love is not blind.”

For the Lord preserveth the faithful. They have to bide their time, but the recompense comes at last, and meanwhile all the cruel malice of their enemies cannot destroy them.

And plentifully rewardeth the proud doer. This also is cause for gratitude: pride is so detestable in its acts that he who shall mete out to it its righteous due, deserves the love of all holy minds.

24 Be of good courage, and he shall strengthen your heart, all ye that hope in the LORD.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>31:24 Be of good courage.</th>
<th>Keep up your spirit, let no craven thoughts blanch your cheek. Fear weakens, courage strengthens. Victory waits upon the banners of the brave.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Be of good courage.</td>
<td>Power from on high shall be given in the most effectual manner by administering force to the fountain of vitality. So far from leaving us, the Lord will draw very near to us in our adversity, and put his own power into us.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And he shall strengthen your heart.</td>
<td>Every one of you, lift up your heads and sing for joy of heart. God is faithful, and does not fail even his little children who do but hope, wherefore then should we be afraid?</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Psalm 32

A Psalm of David, Maschil

TITLE. A Psalm of David, Maschil. That David wrote this gloriously evangelic Psalm is proved not only by this heading, but by the words of the apostle Paul, in Ro 4:6-8. "Even as David also describeth the blessedness of the man unto whom God imputeth righteousness without works," &c. Probably his deep repentance over his great sin was followed by such blissful peace, that he was led to pour out his spirit in the soft music of this choice song. In the order of history it seems to follow the fifty-first. Maschil is a new title to us, and indicates that this is an instructive or didactic Psalm. The experience of one believer affords rich instruction to others, it reveals the footsteps of the flock, and so comforts and directs the weak. Perhaps it was important in this case to prefix the word, that doubting saints might not imagine the Psalm to be the peculiar utterance of a singular individual, but might appropriate it to themselves as a lesson from the Spirit of God. David promised in the fifty-first Psalm to teach transgressors the Lord's ways, and here he does it most effectually. Hugo Grotius (1583-1645) thinks that this Psalm was meant to be sung on the annual day of the Jewish expiation, when a general confession of their sins was made.

DIVISION. In our reading we have found it convenient to note the benediction of the pardoned, Ps 32:1-2; David's personal confession, Ps 32:3-5; and the application of the case to others, Ps 32:6-7. The voice of God is heard by the forgiven one in Ps 32:8-9; and the Psalm then concludes with a portion for each of the two great classes of men, Ps 32:10-11.

1 Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven, whose sin is covered.

32:1 Blessed. Like the sermon on the mount on the mount, this Psalm begins with beatitudes. This is the second Psalm of benediction. The first Psalm describes the result of holy blessedness, the thirty-second details the cause of it. The first pictures the tree in full growth, this depicts it in its first planting and watering. He who in the first Psalm is a reader of God's book, is here a suppliant at God's throne accepted and heard.

Blessed is he whose transgression is forgiven. He is now blessed and ever shall be. Be he ever so poor, or sick, or sorrowful, he is blessed in very deed. Pardoning mercy is of all things in the world most to be prized, for it is the only and sure way to happiness. To hear from God's own Spirit the words, "absolvo te" ["you are absolved"] is joy unspeakable. Blessedness is not in this
case ascribed to the man who has been a diligent law keeper, for then it would never come to us, but rather to a lawbreaker, who by grace most rich and free has been forgiven. Self-righteous Pharisees have no portion in this blessedness. Over the returning prodigal, the word of welcome is here pronounced, and the music and dancing begin. A full, instantaneous, irreversible pardon of transgression turns the poor sinner's hell into heaven, and makes the heir of wrath a partaker in blessing. The word rendered forgiven is in the original taken off or taken away, as a burden is lifted or a barrier removed. What a lift is here! It cost our Saviour a sweat of blood to bear our load, yea, it cost him his life to bear it quite away. Samson carried the gates of Gaza, but what was that to the weight which Jesus bore on our behalf?

Whose sin is covered. Covered by God, as the ark was covered by the mercyseat, as Noah was covered from the flood, as the Egyptians were covered by the depths of the sea. What a cover must that be which hides away for ever from the sight of the all seeing God all the filthiness of the flesh and of the spirit? He who has once seen sin in its horrible deformity, will appreciate the happiness of seeing it no more for ever. Christ's atonement is the propitiation, the covering, the making an end of sin; where this is seen and trusted in, the soul knows itself to be now accepted in the Beloved, and therefore enjoys a conscious blessedness which is the antepast of heaven. It is clear from the text that a man may know that he is pardoned: where would be the blessedness of an unknown forgiveness? Clearly it is a matter of knowledge, for it is the ground of comfort.

2 Blessed is the man unto whom the LORD imputeth not iniquity, and in whose spirit there is no guile.

32:2 Blessed is the man unto whom the Lord imputeth not iniquity. The word blessed is in the plural, oh, the blessednesses! The double joys, the bundles of happiness, the mountains of delight! Note the three words so often used to denote our disobedience—transgression, sin, and iniquity, are the three headed dog at the gates of hell, but our glorious Lord has silenced his barkings for ever against his own believing ones. The trinity of sin is overcome by the Trinity of heaven. Non-imputation is of the very essence of pardon: the believer sins, but his sin is not reckoned, not accounted to him. Certain divines froth at the mouth with rage against imputed righteousness be it ours to see our sin not imputed, and to us may there be as Paul words it, "Righteousness imputed without works." He is blessed indeed who has a substitute to stand for him to whose account all his debts may be set down.

And in whose spirit there is no guile. He who is pardoned, has in every case been taught to deal honestly with himself, his sin, and his God. Forgiveness is no sham, and the peace which it brings is not caused by playing tricks with conscience. Self-deception and hypocrisy bring no blessedness, they may drug the soul into hell with pleasant dreams, but into the heaven of true peace they cannot conduct their victim. Free from guilt, free from guile. Those who are justified from fault are sanctified from falsehood. A liar is not a forgiven soul. Treachery, double-dealing, chicanery, dissimulation, are lineaments of the devil's children, but he who is washed from sin is truthful, honest, simple, and childlike. There can be no blessedness to tricksters with their plans, and tricks, and shuffling, and pretending: they are too much afraid of discovery to be at ease; their house is built on the volcano's brink, and eternal destruction must be their portion. Observe the three words to describe sin, and the three words to represent pardon, weigh them well, and note their meaning. (See note at the end.)
3 When I kept silence, my bones waxed old through my roaring all the day long.

32:3-5 David now gives us his own experience: no instructor is so efficient as one who testifies to what he has personally known and felt. He writes well who like the spider spins his matter out of his own bowels.

32:3 When I kept silence. When through neglect I failed to confess, or through despair dared not do so, my bones, those solid pillars of my frame, the stronger portions of my bodily constitution, waxed old, began to decay with weakness, for my grief was so intense as to sap my health and destroy my vital energy. What a killing thing is sin! It is a pestilent disease! A fire in the bones! While we smother our sin it rages within, and like a gathering wound swells horribly and torments terribly.

Through my roaring all the daylong. He was silent as to confession, but not as to sorrow. Horror at his great guilt, drove David to incessant laments, until his voice was no longer like the articulate speech of man, but so full of sighing and groaning, that it resembled to hoarse roaring of a wounded beast. None knows the pangs of conviction but those who have endured them. The rack, the wheel, the flaming fagot are ease compared with the Tophet which a guilty conscience kindles within the breast: better suffer all the diseases which flesh is heir to, than lie under the crushing sense of the wrath of almighty God. The Spanish inquisition with all its tortures was nothing to the inquest which conscience holds within the heart.

4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me: my moisture is turned into the drought of summer. Selah.

32:4 For day and night thy hand was heavy upon me. God's finger can crush us—what must his hand be, and that pressing heavily and continuously! Under terrors of conscience, men have little rest by night, for the grim thoughts of the day dog them to their chambers and haunt their dreams, or else they lie awake in a cold sweat of dread. God's hand is very helpful when it uplifts, but it is awful when it presses down: better a world on the shoulder, like Atlas, than God's hand on the heart, like David.

My moisture is turned into the drought of summer. The sap of his soul was dried, and the body through sympathy appeared to be bereft of its needful fluids. The oil was almost gone from the lamp of life, and the flame flickered as though it would soon expire. Unconfessed transgression, like a fierce poison, dried up the fountain of the man's strength and made him like a tree blasted by the lightning, or a plant withered by the scorching heat of a tropical sun. Alas! for a poor soul when it has learned its sin but forgets its Saviour, it goes hard with it indeed.

Selah. It was time to change the tune, for the notes are very low in the scale, and with such hard usage, the strings of the harp are out of order: the next verse will surely be set to another key, or will rehearse a more joyful subject.

5 I acknowledged my sin unto thee, and mine iniquity have I not hid. I said, I will confess my transgressions unto the LORD; and thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Selah.
I acknowledged my sin unto thee. After long lingering, the broken heart bethought itself of what it ought to have done at the first, and laid bare its bosom before the Lord. The lancet must be let into the gathering ulcer before relief can be afforded. The least thing we can do, if we would be pardoned, is to acknowledge our fault; if we are too proud for this we double deserve punishment.

And mine iniquity have I not hid. We must confess the guilt as well as the fact of sin. It is useless to conceal it, for it is well known to God; it is beneficial to us to own it, for a full confession softens and humbles the heart. We must as far as possible unveil the secrets of the soul, dig up the hidden treasure of Achan, and by weight and measure bring out our sins. I said. This was his fixed resolution.

I will confess my transgressions unto the Lord. Not to my fellow men or to the high priest, but unto Jehovah; even in those days of symbol the faithful looked to God alone for deliverance from sin's intolerable load, much more now, when types and shadows have vanished at the appearance of the dawn. When the soul determines to lay low and plead guilty, absolution is near at hand; hence we read,

And thou forgavest the iniquity of my sin. Not only was the sin itself pardoned, but the iniquity of it; the virus of its guilt was put away, and that at once, so soon as the acknowledgment was made. God's pardons are deep and thorough: the knife of mercy cuts at the roots of the ill weed of sin. Selah. Another pause is needed, for the matter is not such as may be hurried over.

"Pause, my soul, adore and wonder,
Ask, O why such love to me?
Grace has put me in the number
Of the Savior's family.
Hallelujah!
Thanks, eternal thanks, to thee."

6 For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found: surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him.

For this shall every one that is godly pray unto thee in a time when thou mayest be found. If the psalmist means that on account of God's mercy others would become hopeful, his witness is true. Remarkable answers to prayer very much quicken the prayerfulness of other godly persons. Where one man finds a golden nugget others feel inclined to dig. The benefit of our experience to others should reconcile us to it. No doubt the case of David has led thousands to seek the Lord with hopeful courage who, without such an instance to cheer them, might have died in despair. Perhaps the psalmist meant for this favour or the like all godly souls would seek, and here, again, we can confirm his testimony, for all will draw near to God in the same manner as he did when godliness rules their heart. The mercy seat is the way to heaven for all who shall ever come there. There is, however, a set time for prayer, beyond which it will be unavailing; between the time of sin and the day of punishment
mercy rules the hour, and God may be found, but when once the sentence has gone forth pleading will be useless, for the Lord will not be found by the condemned soul. O dear reader, slight not the accepted time, waste not the day of salvation. The godly pray while the Lord has promised to answer, the ungodly postpone their petitions till the Master of the house has risen up and shut to the door, and then their knocking is too late. What a blessing to be led to seek the Lord before the great devouring floods leap forth from their lairs, for then when they do appear we shall be safe.

Surely in the floods of great waters they shall not come nigh unto him. The floods shall come, and the waves shall rage, and toss themselves like Atlantic billows; whirlpools and waterspouts shall be on every hand, but the praying man shall be at a safe distance, most surely secured from every ill. David was probably most familiar with those great land floods which fill up, with rushing torrents, the beds of rivers which at other times are almost dry: these overflowing waters often did great damage, and, as in the case of the Kishon, were sufficient to sweep away whole armies. From sudden and overwhelming disasters thus set forth in metaphor the true suppliant will certainly be held secure. He who is saved from sin has no need to fear anything else.

7 Thou art my hiding place; thou shalt preserve me from trouble; thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. Selah.

32:7 Thou art my hiding place. Terse, short sentences make up this verse, but they contain a world of meaning. Personal claims upon our God are the joy of spiritual life. To lay our hand upon the Lord with the clasp of a personal "my" is delight at its full. Observe that the same man who in the fourth verse was oppressed by the presence of God, here finds a shelter in him. See what honest confession and full forgiveness will do! The gospel of substitution makes him to be our refuge who otherwise would have been our judge.

Thou shalt preserve me from trouble. Trouble shall do me no real harm when the Lord is with me, rather it shall bring me much benefit, like the file which clears away the rust, but does not destroy the metal. Observe the three tenses, we have noticed the sorrowful past, the last sentence was a joyful present, this is a cheerful future.

Thou shalt compass me about with songs of deliverance. What a golden sentence! The man is encircled in song, surrounded by dancing mercies, all of them proclaiming the triumphs of grace. There is no breach in the circle, it completely rings him round; on all sides he hears music. Before him hope sounds the cymbals, and behind him gratitude beats the timbrel. Right and left, above and beneath, the air resounds with joy, and all this for the very man who, a few weeks ago, was roaring all the day long. How great a change! What wonders grace has done and still can do! Selah. There was a need of a pause, for love so amazing needs to be pondered, and joy so great demands quiet contemplation, since language fails to express it.

8 I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go: I will guide thee with mine eye.
I will instruct thee and teach thee in the way which thou shalt go. Here the Lord is the speaker, and gives the psalmist an answer to his prayer. Our Saviour is our instructor. The Lord himself deigns to teach his children to walk in the way of integrity, his holy word and the monitions of the Holy Spirit are the directors of the believer’s daily conversation. We are not pardoned that we may henceforth live after our own lusts, but that we may be educated in holiness and trained for perfection. A heavenly training is one of the covenant blessings which adoption seals to us:

"All thy children shall be taught by the Lord." Practical teaching is the very best of instruction, and they are thrice happy who, although they never sat at the feet of Gamaliel, and are ignorant of Aristotle, and the ethics of the schools, have nevertheless learned to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.

I will guide thee with mine eye. As servants take their cue from the master’s eye, and a nod or a wink is all that they require, so should we obey the slightest hints of our Master, not needing thunderbolts to startle our incorrigible sluggishness, but being controlled by whispers and love touches. The Lord is the great overseer, whose eye in providence overlooks everything. It is well for us to be the sheep of his pasture, following the guidance of his wisdom.

9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding: whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee.

32: 9 Be ye not as the horse, or as the mule, which have no understanding. Understanding separates man from a brute—let us not act as if we were devoid of it. Men should take counsel and advice, and be ready to run where wisdom points them the way. Alas! we need to be cautioned against stupidity of heart, for we are very apt to fall into it. We who ought to be as the angels, readily become as the beasts.

Whose mouth must be held in with bit and bridle, lest they come near unto thee. It is much to be deplored that we so often need to be severely chastened before we will obey. We ought to be as a feather in the wind, wafted readily in the breath of the Holy Spirit, but alas! we lie like motionless logs, and stir not with heaven itself in view. Those cutting bits of affliction show how hard mouthed we are, those bridles of infirmity manifest our headstrong and willful manners. We should not be treated like mules if there was not so much of the ass about us. If we will be fractious, we must expect to be kept in with a tight rein. Oh, for grace to obey the Lord willingly, lest like the willful servant, we are beaten with many stripes. John Calvin renders the last words, Lest they kick against thee, a version more probable and more natural, but the passage is confessedly obscure—not however, in its general sense.

10 Many sorrows shall be to the wicked: but he that trusteth in the LORD, mercy shall compass him about.
Many sorrows shall be to the wicked. Like refractory horses and mules, they have many cuts and bruises. Here and hereafter the portion of the wicked is undesirable. Their joys are evanescent, their sorrows are multiplying and ripening. He who sows sin will reap sorrow in heavy sheaves. Sorrows of conscience, of disappointment, of terror, are the sinner's sure heritage in time, and then for ever sorrows of remorse and despair. Let those who boast of present sinful joys, remember the shall be of the future and take warning.

But he that trusteth in the Lord, mercy shall compass him about. Faith is here placed as the opposite of wickedness, since it is the source of virtue. Faith in God is the great charmer of life's cares, and he who possesses it, dwells in an atmosphere of grace, surrounded with the bodyguard of mercies. May it be given to us of the Lord at all times to believe in the mercy of God, even when we cannot see traces of its working, for to the believer, mercy is as all surrounding as omniscience, and every thought and act of God is perfumed with it. The wicked have a hive of wasps around them, many sorrows; but we have a swarm of bees storing honey for us.

11 Be glad in the LORD, and rejoice, ye righteous: and shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart.

Be glad. Happiness is not only our privilege, but our duty. Truly we serve a generous God, since he makes it a part of our obedience to be joyful. How sinful are our rebellious murmurings! How natural does it seem that a man blest with forgiveness should be glad! We read of one who died at the foot of the scaffold of overjoy at the receipt of his monarch's pardon; and shall we receive the free pardon of the King of kings, and yet pine in inexcusable sorrow?

In the Lord. Here is the directory by which gladness is preserved from levity. We are not to be glad in sin, or to find comfort in corn, and wine, and oil, but in our God is to be the garden of our soul's delight. That there is a God and such a God, and that he is ours, ours for ever, our Father and our reconciled Lord, is matter enough for a never ending psalm of rapturous joy.

And rejoice, ye righteous, redouble your rejoicing, peal upon peal. Since God has clothed his choristers in the white garments of holiness, let them not restrain their joyful voices, but sing aloud and shout as those who find great spoil.

And shout for joy, all ye that are upright in heart. Our happiness should be demonstrative; chill penury of love often represses the noble flame of joy, and men whisper their praises decorously where a hearty outburst of song would be far more natural. It is to be feared that the church of the present day, through a craving for excessive propriety, is growing too artificial; so that enquirers' cries and believers' shouts would be silenced if they were heard in our assemblies. This may be better than boisterous fanaticism, but there is as much danger in the one direction as the other. For our part, we are touched to the heart by a little sacred excess, and when godly men in their joy over leap the narrow bounds of decorum, we do not, like Michal, Saul's daughter, eye them with a sneering heart. Note how the pardoned are represented as upright, righteous, and without guile; a man may have many faults and yet be saved, but a false heart is everywhere the damning mark. A man of twisting, shifty ways, of a crooked, crafty nature, is not saved, and in all probability never will be; for the ground which brings forth a harvest when grace is sown in it, may be weedy
waste, but our Lord tells us it is *honest* and good ground. Our observation has been that men of double tongues and tricky ways are the least likely of all men to be saved: certainly where grace comes it restores man's mind to its perpendicular, and delivers him from being doubled up with vice, twisted with craft, or bent with dishonesty. Reader, what a delightful Psalm! Have you, in perusing it, been able to claim a lot in the goodly land? If so, publish to others the way of salvation.

---

**Psalm 33**

**TITLE.** This song of praise bears no title or indication of authorship; to teach us, says Dickson, "to look upon Holy Scripture as altogether inspired of God, and not put price upon it for the writers thereof."

**SUBJECT AND DIVISION.** The praise of Jehovah is the subject of this sacred song. The righteous are exhorted to praise him, Ps 33:1-3; because of the excellency of his character, Ps 33:4-5; and his majesty in creation, Ps 33:6-7. Men are bidden to fear before Jehovah because his purposes are accomplished in providence, Ps 33:8-11. His people are proclaimed blessed, Ps 33:12. The omniscience and omnipotence of God, and his care for his people are celebrated, in opposition to the weakness of an arm of flesh, Ps 33:13-19; and the Psalm concludes with a fervent expression of confidence, Ps 33:20-21, and an earnest prayer, Ps 33:22.

1 Rejoice in the LORD, O ye righteous: *for* praise is comely for the upright.

**33:1 Rejoice in the Lord.** Joy is the soul of praise. To delight ourselves in God is most truly to extol him, even if we let no notes of song proceed from our lips. That God is, and that he is such a God, and our God, ours for ever and ever, should wake within us an unceasing and overflowing joy. To rejoice in temporal comforts is dangerous, to rejoice in self is foolish, to rejoice in sin is fatal, but to rejoice in God is heavenly. He who would have a double heaven must begin below to rejoice like those above.
O ye righteous. This is peculiarly your duty, your obligations are greater, and your spiritual nature more adapted to the work, be ye then first in the glad service. Even the righteous are not always glad, and have need to be stirred up to enjoy their privileges.

For praise is comely for the upright. God has an eye to things which are becoming. When saints wear their choral robes, they look fair in the Lord's sight. A harp suits a blood washed hand. No jewel more ornamental to a holy face than sacred praise. Praise is not comely from unpardoned professional singers; it is like a jewel of gold in a swine's snout. Crooked hearts make crooked music, but the upright are the Lord's delight. Praise is the dress of saints in heaven, it is meet that they should fit it on below.

2 Praise the LORD with harp: sing unto him with the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings.

33:2 Praise the Lord with harp. Men need all the help they can get to stir them up to praise. This is the lesson to be gathered from the use of musical instruments under the old dispensation. Israel was at school, and used childish things to help her to learn; but in these days, when Jesus gives us spiritual manhood, we can make melody without strings and pipes. We who do not believe these things to be expedient in worship, lest they should mar its simplicity, do not affirm them to be unlawful, and if any George Herbert or Martin Luther can worship God better by the aid of well tunes instruments, who shall gainsay their right? We do not need them, they would hinder than help our praise, but if others are otherwise minded, are they not living in gospel liberty?

Sing unto him. This is the sweetest and best of music. No instrument like the human voice. As a help to singing the instrument is alone to be tolerated, for keys and strings do not praise the Lord.

With the psaltery and an instrument of ten strings. The Lord must have a full octave, for all notes are his, and all music belongs to him. Where several pieces of music are mentioned, we are taught to praise God with all the powers which we possess.

3 Sing unto him a new song; play skillfully with a loud noise.

33:3 Sing unto him a new song. All songs of praise should be unto him. Singing for singing's sake is nothing worth; we must carry our tribute to the King, and not cast it to the winds. Do most worshippers mind this? Our faculties should be exercised when we are magnifying the Lord, so as not to run in an old groove without thought; we ought to make every hymn of praise a new song. To keep up the freshness of worship is a great thing, and in private it is indispensable. Let us not present old worn out praise, but put life, and soul, and heart, into every song, since we have new mercies every day, and see new beauties in the work and word of our Lord.

Play skillfully. It is wretched to hear God praised in a slovenly manner. He deserves the best that we have. Every Christian should endeavor to sing according to the rules of the art, so that he may keep time and tune with the congregation. The sweetest tunes and the
sweetest voices, with the sweetest words, are all too little for the Lord our God; let us not offer him limping rhymes, set to harsh tunes, and growled out by discordant voices.

*With a loud noise.* Heartiness should be conspicuous in divine worship. Well-bred whispers are disreputable here. It is not that the Lord cannot hear us, but that it is natural for great exultation to express itself in the loudest manner. Men shout at the sight of their kings: shall we offer no loud hosannas to the Son of David?

4 For the word of the LORD is right; and all his works *are done* in truth.

33:4 *For the word of the Lord is right.* His ordinances both natural, moral, and spiritual, are right, and especially his incarnate Word, who is the Lord our righteousness. Whatever God has ordained must be good, and just, and excellent. There are no anomalies in God's universe, except what sin has made; his word of command made all things good. When we look at his word of promise, and remember its faithfulness, what reasons have we for joy and thankfulness!

*And all his works are done in truth.* His work is the outflow of his word, and it is true to it. He neither doth nor saith anything ill; in deed and speech he agrees with himself and the purest truth. There is no lie in God's word, and no sham in his works; in creation, providence, and revelation, unalloyed truth abounds. To act truth as well as to utter it is divine.

Let not children of God ever yield their principles in practice any more than in heart. What a God we serve! The more we know of him, the more our better natures approve his surpassing excellence; even his afflicted works are according to his truthful word.

"*Why should I complain*  
of want of distress,  
Afflictions or pain?  
*He told me no less;*  
The heirs of salvation,  
*I know from his word,*  
Through much tribulation  
*must follow their Lord.*"

God writes with a pen that never blots, speaks with a tongue that never slips, acts with a hand which never fails. Bless his name.

5 He loveth righteousness and judgment: the earth is full of the goodness of the LORD.

33:5 *He loveth righteousness and judgment.* The theory and practice of right he intensely loves. He doth not only approve the true and the just, but his inmost soul delights therein. The character of God is a sea, every drop of which should become a wellhead of praise for his people. The righteousness of Jesus is peculiarly dear to the Father, and for its sake he takes pleasure in those to whom it is imputed. Sin, on the other hand, is infinitely abhorrent to the Lord, and woe unto those who die in it; if he sees no righteousness in them, he will deal righteously with them, and judgment stern and final will be the result.
The earth is full of the goodness of the Lord. Come hither, astronomers, geologists, naturalists, botanists, chemists, miners, yea, all of you who study the works of God, for all your truthful stories confirm this declaration. From the midge in the sunbeam to leviathan in the ocean all creatures own the bounty of the Creator. Even the pathless desert blazes with some undiscovered mercy, and the caverns of ocean conceal the treasures of love. Earth might have been as full of terror as of grace, but instead thereof it teems and overflows with kindness. He who cannot see it, and yet lives in it as the fish lives in the water, deserves to die. If earth be full of mercy, what must heaven be where goodness concentrates its beams?

6 By the word of the LORD were the heavens made; and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth.

33:6 By the word of the Lord were the heavens made. The angelic heavens, the sidereal heavens, and the firmament or terrestrial heavens, were all made to start into existence by a word; what if we say by the Word, "For without him was not anything made that is made." It is interesting to note the mention of the Spirit in the next clause, and all the host of them by the breath of his mouth; the breath is the same as is elsewhere rendered Spirit. Thus the three persons of the Godhead unite in creating all things. How easy for the Lord to make the most ponderous orbs, and the most glorious angels! A word, a breath could do it. It is as easy for God to create the universe as for a man to breathe, nay, far easier, for man breathes not independently, but borrows the breath in his nostrils from his Maker. It may be gathered from this verse that the constitution of all things is from the infinite wisdom, for his word may mean his appointment and determination. A wise and merciful Word has arranged, and a living Spirit sustains all the creation of Jehovah.

7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap: he layeth up the depth in storehouses.

33:7 He gathereth the waters of the sea together as an heap. The waters were once scattered like corn strewn upon a threshing floor: they are now collected in one spot as an heap. Who else could have gathered them into one channel but their great Lord, at whose bidding the waters fled away? The miracle of the Red Sea is repeated in nature day by day, for the sea which now invades the shore under the impulse of sun and moon, would soon devour the land if bounds were not maintained by the divine decree.

He layeth up the depth in storehouses. The depths of the main are God’s great cellars and storerooms for the tempestuous element. Vast reservoirs of water are secreted in the bowels of the earth, from which issue our springs and wells of water. What a merciful provision for a pressing need? May not the text also refer to the clouds, and the magazines of hail, and snow, and rain, those treasures of merciful wealth for the fields of earth? These aqueous masses are not
piled away as in lumber rooms, but in storehouses for future beneficial use. Abundant tenderness is seen in the foresight of our heavenly Joseph, whose granaries are already filled against earth's time of need. These stores might have been, as once they were, the ammunition of vengeance, they are now a part of the commissariat of mercy.

8 Let all the earth fear the LORD: let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.

33:8 *Let all the earth fear the Lord.* Not only Jews, but Gentiles. The psalmist was not a man blinded by national prejudice, he did not desire to restrict the worship of Jehovah to the seed of Abraham. He looks for homage even to far off nations. If they are not well enough instructed to be able to praise, at least let them fear. There is an inferior kind of worship in the trembling which involuntarily admits the boundless power of the thundering God. A defiant blasphemer is out of place in a world covered with tokens of the divine power and Godhead: the whole earth cannot afford a spot congenial for the erection of a synagogue of Atheism, nor a man in whom it is becoming to profane the name of God.

*Let all the inhabitants of the world stand in awe of him.* Let them forsake their idols, and reverently regard the only living God. What is here placed as a wish may also be read as a prophecy: the adoration of God will yet be universal.

9 For he spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast.

33:9 *For he spake, and it was done.* Creation was the fruit of a word. Jehovah said, "Light be," and light was. The Lord's acts are sublime in their ease and instantaneousness. "What a word is this?" This was the wondering enquiry of old, and it may be ours to this day.

*He commanded, and it stood fast.* Out of nothing creation stood forth, and was confirmed in existence. The same power which first uplifted, now makes the universe to abide; although we may not observe it, there is as great a display of sublime power in confirming as in creating. Happy is the man who has learned to lean his all upon the sure word of him who built the skies!

10 The LORD bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought: he maketh the devices of the people of none effect.

33:10 *The Lord bringeth the counsel of the heathen to nought.* While his own will is done, he takes care to anticipate the willfulness of his enemies. Before they come to action he vanquishes them in the council chamber; and when, well armed with craft, they march to the assault, he frustrates their knaveries, and makes their promising plots to end in nothing. Not only the folly of the heathen, but their wisdom too, shall yield to the power of the cross of Jesus: what a comfort is this to those who have to labour where sophistry, and philosophy, falsely so called, are set in opposition to the truth as it is in Jesus.
He maketh the devices of the people of none effect. Their persecutions, slanders, falsehoods, are like puffballs flung against a granite wall—they produce no result at all; for the Lord overrules the evil, and brings good out of it. The cause of God is never in danger: infernal craft is outwitted by infinite wisdom, and Satanic malice held in check by boundless power.

11 The counsel of the LORD standeth for ever, the thoughts of his heart to all generations.

33:11 The counsel of the Lord standeth for ever. He changes not his purpose, his decree is not frustrated, his designs are accomplished. God has a predestination according to the counsel of his will, and none of the devices of his foes can thwart his decree for a moment. Men's purposes are blown to and from like the thread of the gossamer or the down of the thistle, but the eternal purposes are firmer than the earth.

The thoughts of his heart to all generations. Men come and go, sons follow their sires to the grave, but the undisturbed mind of God moves on in unbroken serenity, producing ordained results with unerring certainty. No man can expect his will or plan to be carried out from age to age; the wisdom of one period is the folly of another, but the Lord's wisdom is always wise, and his designs run on from century to century. His power to fulfill his purposes is by no means diminished by the lapse of years. He who was absolute over Pharaoh in Egypt is not one whit the less today the King of kings and Lord of lords; still do his chariot wheels roll onward in imperial grandeur, none being for a moment able to resist his eternal will.

12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the LORD; and the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance.

33:12 Blessed is the nation whose God is the Lord. Israel was happy in the worship of the only true God. It was the blessedness of the chosen nation to have received a revelation from Jehovah. While others groveled before their idols, the chosen people were elevated by a spiritual religion which introduced them to the invisible God, and led them to trust in him. All who confide in the Lord are blessed in the largest and deepest sense, and none can reverse the blessing.

And the people whom he hath chosen for his own inheritance. Election is at the bottom of it all. The divine choice rules the day; none take Jehovah to be their God till he takes them to be his people. What an ennobling choice this is! We are selected to no mean estate, and for no ignoble purpose: we are made the peculiar domain and delight of the Lord our God. Being so blessed, let us rejoice in our portion, and show the world by our lives that we serve a glorious Master.

13 The LORD looketh from heaven; he beholdeth all the sons of men.

33:13 The Lord looketh from heaven. The Lord is represented as dwelling above and looking down below; seeing all things, but peculiarly observing and caring for those who trust in him. It is one of our choicest privileges to be always under our Father's eye, to be never out of sight of our best Friend.
He beholdeth all the sons of men. All Adam's sons are as well watched as was Adam himself, their lone progenitor in the garden. Ranging from the frozen pole to the scorching equator, dwelling in hills and valleys, in huts and palaces, alike doth the divine eye regard all the members of the family of man.

14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth.

33:14 From the place of his habitation he looketh upon all the inhabitants of the earth. Here the sentiment is repeated: it is worth repeating, and it needs repeating, for man is most prone to forget it. As great men sit at their windows and watch the crowd below, so doth the Lord; he gazes intently upon his responsible creatures, and forgets nothing of what he sees.

15 He fashioneth their hearts alike; he considereth all their works.

33:15 He fashioneth their hearts alike. By which is meant that all hearts are equally fashioned by the Lord, kings' hearts as well as the hearts of beggars. The text does not mean that all hearts are created originally alike by God, such a statement would scarcely be true, since there is the utmost variety in the constitutions and dispositions of men. All men equally owe the possession of life to the Creator, and have therefore no reason to boast themselves. What reason has the vessel to glorify itself in presence of the potter?

He considereth all their words. Not in vain doth God see men's acts: he ponders and judges them. He reads the secret design in the outward behavior, and resolves the apparent good into its real elements.

This consideration foretokens a judgment when the results of the divine thoughts will be meted out in measures of happiness or woe. Consider thy ways, O man, for God considereth them!

16 There is no king saved by the multitude of an host: a mighty man is not delivered by much strength.

33:16 There is no king saved by the multitude of an host. Mortal power is a fiction, and those who trust in it are dupes. Serried ranks of armed men have failed to maintain an empire, or even to save their monarch's life when a decree from the court of heaven has gone forth for the empire's overthrow. The all seeing God preserves the poorest of his people when they are alone and friendless, but ten thousand armed men cannot ensure safety to him whom God leaves to destruction.

A mighty man is not delivered by much strength. So far from guarding others, the valiant veteran is not able to deliver himself. When his time comes to die, neither the force of his arms nor the speed of his legs can save him. The weakest believer dwells safely under the shadow of Jehovah's throne, while the most mighty sinner is in peril every hour. Why do we talk so much of our armies and our heroes? the Lord alone has strength, and let him alone have praise.
17 An horse is a vain thing for safety: neither shall he deliver any by his great strength.

33:17 An horse is a vain thing for safety. Military strength among the Orientals lay much in horses and scythed chariots, but the psalmist calls them a lie, a deceitful confidence. Surely the knight upon his gallant steed may be safe, either by valor or by flight? Not so, his horse shall bear him into danger or crush him with its fall.

Neither shall he deliver any by his great strength. Thus the strongest defenses are less than nothing when most needed. God only is to be trusted and adored. Sennacherib with all his calvary is not a match for one angel of the Lord, Pharaoh's horses and chariots found it vain to pursue the Lord's anointed, and so shall all the leaguered might of earth and hell find themselves utterly defeated when they rise against the Lord and his chosen.

18 Behold, the eye of the LORD is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy;

33:18 Behold. For this is a greater wonder than hosts and horses, a surer confidence than chariots or shields.

The eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him. That eye of peculiar care is their glory and defense. None can take them at unawares, for the celestial watcher foresees the designs of their enemies, and provides against them. They who fear God need not fear anything else; let them fix their eye of faith on him, and his eye of love will always rest upon them.

Upon them that hope in his mercy. This one would think to be a small evidence of grace, and yet it is a valid one.

Humble hope shall have its share as well as courageous faith. Say, my soul, is not this an encouragement to thee? Dost thou not hope in the mercy of God in Christ Jesus? Then the Father's eye is as much upon thee as upon the elder born of the family. These gentle words, like soft bread, are meant for babes in grace, who need infant's food.

19 To deliver their soul from death, and to keep them alive in famine.

33:19 To deliver their soul from death. The Lord's hand goes with his eye; he sovereignly preserves those whom he graciously observes. Rescues and restorations hedge about the lives of the saints; death cannot touch them till the King signs his warrant and gives him leave, and even then his touch is not so much mortal as immortal; he doth not so much kill us as kill our mortality.
And to keep them alive in famine. Gaunt famine knows its master. God has meal and oil for his Elijahs somewhere. "Verily thou shalt be fed" is a divine provision for the man of faith. The Preserver of men will not suffer the soul of the righteous to famish. Power in human hands is outmatched by famine, but God is good at a pinch, and proves his bounty under the most straitened circumstances. Believer, wait upon thy God in temporals. His eye is upon thee, and his hand will not long delay.

20 Our soul waiteth for the LORD: he is our help and our shield.

33:20 Our soul waits for the Lord. Here the godly avow their reliance upon him whom the Psalm extols. To wait is a great lesson. To be quiet in expectation, patient in hope, single in confidence, is one of the bright attainments of a Christian. Our soul, our life, must hang upon God; we are not to trust him with a few gewgaws, but with all we have and are.

He is our help and our shield. Our help in labour, our shield in danger. The Lord answereth all things to his people. He is their all in all. Note the three "ours" in the text. These holdfast words are precious. Personal possession makes the Christian man; all else is mere talk.

21 For our heart shall rejoice in him, because we have trusted in his holy name.

33:21 For our hearts shall rejoice in him. The duty commended and commanded in the first verse is here presented to the Lord. We, who trust, cannot but be of a glad heart, our inmost nature must triumph in our faithful God.

Because we have trusted in his holy name. The root of faith in due time bears the flower of rejoicing. Doubts breed sorrow, confidence creates joy.

22 Let thy mercy, O LORD, be upon us, according as we hope in thee.

33:22 Here is a large and comprehensive prayer to close with. It is an appeal for mercy, which even joyful believers need; and it is sought for in a proportion which the Lord has sanctioned. "According to your faith be it unto you," is the Master’s word, and he will not fall short of the scale which he has himself selected. Yet, Master, do more than this when hope is faint, and bless us far above what we ask or even think.
Psalm 34

A Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech, who drove him away, and he departed.

TITLE. Psalm of David, when he changed his behavior before Abimelech; who drove him away, and he departed. Of this transaction, which reflects no credit upon David's memory, we have a brief account in 1Sa 21:1-15. Although the gratitude of the psalmist prompted him thankfully to record the goodness of the Lord in vouchsafing an undeserved deliverance, yet he weaves none of the incidents of the escape into the narrative, but dwells only on the grand fact of his being heard in the hour of peril. We may learn from his example not to parade our sins before others, as certain vainglorious professors are wont to do who seem as proud of their sins as old Greenwich pensioners of their battles and their wounds. David played the fool with singular dexterity, but he was not so real a fool as to sing of his own exploits of folly. In the original, the title does not teach us that the psalmist composed this poem at the time of his escape from Achish, the king or Abimelech of Gath, but that it is intended to commemorate that event, and was suggested by it. It is well to mark our mercies with well-carved memorials. God deserves
our best handiwork. David in view of the special peril from which he was rescued, was at great pains with this Psalm, and wrote it with considerable regularity, in almost exact accordance with the letters of the Hebrew alphabet. This is the second alphabetical Psalm, the twenty-fifth being the first.

DIVISION. The Psalm is split into two great divisions at the close of Ps 34:10, when the Psalmist having expressed his praise to God turns in direct address to men. The first ten verses are A HYMN, and the last twelve A SERMON. For further assistance to the reader we may subdivide thus: In Ps 34:1-3, David vows to bless the Lord, and invites the praise of others; from Ps 34:4-7 he relates his experience, and in Ps 34:8-10 exhorts the godly to constancy of faith. In Ps 34:1-14, he gives direct exhortation, and follows it up by didactic teaching from Ps 34:15-22 to the close.

1 I will bless the LORD at all times: his praise shall continually be in my mouth.

34:1. I will bless the LORD at all times. He is resolved and fixed, I will; he is personally and for himself determined, let others so as they may; he is intelligent in head and inflamed in heart—he knows to whom the praise is due, and what is due, and for what and when. To Jehovah, and not to second causes our gratitude is to be rendered. The Lord hath by right a monopoly in his creatures praise. Even when a mercy may remind us of our sin with regard to it, as in this case David's deliverance from the Philistine monarch was sure to do, we are not to rob God of his need of honour because our conscience justly awards a censure to our share in the transaction. Though the hook was rusty, yet God sent the fish, and we thank him for it.

At all times, in every situation, under every circumstance, before, in and after trials, in bright days of glee, and dark nights of fear. He would never have done praising, because never satisfied that he had done enough; always feeling that he fell short of the Lord's deservings. Happy is he whose fingers are wedded to his harp. He who praises God for mercies shall never want a mercy for which to praise. To bless the Lord is never unseasonable.

His praise shall continually be in my mouth, not in my heart merely, but in my mouth too. Our thankfulness is not to be a dumb thing; it should be one of the daughters of music. Our tongue is our glory, and it ought to reveal the glory of God. What a blessed mouthful is God's praise! How sweet, how purifying, how perfuming! If men's mouths were always thus filled, there would be no repining against God, or slander of neighbours. If we continually rolled this dainty morsel under our tongue, the bitterness of daily affliction would be swallowed up in joy. God deserves blessing with the heart, and extolling with the mouth—good thoughts in the closet, and good words in the world.
2 My soul shall make her boast in the LORD: the humble shall hear thereof, and be glad.

34:2 My soul shall make her boast in the Lord. Boasting is a very natural propensity, and if it were used as in this case, the more it were indulged the better. The exultation of this verse is no mere tongue bragging, "the soul" is in it, the boasting is meant and felt before it is expressed. What scope there is for holy boasting in Jehovah! His person, attributes, covenant, promises, works, and a thousand things besides, are all incomparable, unparalleled, matchless; we may cry them up as we please, but we shall never be convicted of vain and empty speech in so doing. Truly he who writes these words of comment has nothing of his own to boast of, but much to lament over, and yet none shall stop him of his boast in God so long as he lives.

The humble shall hear thereof, and be glad. They are usually grieved to hear boastings; they turn aside from vauntings and lofty speeches, but boasting in the Lord is quite another matter; by this the most lowly are consoled and encouraged. The confident expressions of tried believers are a rich solace to their brethren of less experience. We ought to talk of the Lord's goodness on purpose that others may be confirmed in their trust in a faithful God.

3 O magnify the LORD with me, and let us exalt his name together.

34:3 O magnify the Lord with me. Is this request addressed to the humble? If so it is most fitting. Who can make God great but those who feel themselves to be little? He bids them help him to make the Lord's name greater among the sons of men. Jehovah is infinite, and therefore cannot really be made greater, but his name grows in manifested glory as he is made known to his creatures, and thus he is said to be magnified. It is well when the soul feels its own inability adequately to glorify the Lord, and therefore stirs up others to the gracious work; this is good both for the man himself and for his companions. No praise can excel that which lays us prostrate under a sense of our own nothingness, while divine grace like some topless Alp rises before our eyes and sinks us lower and lower in holy awe.

Let us exalt his name together. Social, congregated worship is the outgrowth of one of the natural instincts of the new life. In heaven it is enjoyed to the full, and earth is like heaven where it abounds.

4 I sought the LORD, and he heard me, and delivered me from all my fears.

34:4 I sought the Lord, and he heard me. It must have been in a very confused manner that David prayed, and there must have been much of self sufficiency in his prayer, or he would not have resorted to methods of such dubious morality as pretending to be mad and behaving as a lunatic; yet his poor limping prayer had an acceptance and brought him succor: the more reason for then celebrating the abounding mercy of the Lord. We may seek God even when we have sinned. If sin could blockade the mercyseat it would be all over with us, but the mercy is that there are gifts even for the rebellious, and an advocate for men who sin.
And delivered me from all my fears. God makes a perfect work of it. He clears away both our fears and their causes, all of them without exception. Glory be to his name, prayer sweeps the field, slays all the enemies and even buries their bones. Note the egoism of this verse and of those preceding it; we need not blush to speak of ourselves when in so doing we honestly aim at glorifying God, and not at exalting ourselves. Some are foolishly squeamish upon this point, but they should remember that when modesty robs God it is most immodest.

5 They looked unto him, and were lightened: and their faces were not ashamed.

34:5 They looked unto him, and were lightened. The psalmist avows that his case was not at all peculiar, it was matched in the lives of all the faithful; they too, each one of them on looking to their Lord were brightened up, their faces began to shine, their spirits were uplifted. What a means of blessing one look at the Lord may be! There is light, love, freedom, everything in fact, in a look at the crucified One. Never did a sore heart look in vain to the good Physician; never a dying soul turned its darkening eye to the brazen serpent to find its virtue gone.

And their faces were not ashamed. Their faces were covered with joy but not with blushes. He who trusts in God has no need to be ashamed of his confidence, time and eternity will both justify his reliance.

6 This poor man cried, and the LORD heard him, and saved him out of all his troubles.

34:6 This poor man cried. Here he returns to his own case. He was poor indeed, and so utterly friendless that his life was in great jeopardy; but he cried in his heart to the protector of his people and found relief. His prayer was a cry, for brevity and bitterness, for earnestness and simplicity, for artlessness and grief; it was a poor man's cry, but it was none the less powerful with heaven, for the Lord heard him, and to be heard of God is to be delivered; and so it is added that the Lord saved him out of all his troubles. At once and altogether David was clean rid of all his woes. The Lord sweeps our griefs away as men destroy a hive of hornets, or as the winds clear away the mists. Prayer can clear us of troubles as easily as the Lord made riddance of the frogs and flies of Egypt when Moses entreated him. This verse is the psalmist's own personal testimony: he being dead yet speaketh. Let the afflicted reader take heart and be of good courage.

7 The angel of the LORD encampeth round about them that fear him, and delivereth them.

34:7 The angel of the Lord. The covenant angel, the Lord Jesus, at the head of all the bands of heaven, surrounds with his army the dwellings of the saints. Like hosts entrenched so are the ministering spirits encamped around the Lord's chosen, to serve and succor, to defend and console them.

Encampeth round about them that fear him. On every side the watch is kept by warriors of sleepless eyes, and the Captain of the host is one whose prowess none can resist.
**And delivereth them.** We little know how many providential deliverances we owe to those unseen hands which are charged to bear us up lest we dash our foot against a stone.

8 O taste and see that the LORD is good: blessed is the man that trusteth in him.

| 34:8 O taste and see. | Make a trial, an inward, experimental trial of the goodness of God. You cannot see except by tasting for yourself; but if you taste you shall see, for this, like Jonathan's honey, enlightens the eyes. |

**That the Lord is good.** You can only know this really and personally by experience. There is the banquet with its oxen and fatlings; its fat things full of marrow, and wine on the lees well refined; but their sweetness will be all unknown to you except you make the blessings of grace your own, by a living, inward, vital participation in them.

**Blessed is the man that trusteth in him.** Faith is the soul's taste; they who test the Lord by their confidence always find him good, and they become themselves blessed. The second clause of the verse, is the argument in support of the exhortation contained in the first sentence.

9 O fear the LORD, ye his saints: for there is no want to them that fear him.

| 34:9 O fear the Lord, ye his saints. | Pay to him humble childlike reverence, walk in his laws, have respect to his will, tremble to offend him, hasten to serve him. Fear not the wrath of men, neither be tempted to sin through the virulence of their threats; fear God and fear nothing else. |

**For there is no want to them that fear him.** Jehovah will not allow his faithful servants to starve. He may not give luxuries, but the promise binds him to supply necessaries, and he will not run back from his word. Many whims and wishes may remain unfulfilled, but real wants the Lord will supply. The fear of the Lord or true piety is not only the duty of those who avow themselves to be saints, that is, persons set apart and consecrated for holy duties, but it is also their path of safety and comfort. Godliness hath the promise of the life which now is. If we were to die like dogs, and there were no hereafter, yet were it well for our own happiness' sake to fear the Lord. Men seek a patron and hope to prosper; he prospers surely who hath the Lord of Hosts to be his friend and defender.

10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger: but they that seek the LORD shall not want any good thing.

| 34:10 The young lions do lack, and suffer hunger. | They are fierce, cunning, strong, in all the vigor of youth, and yet they sometimes howl in their ravenous hunger, and even so crafty, designing, and oppressing men, with all their sagacity and unscrupulousness, often come to want; yet simple minded believers, who dare not act as the greedy lions of earth, are fed with food convenient for them. To trust God is better policy than the craftiest politicians can teach or practice. |
But they that seek the Lord shall not want any good thing. No really good thing shall be denied to those whose first and main end in life is to seek the Lord. Men may call them fools, but the Lord will prove them wise. They shall win where the world's wiseacres lose their all, and God shall have the glory of it.

11 Come, ye children, hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the LORD.

34:11 

Come, ye children. Though a warrior and a king, the psalmist was not ashamed to teach children. Teachers of youth belong to the true peerage; their work is honorable, and their reward shall be glorious. Perhaps the boys and girls of Gath had made sport of David in his seeming madness, and if so, he here aims by teaching the rising race to undo the mischief which he had done aforetime. Children are the most hopeful persons to teach—wise men who wish to propagate their principles take care to win the ear of the young.

Hearken unto me: I will teach you the fear of the Lord. So far as they can be taught by word of mouth, or learned by the hearing of the ear, we are to communicate the faith and fear of God, inculcating upon the rising generation the principles and practices of piety. This verse may be the address of every Sabbath schoolteacher to his class, of every parent to his children. It is not without instruction in the art of teaching. We should be winning and attractive to the youngsters, bidding them "come, "and not repelling them with harsh terms. We must get them away, apart from toys and sports, and try to occupy their minds with better pursuits; for we cannot well teach them while their minds are full of other things. We must drive at the main point always, and keep the fear of the Lord ever uppermost in our teachings, and in so doing we may discreetly cast our own personality into the scale by narrating our own experiences and convictions.

12 What man is he that desireth life, and loveth many days, that he may see good?

34:12 Life spent in happiness is the desire of all, and he who can give the young a receipt for leading a happy life deserves to be popular among them. Mere existence is not life; the art of living, truly, really, and joyfully living, it is not given to all men to know. To teach men how to live and how to die, is the aim of all useful religious instruction. The rewards of virtue are the baits with which the young are to be drawn to morality. While we teach piety to God we should also dwell much upon morality towards man.

13 Keep thy tongue from evil, and thy lips from speaking guile.

34:13 Keep thy tongue from evil. Guard with careful diligence that dangerous member, the tongue, lest it utter evil, for that evil will recoil upon thee, and mar the enjoyment of thy life. Men cannot spit forth poison without feeling some of the venom burning their own flesh.

And thy lips from speaking guile. Deceit must be very earnestly avoided by the man who desires happiness. A crafty schemer lives like a spy in the enemy's camp, in constant fear of exposure and execution. Clean and honest conversation, by keeping the conscience at ease, promotes
happiness, but lying and wicked talk stuffs our pillow with thorns, and makes life a constant whirl of fear and shame. David had tried the tortuous policy, but he here denounces it, and begs others as they would live long and well to avoid with care the doubtful devices of guile.

14 Depart from evil, and do good; seek peace, and pursue it.

**34:14 Depart from evil.** Go away from it. Not merely take your hands off, but yourself off. Live not near the pest house. Avoid the lion's lair, leave the viper's nest. Set a distance between yourself and temptation.

**And do good.** Be practical, active, energetic, persevering in good. Positive virtue promotes negative virtue; he who does good is sure to avoid evil.

**Seek peace.** Not merely prefer it, but with zeal and care endeavor to promote it. Peace with God, with thine own heart, with thy fellow man, search after this as the merchantman after a precious pearl. Nothing can more effectually promote our own happiness than peace; strife awakens passions which eat into the heart with corroding power. Anger is murder to one's own self, as well as to its objects.

**And pursue it.** Hunt after it, chase it with eager desire. It may soon be lost, indeed, nothing is harder to retain, but do your best, and if enmity should arise let it be no fault of yours. Follow after peace when it shuns you; be resolved not to be of a contentious spirit. The peace which you thus promote will be returned into your own bosom, and be a perennial spring of comfort to you.

15 The eyes of the LORD are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry.

**34:15 The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous.** He observes them with approval and tender consideration; they are so dear to him that he cannot take his eyes off them; he watches each one of them as carefully and intently as if there were only that one creature in the universe.

**His ears are open unto their cry.** His eyes and ears are thus both turned by the Lord towards his saints; his whole mind is occupied about them: if slighted by all others they are not neglected by him. Their cry he hears at once, even as a mother is sure to hear her sick babe; the cry may be broken, plaintive, unhappy, feeble, unbelieving, yet the Father's quick ear catches each note of lament or appeal, and he is not slow to answer his children's voice.

16 The face of the LORD is against them that do evil, to cut off the remembrance of them from the earth.

**34:16 The face of the Lord is against them that do evil.** God is not indifferent to the deeds of sinners, but he sets his face against them, as we say, being determined that they shall have no countenance and support, but shall be thwarted and defeated. He is determinately resolved that the ungodly shall not prosper; he sets himself with all his might to overthrow them.
To cut off the remembrance of them from the earth. He will stamp out their fires, their honour shall be turned into shame, their names forgotten or accursed. Utter destruction shall be the lot of all the ungodly.

17 The righteous cry, and the LORD heareth, and delivereth them out of all their troubles.

34:17 The righteous cry. Like Israel in Egypt, they cry out under the heavy yoke of oppression, both of sin, temptation, care, and grief.

And the Lord heareth; he is like the night watchman, who no sooner hears the alarm bell than he flies to relieve those who need him.

And delivereth them out of all their troubles. No net of trouble can so hold us that the Lord cannot free us. Our afflictions may be numerous and complicated, but prayer can set us free from them all, for the Lord will show himself strong on our behalf.

18 The LORD is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart; and saveth such as be of a contrite spirit.

34:18 The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a broken heart. Near in friendship to accept and console. Broken hearts think God far away, when he is really most near them; their eyes are holden so that they see not their best friend. Indeed, he is with them, and in them, but they know it not. They run hither and thither, seeking peace in their own works, or in experiences, or in proposals and resolutions, whereas the Lord is nigh them, and the simple act of faith will reveal him.

And saveth such as be of a contrite spirit. What a blessed token for good is a repentant, mourning heart!

Just when the sinner condemns himself, the Lord graciously absolves him. If we chasten our own spirits the Lord will spare us. He never breaks with the rod of judgment those who are already sore with the rod of conviction. Salvation is linked with contrition.

19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous: but the LORD delivereth him out of them all.

34:19 Many are the afflictions of the righteous. Thus are they made like Jesus their covenant Head. Scripture does not flatter us like the story books with the idea that goodness will secure us from trouble; on the contrary, we are again and again warned to expect tribulation while we are in this body. Our afflictions come from all points of the compass, and are as many and as tormenting as the mosquitoes of the tropics. It is the earthly portion of the elect to find thorns and briars growing in their pathway, yea, to lie down among them, finding their rest broken and disturbed by sorrow. BUT, blessed but, how it takes the sting out of the previous sentence!
But the Lord delivereth him out of them all. Through troops of ills Jehovah shall lead his redeemed scatheless and triumphant. There is an end to the believer's affliction, and a joyful end too. None of his trials can hurt so much as a hair of his head, neither can the furnace hold him for a moment after the Lord bids him come forth of it. Hard would be the lot of the righteous if this promise, like a bundle of camphire, were not bound up in it, but this sweetens all. The same Lord who sends the afflictions will also recall them when his design is accomplished, but he will never allow the fiercest of them to rend and devour his beloved.

20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken.

34:20 He keepeth all his bones: not one of them is broken. David had come off with kicks and cuffs, but no broken bones. No substantial injury occurs to the saints. Eternity will heal all their wounds. Their real self is safe; they may have flesh wounds, but no part of the essential fabric of their being shall be broken. This verse may refer to frequent providential protections vouchsafed to the saints; but as good men have had broken limbs as well as others, it cannot absolutely be applied to bodily preservations; but must, it seems to me, be spiritually applied to great injuries of soul, which are for ever prevented by divine love. Not a bone of the mystical body of Christ shall be broken, even as his corporeal frame was preserved intact. Divine love watches over every believer as it did over Jesus; no fatal injury shall happen to us, we shall neither be halt or maimed in the kingdom, but shall be presented after life's trials are over without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, being preserved in Christ Jesus, and kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation.

21 Evil shall slay the wicked: and they that hate the righteous shall be desolate.

34:21 Evil shall slay the wicked. Their adversaries shall be killing; they are not medicine, but poison. Ungodly men only need rope enough and they will hang themselves; their own iniquities shall be their punishment. Hell itself is but evil fully developed, torturing those in whom it dwells. Oh! Happy they who have fled to Jesus to find refuge from their former sins, such, and such only will escape.

And they that hate the righteous shall be desolate. They hated the best of company, and they shall have none; they shall be forsaken, despoiled, wretched, despairing. God makes the viper poison itself. What desolation of heart do the damned feel, and how richly have they deserved it!

22 The LORD redeemeth the soul of his servants: and none of them that trust in him shall be desolate.

34:22 The Lord redeemeth the soul of his servants—with price and with power, with blood and with water. All providential helps are a part of the redemption by power, hence the Lord is said still to redeem. All thus ransomed belong to him who bought them—this is the law of justice and the verdict of gratitude. Joyfully will we serve him who so graciously purchases us with his blood, and delivers us by his power.
And none of them that trust in him shall be desolate. Faith is the mark of the ransomed, and wherever it is seen, though in the least and meanest of the saints, it ensures eternal salvation. Believer, thou shalt never be deserted, forsaken, given up to ruin. God, even thy God, is thy guardian and friend, and bliss is thine.

Psalm 35
A Psalm of David

TITLE. A Psalm of David. Here is all we know concerning this Psalm, but internal evidence seems to fix the date of its composition in those troublous times when Saul hunted David over hill and dale, and when those who fawned upon the cruel king, slandered the innocent object of his wrath, or it may be referred to the unquiet days of frequent insurrections in David's old age. The whole Psalm is the appeal to heaven of a bold heart and a clear conscience, irritated beyond measure by oppression and malice. Beyond a doubt David's Lord may be seen here by the spiritual eye.

DIVISION. The most natural mode of dividing this Psalm is to note its triple character. Its complaint, prayer, and promise of praise are repeated with remarkable parallelism three times, even as our Lord in the Garden prayed three times, using the same words. The first portion occupies from Ps 35:1-10, the second from Ps 35:11-18, and the last from Ps 35:19-28; each section ending with a note of grateful song.

1 Plead my cause, O LORD, with them that strive with me: fight against them that fight against me.

2 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help.

35:1 Plead my cause, O Lord, with them that strive with me. Plead against those who plead against me; strive with my strivers; contend with my contenders. If they urge their suit in the law court, Lord, meet them there, and beat them at their own weapons. Every saint of God shall have this privilege: the accuser of the brethren shall be met by the Advocate of the saints.

Fight against them that fight against me. If my advisers try force as well as fraud, be a match for them; oppose thy strength to their strength. Jesus does this for all his beloved—for them he is both intercessor and champion; whatever aid they need they shall receive from him, and in whatever manner they are assaulted they shall be effectually defended. Let us not fail to leave our case into the Lord's hand. Vain is the help of man, but ever effectual is the interposition of heaven. What is here asked for as a boon, may be regarded as a promise to all the saints; in judgment they shall have a divine advocate, in warfare a divine protection.
3 Take hold of shield and buckler, and stand up for mine help. In vivid metaphor the Lord is pictured as coming forth armed for battle, and interposing himself between his servant and his enemies. The greater and lesser protections of providence may be here intended by the two defensive weapons, and by the Lord's standing up is meant his active and zealous preservation of his servant in the perilous hour. This poetic imagery shows how the psalmist realized the existence and power of God; and thought of him as a real and actual personage, truly working for his afflicted.

3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me: say unto my soul, I am thy salvation.

3 Draw out also the spear, and stop the way against them that persecute me. Before the enemy comes to close quarters the Lord can push them off as with a long spear. To stave off trouble is no mean act of lovingkindness. As when some valiant warrior with his lance blocks up a defile, and keeps back a host until his weaker brethren have made good their escape, so does the Lord often hold the believer's foes at bay until the good man had taken breath, or clean fled from his foes. He often gives the foes of Zion some other work to do, and so gives rest to his church. What a glorious idea is this of Jehovah blocking the way of persecutors, holding them at the pike's end, and giving time for the hunted saint to elude the pursuit!

Say unto my soul, I am thy salvation. Besides holding off the enemy, the Lord can also calm the mind of his servant by express assurance from his own mouth, that he is, and shall be, safe under the Almighty wing. An inward persuasion of security in God is of all things the most precious in the furnace of persecution. One word from the Lord quiets all our fears.

3 Let them be confounded and put to shame that seek after my soul. There is nothing malicious here, the slandered man simply craves for justice, and the petition is natural and justifiable. Guided by God's good spirit the psalmist foretells the everlasting confusion of all the haters of the righteous. Shameful disappointment shall be the portion of the enemies of the gospel, nor would the most tender hearted Christian have it otherwise: viewing sinners as men, we love them and seek their good, but regarding them as enemies of God, we cannot think of them with anything but detestation, and a loyal desire for the confusion of their devices. No loyal subject can wish well to rebels. Squeamish sentimentality may object to the strong language here used, but in their hearts all good men wish confusion to mischief makers.

5 Let them be as chaff before the wind: and let the angel of the LORD chase them.
6 Let their way be dark and slippery: and let the angel of the LORD persecute them.

**35:6. Let their way be dark and slippery.** What terrors are gathered Here! No light, no foothold, and a fierce avenger at their heels! What a doom is appointed for the enemies of God! They may rage and rave today, but how altered will be their plight ere long!

*And let the angel of the Lord persecute them.* He will follow them hot foot, as we say, never turning aside, but like a trusty pursuivant [attendant of a herald] serving the writ of vengeance upon them, and arresting them in the name of unflinching justice. Woe, woe, woe, unto those who touch the people of God; their destruction is both swift and sure.

7 For without cause have they hid for me their net *in a pit,* which without cause they have digged for my soul.

**35:7 In** this verse the psalmist brings forward the gravamen [Latin, *gravare,* to weigh down; *gravis,* heavy] of his charge against the servants of the devil.

*For without cause*—without my having injured, assailed, or provoked them; out of their own spontaneous malice

*have they hid for me their net in a pit,* even as men hunt for their game with cunning and deception. Innocent persons have often been ruined by traps set for them, into which they have fallen as guilelessly as beasts which stumble into concealed pits, and are taken as in a net. It is no little thing to be able to feel that the enmity which assails us is undeserved—not caused by any willful offence on our part. Twice does David assert in one verse that his adversaries plotted against him *without cause.* Net making and pit digging require time and labour, and both of these the wicked will expend cheerfully if they may but overthrow the people of God. Fair warfare belongs to honorable men, but the assailants of God's church prefer mean, ungenerous schemes, and so prove their nature and their origin. We must all of us be on our guard, for gins and pitfalls are still the favorite weapons of the powers of evil.

8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares; and let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.

**35:8 Let destruction come upon him at unawares.** This tremendous imprecation is frequently fulfilled. God's judgments are often sudden and signal. Death enters the persecutor's house without pausing to knock at the door. The thunderbolt of judgment leaps from its hiding place, and in one crash the wicked are broken for ever.

*And let his net that he hath hid catch himself: into that very destruction let him fall.* There is a *lex talionis* [law of retribution] with God which often works most wonderfully. Men set traps and catch their own fingers. They throw up stones, and they fall upon their own heads. How often
Satan outwits himself, and burns his fingers with his own coals! This will doubtless be one of the aggravations of hell, that men will torment themselves with what was once the fond devices of their rebellious minds. They curse and are cursed; they kick the pricks and tear themselves; they pour forth floods of fire, and it burns within and without.

9 And my soul shall be joyful in the LORD: it shall rejoice in his salvation.

35:9 And my soul shall be joyful in the Lord. Thus rescued, David ascribes all the honour to the Judge of the right; to his own valorous arm he offers no sacrifice of boasting. He turns away from his adversaries to his God, and finds a deep unbroken joy in Jehovah, and in that joy his spirit revels.

It shall rejoice in his salvation. We do not triumph in the destruction of others, but in the salvation given to us of God. Prayer heard should always suggest praise. It were well if we were more demonstrative in our holy rejoicing. We rob God by suppressing grateful emotions.

10 All my bones shall say, LORD, who is like unto thee, which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him?

35:10 As the tongue were not enough to bless God with, David makes every limb vocal—

All my bones shall say, Lord, who is like unto thee? His whole anatomy he would make resonant with gratitude. Those bones which were to have been broken by my enemies shall now praise God; every one of them shall bring its tribute, ascribing unrivalled excellence to Jehovah the Saviour of his people. Even if worn to skin and bone, yet my very skeleton shall magnify the Lord,

which deliverest the poor from him that is too strong for him, yea, the poor and the needy from him that spoileth him. God is the champion, the true knight errant of all oppressed ones. Where there is so much condescension, justice, kindness, power, and compassion, the loftiest songs should be rendered. Come, dear reader, have you not been delivered from sin, Satan, and death, and will not you bless the Redeemer? You were poor and weak, but in due time Christ sought you, and set you free.

O magnify the Lord today, and speak well of his name.

11 False witnesses did rise up; they laid to my charge things that I knew not.

35:11 False witnesses did rise up. This is the old device of the ungodly, and we must not wonder if it be used against us as against our Master. To please Saul, there were always men to be found mean enough to impeach David.

They laid to my charge things that I knew not. He had not even a though of sedition; he was loyal even to excess; yet they accused him of conspiring against the Lord's anointed. He was not
only innocent, but ignorant of the fault alleged. It is well when our hands are so clean that no trace of dirt is upon them.

12 They rewarded me evil for good to the spoiling of my soul.

35:12 They rewarded me evil for good. This is devilish; but men have learned the lesson well of the old Destroyer, and practice it most perfectly.

To the spoiling of my soul. They robbed him of comfort, and even would have taken his life had it not been for special rescues from the hand of God. The wicked would strip the righteous naked to their very soul: they know no pity. There are only such limits to human malice as God himself may see fit to place.

13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth: I humbled my soul with fasting; and my prayer returned into mine own bosom.

35:13 But as for me, when they were sick, my clothing was sackcloth. David had been a man of sympathy; he had mourned when Saul was in ill health, putting on the weeds of sorrow for him as though he were a near and dear friend. His heart went into mourning for his sick master.

Humbled my soul with fasting. He prayed for his enemy, and made the sick man's case his own, pleading and confessing as if his own personal sin had brought on the evil. This showed a noble spirit in David, and greatly aggravated the baseness of those who now so cruelly persecuted him.

And my prayer returned into mine own bosom. Prayer is never lost: if it bless not those for whom intercession is made, it shall bless the intercessors. Clouds do not always descend in showers upon the same spot from which the vapors ascended, but they come down somewhere; and even so do supplications in some place or other yield their showers of mercy. If our dove find no rest for the sole of her foot among our enemies, it shall fly into our bosoms and bring an olive branch of peace in its mouth. How sharp is the contrast all through this Psalm between the righteous and his enemies! We must be earnest to keep the line of demarcation broad and clear.

14 I behaved myself as though he had been my friend or brother: I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother.

35:14 I behaved myself as though he has been my friend or brother. I waited upon him assiduously, comforted him affectionately, and sympathized with him deeply. This may refer to those days when David played on the harp, and chased away the evil spirit from Saul.

I bowed down heavily, as one that mourneth for his mother. He bowed his head as mourners do. The strongest natural grief was such as he felt when they were in trouble. The mother usually
wins the deepest love, and her loss is most keenly felt: such was David's grief. How few professors in these days have such bowels of compassion; and yet under the gospel there should be far more tender love than under the law. Had we more hearty love to manhood, and care for its innumerable ills, we might be far more useful; certainly we should be infinitely more Christ like. "He prayeth best that loveth best."

15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced, and gathered themselves together: yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me, and I knew it not; they did tear me, and ceased not:

**35:15 But in mine adversity they rejoiced.** In my halting they were delighted. My lameness was sport to them. Danger was near, and they sang songs over my expected defeat. How glad are the wicked to see a good man limp! "Now, "say they, "he will meet with his downfall."

**And gathered themselves together,** like kites and vultures around a dying sheep. They found a common joy in my ruin, and a recreation in my sorrow, and therefore met together to keep the feast. They laid their heads together to devise, and their tongues to deceive.

**Yea, the abjects gathered themselves together against me.** Those who deserved horsewhipping, fellows the soles of whose feet were needing the bastinado, came together to plot, and held hole and corner meetings. Like curs around a sick lion, the mean wretches taunted and insulted one whose name had been their terror. The very cripples hobbled out to join the malicious crew. How unanimous are the powers of evil; how heartily do men serve the devil; and none decline his service because they are not endowed with great abilities!

**I knew it not.** It was all done behind my back. What a fluster the world may be in, and the cause of it all may not even know that he has given offence.

**They did tear me, and ceased not.** It is such dainty work to tear to pieces a good man's character, that when slanderers have their hand in they are loath to leave off. A pack of dogs tearing their prey is nothing compared with a set of malicious gossips mauling the reputation of a worthy man. That lovers of the gospel are not at this time rent and torn as in the old days of Mary, is to be attributed to the providence of God rather than to the gentleness of men.

16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.

**35:16 With hypocritical mockers in feasts, they gnashed upon me with their teeth.** Like professional buffoons who grin around the banquet to make sport, so they made a business of jeering at the good man; not, however, out of mirth, but from violent, insatiable hatred. Like cake scoffers, or men who will jeer for a bit of bread, these hireling miscreants persecuted David in order to get a bellyful for themselves from Saul's table: having moreover an inward grudge against the son of Jesse because he was a better man than themselves. Very forcibly might our Lord have used the words of these verses! Let us not forget to see the Despised and Rejected of men here painted to the life. Calvary and the ribald crew around the cross seem brought before our eyes.
17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on? Rescue my soul from their destructions, my darling from the lions.

35:17 Lord, how long wilt thou look on? Why be a mere spectator? Why so neglectful of thy servant? Art thou indifferent? Carest thou not that we perish? We may thus reason with the Lord. He permits us this familiarity. There is a time for our salvation, but to our impatience it often seems to be very slow in coming; yet wisdom has ordained the hour, and nothing shall delay it.

Rescue my soul from their destructions. From their many devices; their multiplied assaults, be pleased to set me free. ["My darling,"] my lovely, only, precious soul, do thou rescue ["from the lions."] His enemies were fierce, cunning, and strong as young lions; God only could deliver him from their jaws, to God he therefore addresses himself.

18 I will give thee thanks in the great congregation: I will praise thee among much people.
19 Let not them that are mine enemies wrongfully rejoice over me: neither let them wink with the eye that hate me without a cause.
20 For they speak not peace: but they devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land.

35:20 For they speak not peace. They love it not; how can they speak it? They are such troublers themselves that they cannot judge others to be peaceable. Out of the mouth comes what is in the heart. Riotous men charge others with sedition.

They devise deceitful matters against them that are quiet in the land. David would fain have been an orderly citizen, but they labored to make him a rebel. He could do nothing aright, all his dealings were misrepresented. This is an old trick of the enemy to brand good men with S.S. on their cheeks, as sowers of sedition, though they have ever been a harmless race, like sheep among wolves. When mischief is meant, mischief is soon made. Unscrupulous partisans could even charge Jesus with seeking to overturn Caesar, much more will they thus accuse his household. At this very hour, those who stand up for the crown rights of King Jesus are called enemies of the church, favorers of Popery, friends of Atheists, levelers, red republicans, and it were hard to say what besides.

21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me, and said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it.

35:21 Yea, they opened their mouth wide against me. As if they would swallow him. Uttering great lies which needed wide mouths. They set no bounds to their infamous charges, but poured out wholesale abuse, trusting that if all did not stick, some of it would.

And said, Aha, aha, our eye hath seen it. Glad to find out a fault or a misfortune, or to swear they had seen evil where there was none. Malice has but one eye; it is blind to all virtue in its
enemy. Eyes can generally see what hearts wish. A man with a mote in his eye sees a spot in the sun. How like a man is to an ass when he brays over another's misfortunes! How like to a devil when he laughs a hyena-laugh over a good man's slip! Malice is folly, and when it holds a festival its tones and gestures far exceed all the freaks and mummeries of the lord of misrule.

22 *This* thou hast seen, O LORD: keep not silence: O Lord, be not far from me.

35:22 *This thou hast seen, O Lord.* Here is comfort. Our heavenly Father knows all our sorrow. Omniscience is the saint's candle which never goes out. A father will not long endure to see his child abused. Shall not God avenge his own elect?

*Keep not silence.* Rebuke thine enemies and mine, O Lord. A word will do it. Clear my character, comfort my heart.

*O Lord, be not far from me.* Walk the furnace with me. Stand in the pillory at my side. The sweet presence of God is the divine cordial of the persecuted; his painful absence would be their seerpest misery.

23 Stir up thyself, and awake to my judgment, *even* unto my cause, my God and my Lord.

35:23 *Stir up thyself.* Be upon thy mettle. Prove that thou art no indifferent witness to all this infamy.

*Awake to my judgment.* Take the scepter and summon the great assize; vindicate justice, avenge oppression. Do not tarry as men do who sleep.

*Even unto my cause, my God and my Lord.* He claims a nearness to his God, he holds him with both hands; he leaves his case with the righteous Judge. He begs that the suit may be brought on, heard, tried, and verdict given. Well is it for a man when his conscience is so clear that he dares to make such an appeal.

24 Judge me, O LORD my God, according to thy righteousness; and let them not rejoice over me.

35:24 The appeal is here repeated; the plaintiff feels that the joy of his accusers will be short-lived as soon as impartial justice rules. The oppressors' wrong, the proud man's contumely, the fool's grimace—all, all will cease when the righteous Lord sits down upon the judgment seat.

25 Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.

35:25 *Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up.* Disappoint them of their prey when their mouths are ready to swallow it.
Saints are too dear a morsel for the powers of evil; God will not give his sheep over to the wolfish jaws of persecutors. Just when they are tuning their pipes to celebrate their victory, they shall be made to laugh on the other side of their mouths. They are all too sure, and too boastful; they reckon without their host: little do they dream of the end which will be put to their scheming. Their bird shall be flown, and they themselves shall be in the trap. The prayer of this text is a promise. Even before the lips of the wicked can frame a speech of exultation, they shall be disappointed; their heart-speech shall be forestalled, their wishes frustrated, their knavish tricks exposed.

26 Let them be ashamed and brought to confusion together that rejoice at mine hurt: let them be clothed with shame and dishonour that magnify themselves against me.

35:26 Here is the eternal result of all the laborious and crafty devices of the Lord's enemies. God will make little of them, though they "magnified themselves;" he will shame them for shaming his people, bring them to confusion for making confusion, pull off their fine apparel and give them a beggarly suit of dishonor, and turn all their rejoicing into weeping and wailing, and gnashing of teeth. Truly, the saints can afford to wait.

27 Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause: yea, let them say continually, Let the LORD be magnified, which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant.

35:27 "Let them shout for joy, and be glad, that favour my righteous cause." Even those who could not render him active aid, but in their hearts favored him, David would have the Lord reward most abundantly. Men of tender heart set great store by the good wishes and prayers of the Lord's people. Jesus also prizes those whose hearts are with his cause. The day is coming when shouts of victory shall be raised by all who are on Christ's side, for the battle will turn, and the foes of truth shall be routed.

"Yea, let them say continually, Let the Lord be magnified." He would have their gladness contributory to the divine glory; they are not to shout to David's praise, but for the honour of Jehovah. Such acclamations may fitly be continued throughout time and eternity.

"Which hath pleasure in the prosperity of his servant." They recognized David as the Lord's servant, and saw with pleasure the Lord's favour to him. We can have no nobler title than "servant of God," and no greater reward than for our Master to delight in our prosperity. What true prosperity may be we are not always best able to judge. We must leave that in Jesus' hand; he will not fail to rule all things for our highest good.

"For by his saints it stands confessed, That what he does is always best."

28 And my tongue shall speak of thy righteousness and of thy praise all the day long.
Unceasing praise is here vowed to the just and gracious God. From morning till evening the grateful tongue would talk and sing, and glorify the Lord. O for such a resolve carried out by us all!

Psalm 36

To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David the servant of the Lord

TITLE. To the Chief Musician, He who had the leadership of the Temple service was charged with the use of this song in public worship. What is everybody's business is never done. It was well to have one person specially to attend to the service of song in the house of the Lord. Of David the servant of the Lord. This would seem to indicate that the Psalm peculiarly befits one who esteems it an honour to be called Jehovah's servant. It is THE SONG OF HAPPY SERVICE; such a one as all may join in who bear the easy yoke of Jesus. The wicked are
contrasted with the righteous, and the great Lord of devout men is heartily extolled; thus obedience to so good a Master is indirectly insisted on, and rebellion against him is plainly condemned.

**DIVISION.** From Ps 36:1-4 David describes the rebellious: in Ps 36:5-9 he extols the various attributes of the Lord; in Ps 36:10-11 he addresses the Lord in prayer, and in the last verse his faith sees in vision the overthrow of all the workers of iniquity.

1 The transgression of the wicked saith within my heart, *that there is* no fear of God before his eyes.

### 36:1 The transgression of the wicked. His daring and wanton sin; his breaking the bounds of law and justice.

*Saith within my heart, that there is no fear of God before his eyes.* Men's sins have a voice to godly ears. They are the outer index of an inner evil. It is clear that men who dare to sin constantly and presumptuously cannot respect the great Judge of all. Despite the professions of unrighteous men, when we see their unhallowed actions our heart is driven to the conclusion that they have no religion whatever. Unholiness is clear evidence of ungodliness. Wickedness is the fruit of an atheistic root. This may be made clear to the candid head by cogent reasoning, but it is clear already and intuitively to the pious heart. If God be everywhere, and I fear him, how can I dare to break his laws in his very presence? He must be a desperate traitor who will rebel in the monarch's own halls. Whatever theoretical opinions bad men may avow, they can only be classed with atheists, since they are such practically. Those eyes which have no fear of God before them now, shall have the terrors of hell before them for ever.

2 For he flattereth himself in his own eyes, until his iniquity be found to be hateful.

### 36:2 For. Here is the argument to prove the proposition laid down in the former verse. David here runs over the process of reasoning by which he had become convinced that wicked men have no proper idea of God or respect for him. God fearing men see their sins and bewail them, where the reverse is the case we may be sure there is no fear of God.

*He flattereth himself in his own eyes.* He counts himself a fine fellow, worthy of great respect. He quiets his conscience, and so deceives his own judgment as to reckon himself a pattern of excellence; if not for morality, yet for having sense enough not to be enslaved by rules which are bonds to others. He is the free thinker, the man of strong mind, the hater of cant, the philosopher; and the servants of God are, in his esteem, mean spirited and narrow minded. Of all flatteries this is the most absurd and dangerous. Even the silliest bird will not set traps for itself; the most pettifogging attorney will not cheat himself. To smooth over one's own conduct to one's conscience (which is the meaning of the Hebrew) is to smooth one's own path to hell. The descent to eternal ruin is easy enough, without making a glissade of it, as self flatters do.
Until his iniquity be found to be hateful. At length he is found out and detested, despite his self-conceit. Rottenness smells sooner or later too strong to be concealed. There is a time when the leprosy cannot be hidden. At last the old house can no longer be propped up, and falls about the tenant's ears: so there is a limit to a man's selfgradation; he is found out amid general scorn, and can no longer keep up the farce which he played so well. If this happens not in this life, the hand of death will let light in upon the coveted character, and expose the sinner to shame and contempt. The self-flattering process plainly proves the atheism of sinners, since the bare reflection that God sees them would render such self flatteries extremely difficult, if not impossible. Belief in God, like light reveals, and then our sin and evil are perceived; but wicked men are in the dark, for they cannot see what is so clearly within them and around them that it stares them in the face.

3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit: he hath left off to be wise, and to do good.

36:3 The words of his mouth are iniquity and deceit. This pair of hell dogs generally hunt together, and what one does not catch the other will; if iniquity cannot win by oppression, deceit will gain by chicanery. When the heart is so corrupt as to flatter itself, the tongue follows suit. The open sepulchre of the throat reveals the foulness of the inner nature. God fearing men make a conscience of their words, and if they sin through infirmity they do not invent excuses, or go about to boast of their wickedness: but because wicked men think little of evil and artful speeches, we may be clear that God rules not in their souls. The original by declaring that the words of the wicked are falsehood and deceit is peculiarly strong; as if they were not only false in quality, but actual falseness itself.

He hath left off to be wise, and to do good. From the good way he has altogether gone aside. Men who fear God proceed from strength to strength in the right path, but godless men soon forsake what little good they once knew. How could men apostatize if they had respect unto the supreme Judge? Is it not because they grow more and more forgetful of God, that in due season they relinquish even that hypocritical reverence of him which in former days they maintained in order to flatter their souls?

4 He deviseth mischief [vanity] upon his bed; he setteth himself in a way that is not good; he abhorreth not evil.

36:4 He deviseth mischief upon his bed. His place of rest becomes the place for plotting. His bed is a hot bed for poisonous weeds. God fearing men meditate upon God and his service; but when men turn all their thoughts and inventive faculties towards evil, their godlessness is proved to a demonstration. He hath the devil for his bedfellow who lies abed and schemes how to sin. God is far from him.

He setteth himself in a way that is not good. When he gets up he resolutely and persistently pursues the mischief which he planned. The worst of ways he prefers for his walking, for he has taught his heart to love filthiness, having accustomed himself to revel in it in imagination.
He abhorreth not evil. So far from having a contempt and abhorrence for evil, he even rejoices in it, and patronizes it. He never hates a wrong thing because it is wrong, but he meditates on it, defends it, and practices it. What a portrait of a graceless man these few verses afford us! His jauntness of conscience, his licentiousness of speech, his intentness upon wrong doing, his deliberate and continued preference of iniquity, and withal his atheistic heart, are all photographed to the life. Lord, save us from being such.

5 Thy mercy, O LORD, is in the heavens; and thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds.

36: 5-9 From the baseness of the wicked the psalmist turns his contemplation to the glory of God. Contrasts are impressive.

36:5 Thy mercy, O Lord, is in the heavens. Like the ethereal blue, it encompasses the whole earth, smiling upon universal nature, acting as a canopy for all the creatures of earth, surmounting the loftiest peaks of human provocations, and rising high above the mists of mortal transgression. Clear sky is evermore above, and mercy calmly smiles above the din and smoke of this poor world. Darkness and clouds are but of earth's lower atmospheres: the heavens are evermore serene, and bright with innumerable stars. Divine mercy abides in its vastness of expanse, and matchless patience, all unaltered by the rebellions of man. When we can measure the heavens, then shall we bound the mercy of the Lord. Towards his own servants especially, in the salvation of the Lord Jesus, he has displayed grace higher than the heaven of heavens, and wider than the universe. O that there atheist could but see this, how earnestly would he long to become a servant of Jehovah!

Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds. Far, far above all comprehension is the truth and faithfulness of God. He never fails, nor forgets, nor falters, nor forfeits his word. Afflictions are like clouds, but the divine truthfulness is all around them. While we are under the cloud we are in the region of God's faithfulness; when we mount above it we shall not need such an assurance. To every word of threat, or promise, prophecy or covenant, the Lord has exactly adhered, for he is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent.

6 Thy righteousness is like the great mountains; thy judgments are a great deep: O LORD, thou preservest man and beast.

36:6 Thy righteousness is like the great mountains. Firm and unmoved, lofty and sublime. As winds and hurricanes shake not an Alp, so the righteousness of God is never in any degree affected by circumstances; he is always just. Who can bribe the Judge of all the earth, or who can, by threatening, compel him to pervert judgment? Not even to save his elect would the Lord suffer his righteousness to be set aside. No awe inspired by mountain scenery can equal that which fills the soul when it beholds the Son of God slain as a victim to vindicate the justice of the Inflexible Lawgiver. Right across the path of every unholy man who dreams of heaven stand the towering Andes of divine righteousness, which no unregenerate sinner can ever climb. Among great mountains lie slumbering avalanches, and there the young lightnings try their
callow wings until the storm rushes down amain from the awful peaks; so against the great day of the Lord's wrath the Lord has laid up in the mountains of his righteousness dreadful ammunition of war with which to overwhelm his adversaries.

**Thy judgments are a great deep.** God's dealings with men are not to be fathomed by every boaster who demands to see a why for every wherefore. The Lord is not to be questioned by us as to why this and why that. He has reasons, but he does not choose to submit them to our foolish consideration. Far and wide, terrible and irresistible like the ocean are the providential dispensations of God: at one time they appear as peaceful as the unrippled sea of glass; at another tossed with tempest and whirlwind, but evermore most glorious and full of mystery. Who shall discover the springs of the sea? He who shall do this may hope to comprehend the providence of the Eternal.

"Undiscovered sea!
Into thy dark, unknown,
mysterious caves,
And secret haunts unfathomably deep,
Beneath all visible retired, none went
And came again to tell the wonders there."

Yet as the deep mirrors the sky, so the mercy of the Lord is to be seen reflected in all the arrangements of his government on earth, and over the profound depth the covenant rainbow casts its arch of comfort, for the Lord is faithful in all that he doeth.

**O Lord, thou preservest man and beast.** All the myriads of creatures, rational and irrational, are fed by Jehovah's hand. The countless beasts, the innumerable birds, the inconceivable abundance of fishes, the all but infinite armies of insects, all owe their continuance of life to the unceasing outgoings of the divine power. What a view of God this presents to us! What a debased creature must he be who sees no trace of such a God, and feels no awe of him!

7 How excellent [precious] is thy lovingkindness, O God! Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings.

**36:7 How excellent is thy lovingkindness, O God.** Here we enter into the Holy of Holies. Benevolence, and mercy, and justice, are everywhere, but the excellence of that mercy only those have known whose faith has lifted the veil and passed into the brighter presence of the Lord; these behold the excellency of the Lord's mercy. The word translated excellent may be rendered "precious;" no gem or pearl can ever equal in value a sense of the Lord's love. This is such a brilliant as angels wear. King's regalia are a beggardly collection of worthless pebbles when compared with the tender mercies of Jehovah. David could not estimate it, and therefore, after putting a note of admiration, he left our hearts and imagination, and, better still, our experience, to fill up the rest. He writes how excellent! Because he cannot tell us the half of it.
Therefore the children of men put their trust under the shadow of thy wings. The best of reasons for the best of courses. The figure is very beautiful. The Lord overshadows his people as a hen protects her brood, or as an eagle covers its young; and we as the little ones run under the blessed shelter and feel at rest. To cower down under the wings of God is so sweet. Although the enemy be far too strong for us, we have no fear, for we nestle under the Lord's wing. O that more of Adam's race knew the excellency of the heavenly shelter! It made Jesus weep to see how they refused it: our tears may well lament the same evil.

8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house; and thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures.

36:8 They shall be abundantly satisfied with the fatness of thy house. Those who learn to put their trust in God shall be received into his house, and shall share in the provision laid up therein. The dwelling place of the Lord is not confined to any place, and hence reside where we may, we may regard our dwelling, if we be believers, as one room in the Lord's great house; and we shall, both in providence and grace, find a soul contenting store supplied to us as the result of living by faith in nearness to the Lord. If we regard the assembly of the saints as being peculiarly the house of God, believers shall, indeed, find in sacred worship the richest spiritual food. Happy is the soul that can drink in the sumptuous dainties of the gospel—nothing can so completely fill the soul.

And thou shalt make them drink of the river of thy pleasures. As they have the fruits of Eden to feed on, so shall they have the river of Paradise to drink from. God's everlasting love bears to us a constant and ample comfort, of which grace makes us to drink by faith, and then our pleasure is of the richest kind. The Lord not only brings us to this river, but makes us drink: herein we see the condescension of divine love. Heaven will, in the fullest sense, fulfill these words; but they who trust in the Lord enjoy the antepast even here. The happiness given to the faithful is that of God himself; purified spirits joy with the same joy as the Lord himself. "That my joy may be in you, that your joy may be full."

9 For with thee is the fountain of life: in thy light shall we see light.

36:9 For with thee is the fountain of life. This verse is made of simple words, but like the first chapter of John's Gospel, it is very deep. From the Lord, as from an independent self-sufficient spring, all creature life proceeds, by him is sustained, through him alone can it be perfected. Life is in the creature, but the fountain of it is only in the Creator. Of spiritual life, this is true in the most emphatic sense; "it is the Spirit that quickeneth," "and we are dead, and our life is hid with Christ in God."

In thy light shall we see light. Light is the glory of life. Life in the dark is misery, and rather death than life. The Lord alone can give natural, intellectual, and spiritual life; he alone can make life bright and lustrous. In spiritual things the knowledge of God sheds a light on all other
subjects. We need no candle to see the sun, we see it by its own radiance, and then see everything else by the same luster. We never see Jesus by the light of self, but self in the light of Jesus. No inward intelligence of ours leads us to receive the Spirit's light, but the rather, it often helps to quench the sacred beam; purely and only by his own illumination, the Holy Ghost lights up the dark recesses of our heart's ungodliness. Vain are they who look to learning and human wit, one ray from the throne of God is better than the noonday splendor of created wisdom. Lord, give me the sun, and let those who will delight in the wax candles of superstition and the phosphorescence of corrupt philosophy. Faith derives both light and life from God, and hence she neither dies nor darkens.

10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee; and thy righteousness to the upright in heart.

36:10 O continue thy lovingkindness unto them that know thee. We ask no more than a continuance of the past mercy. Lord, extend this grace of thine to all the days of all who have been taught to know thy faithful love, thy tenderness, thine immutability and omnipotence. As they have been taught of the Lord to know the Lord, so go on to instruct them and perfect them. This prayer is the heart of the believer asking precisely that which the heart of his God is prepared to grant. It is well when the petition is but the reflection of the promise.

And thy righteousness to the upright in heart. As thou hast never failed the righteous, so abide thou in the same manner their defender and avenger. The worst thing to be feared by the man of God is to be forsaken of heaven, hence this prayer; but the fear is groundless, hence the peace which faith brings to us. Learn from this verse, that although a continuance of mercy is guaranteed in the covenant, we are yet to make it a matter of prayer. For this good thing will the Lord be enquired of.

11 Let not the foot of pride come against me, and let not the hand of the wicked remove me.

36:11 Let not the foot of pride come against me. The general prayer is here turned into a particular and personal one for himself. Pride is the devil's sin. Good men may well be afraid of proud men, for the serpent's seed will never cease to bite the heel of the godly. Fain would proud scoffers spurn the saints or trample them under foot: against their malice prayer lifts up her voice. No foot shall come upon us, no hand shall prevail against us, while Jehovah is on our side.

Let not the hand of the wicked remove me. Suffer me not to be driven about as a fugitive, nor torn from my place like an uprooted tree. Violence with both hand and foot, with means fair and means foul, strove to overthrow the psalmist, but he resorts to his great Patron, and sings a song of triumph in anticipation of the defeat of his foes.

12 There are the workers of iniquity fallen: they are cast down, and shall not be able to rise.
36:12 *There are the workers of iniquity fallen.* Faith sees them scattered on the plain. There! before our very eyes sin, death, and hell, lie prostrate. Behold the vanquished foes!

*They are cast down.* Providence and grace have dashed them from their vantage ground. Jesus has already thrown all the foes of his people upon their faces, and in due time all sinners shall find it so.

*And shall not be able to rise.* The defeat of the ungodly and of the powers of evil is final, total, irretrievable. Glory be to God, however high the powers of darkness may carry it at this present, the time hastens on when God shall defend the right, and give to evil such a fall as shall for ever crush the hopes of hell;

while those who trust in the Lord shall eternally praise him and rejoice in his holy name.
Psalm 37

A Psalm of David

TITLE. Of David. There is but this word to denote the authorship; whether it was a song or a meditation we are not told. It was written by David in his old age Ps 37:25, and is the more valuable as the record of so varied an experience.

SUBJECT. The great riddle of the prosperity of the wicked and the affliction of the righteous, which has perplexed so many, is here dealt with in the light of the future; and fretfulness and repining are most impressively forbidden. It is a Psalm in which the Lord hushes most sweetly the too common repinings of his people, and calms their minds as to his present dealings with his own chosen flock, and the wolves by whom they are surrounded. It contains eight great precepts, is twice illustrated by autobiographical statements, and abounds in remarkable contrasts.

DIVISION. The Psalm can scarcely be divided into considerable sections. It resembles a chapter of the book of Proverbs, most of the verses being complete in themselves. It is an alphabetical Psalm: in somewhat broken order, the first letters of the verses follow the Hebrew alphabet. This may have been not only a poetical invention, but a help to memory. The reader is requested to read the Psalm through without comment before he turns to our exposition.

1 Fret not thyself because of evildoers, neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity.

37:1 The Psalm opens with the first precept. It is alas! Too common for believers in their hours of adversity to think themselves harshly dealt with when they see persons utterly destitute of religion and honesty, rejoicing in abundant prosperity. Much needed is the command,

Fret not thyself because of evildoers. To fret is to worry, to have the heartburn, to fume, to become vexed. Nature is very apt to kindle a fire of jealousy when it sees lawbreakers riding on horses, and obedient subjects walking in the mire: it is a lesson learned only in the school of grace, when one comes to view the most paradoxical providences with the devout complacency
of one who is sure that the Lord is righteous in all his acts. It seems hard to carnal judgments that the best meat should go to the dogs, while loving children pine for want of it.

_Neither be thou envious against the workers of iniquity._ The same advice under another shape. When one is poor, despised, and in deep trial, our old Adam naturally becomes envious of the rich and great; and when we are conscious that we have been more righteous than they, the devil is sure to be at hand with blasphemous reasonings. Stormy weather may curdle even the cream of humanity. Evil men instead of being envied, are to be viewed with horror and aversion; yet their loaded tables, and gilded trappings, are too apt to fascinate our poor half opened eyes. Who envies the fat bullock the ribbons and garlands which decorate him as he is led to the shambles? Yet the case is a parallel one; for ungodly rich men are but as beasts fattened for the slaughter.

2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass, and wither as the green herb.

_37:2 For they shall soon be cut down like the grass._ The scythe of death is sharpening. Green grows the grass, but quick comes the scythe. The destruction of the ungodly will be speedy, sudden, sure, overwhelming, irretrievable. The grass cannot resist or escape the mower.

_And wither as the green herb._ The beauty of the herb dries up at once in the heat of the sun, and so all the glory of the wicked shall disappear at the hour of death. Death kills the ungodly man like grass, and wrath withers him like hay; he dies, and his name rots. How complete an end is made of the man whose boasts had no end! Is it worth while to waste ourselves in fretting about the insect of an hour, an ephemeral which in the same day is born and dies? Within believers there is a living and incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever; why should they envy mere flesh, and the glory of it, which are but as grass, and the flower thereof?

3 Trust in the LORD, and do good; _so shalt thou dwell in the land, and verily thou shalt be fed._

_37:3 Trust in the Lord._ Here is the second precept, and one appropriate to the occasion. Faith cures fretting. Sight is cross-eyed, and views things only as they seem, hence her envy: faith has clearer optics to behold things as they really are, hence her peace.

_And do good._ True faith is actively obedient. Doing good is a fine remedy for fretting. There is a joy in holy activity which drives away the rust of discontent.

_So shalt thou dwell in the land._ In _"the land"_ which floweth with milk and honey; the Canaan of the covenant. Thou shalt not wander in the wilderness of murmuring, but abide in the promised land of content and rest. _"We which have believed do enter into rest."_ Very much of our outward depends upon the inward: where there is heaven in the heart there will be heaven in the house.

_And verily thou shalt be fed, or shepherded._ To integrity and faith necessaries are guaranteed. The good shepherd will exercise his pastoral care over all believers. In truth they shall be fed, and fed on truth. The promise of God shall be their perpetual banquet; they shall neither lack in spirituals nor in temporals. Some read this as an exhortation, _"Feed on truth; "_ certainly this is good cheer, and banishes for ever the hungry heart burnings of envy.
4 Delight thyself also in the LORD; and he shall give thee the desires of thine heart.

37:4 There is an ascent in this third precept. He who was first bidden not to fret, was then commanded actively to trust, and now is told with holy desire to delight in God.

Delight thyself also in the Lord. Make Jehovah the joy and rejoicing of thy spirit. Bad men delight in carnal objects; do not envy them if they are allowed to take their fill in such vain idols; look thou to thy better delight, and fill thyself to the full with thy more sublime portion. In a certain sense imitate the wicked; they delight in their portion—take care to delight in yours, and so far from envying you will pity them. There is no room for fretting if we remember that God is ours, but there is every incentive to sacred enjoyment of the most elevated and ecstatic kind. Every name, attribute, word, or deed of Jehovah, should be delightful to us, and in meditating thereon our soul should be as glad as is the epicure who feeds delicately with a profound relish for his dainties.

And he shall give thee the desires of thine heart. A pleasant duty is here rewarded with another pleasure. Men who delight in God desire or ask for nothing but what will please God; hence it is safe to give them carte blanche. Their will is subdued to God's will, and now they may have what they will. Our innermost desires are here meant, not our casual wishes; there are many things which nature might desire which grace would never permit us to ask for; these deep, prayerful, asking desires are those to which the promise is made.

5 Commit thy way unto the LORD; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass.

37:5 Commit thy way unto the Lord. Roll the whole burden of life upon the Lord. Leave with Jehovah not thy present fretfulness merely, but all thy cares; in fact, submit the whole tenor of thy way to him. Cast away anxiety, resign thy will, submit thy judgment, leave all with the God of all. What a medicine is this for expelling envy! What a high attainment does this fourth precept indicate! How blessed must he be who lives every day in obedience to it!

Trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. Our destiny shall be joyfully accomplished if we confidently entrust all to our Lord. We may serenely sing—

"Thy way, not mine, O Lord,
   However dark it be;
O lead me by thine own right hand,
Choose out the path for me."

"Smooth let it be or rough,
   It will be still the best;
Winding or straight, it matters not,
   It leads me to thy rest."

"I dare not choose my lot,
The ploughman sows and harrows, and then leaves the harvest to God. What can he do else? He cannot cover the heavens with clouds, or command the rain, or bring forth the sun or create the dew. He does well to leave the whole matter with God; and so to all of us it is truest wisdom, having obediently trusted in God, to leave results in his hands, and expect a blessed issue.

6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday.

37:6 And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light. In the matter of personal reputation we may especially be content to be quiet, and leave our vindication with the Judge of all the earth. The more we fret in this case the worse for us. Our strength is to sit still. The Lord will clear the slandered. If we look to his honour, he will see to ours. It is wonderful how, when faith learns to endure calumny with composure, the filth does not defile her, but falls off like snowballs from a wall of granite. Even in the worst cases, where a good name is for awhile darkened, Providence will send a clearing like the dawning light, which shall increase until the man once censured shall be universally admired.

And thy judgment as the noonday. No shade of reproach shall remain. The man shall be in his meridian of splendor. The darkness of his sorrow and his ill repute shall both flee away.

7 Rest in the LORD, and wait patiently for him: fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.

37:7 Rest in the Lord. This fifth is a most divine precept, and requires much grace to carry it out. To hush the spirit, to be silent before the Lord, to wait in holy patience the time for clearing up the difficulties of Providence—that is what every gracious heart should aim at. "Aaron held his peace:" "I opened not my mouth, because thou didst it." A silent tongue in many cases not only shows a wise head, but a holy heart.

And wait patiently for him. Time is nothing to him; let it be nothing to thee. God is worth waiting for. "He never is before his time, he never is too late." In a story we wait for the end to
clear up the plot; we ought not to prejudge the great drama of life, but stay till the closing scene, and see to what a finis the whole arrives.

*Fret not thyself because of him who prospereth in his way, because of the man who bringeth wicked devices to pass.* There is no good, but much evil, in worrying your heart about the present success of graceless plotters: be not enticed into premature judgments—they dishonor God, they weary yourself. Determine, let the wicked succeed as they may, that you will treat the matter with indifference, and never allow a question to be raised as to the righteousness and goodness of the Lord. What if wicked devices succeed and your own plans are defeated! there is more of the love of God in your defeats than in the successes of the wicked.

8 Cease from anger, and forsake wrath: fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.

**37:8 Cease from anger and forsake wrath.** Especially anger against the arrangements of Providence, and jealousies of the temporary pleasures of those who are so soon to be banished from all comfort. Anger anywhere is madness, here it is aggravate insanity. Yet since anger will try to keep us company, we must resolutely forsake it.

*Fret not thyself in any wise to do evil.* By no reasonings and under no circumstances be led into such a course.

Fretfulness lies upon the verge of great sin. Many who have indulged a murmuring disposition have at last come to sin, in order to gain their fancied rights. Beware of carping at others, study to be yourself found in the right way; and as you would dread outward sin, tremble at inward repining.

9 For evildoers shall be cut off: but those that wait upon the LORD, they shall inherit the earth.

**37:9 For evil doers shall be cut off.** Their death shall be a penal judgment; not a gentle removal to a better state, but an execution in which the axe of justice will be used.

*But those that wait upon the Lord*—those who in patient faith expect their portion in another life—

they shall inherit the earth. Even in this life they have the most of real enjoyment, and in the ages to come theirs shall be the glory and the triumph. Passion, according to Bunyan's parable, has his good things first, and they are soon over; Patience has his good things last, and they last for ever.

10 For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be.

**37:10 For yet a little while, and the wicked shall not be.** When bad men reach to greatness, the judgments of God frequently sweep them away; their riches melt, their power decays, their happiness turns to wretchedness; they themselves cease any longer to be numbered with the living.
The shortness of life makes us see that the glitter of the wicked great is not true gold. O wherefore, tried believer, dost thou envy one who in a little while will lie lower than the dust? Yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. His house shall be empty, his chair of office vacant, his estate without an owner; he shall be utterly blotted out, perhaps cut off by his own debauchery, or brought to a deathbed of penury by his own extravagance. Gone like a passing cloud—forgotten as a dream—where are his boastings and hectoring, and where the pomp which made poor mortals think the sinner blest?

11 But the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace.

37:11 But the meek shall inherit the earth. Above all others they shall enjoy life. Even if they suffer, their consolations shall overtop their tribulations. By inheriting the land is meant obtaining covenant privileges and the salvation of God. Such as are truly humble shall take their lot with the rest of the heirs of grace, to whom all good things come by a sacred birthright.

And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace. Peace they love and peace they shall have. If they find not abundance of gold, abundance of peace will serve their turn far better. Others find joy in strife, and thence arises their misery in due time, but peace leads on to peace, and the more a man loves it the more shall it come to him. In the halcyon period of the latter days, when universal peace shall make glad the earth, the full prophetic meaning of words like these will be made plain.

12 The wicked plotteth against the just, and gnasheth upon him with his teeth.

37:12-15

Here is the portrait of a proud oppressor armed to the teeth.

37:12 The wicked plotteth against the just. Why can he not let the good man alone? Because there is enmity between the serpent's seed and the seed of the woman. Why not attack him fairly? Why plot and scheme? Because it is according to the serpent's nature to be very subtle. Plain sailing does not suit those who are on board of "The Apollyon."

And gnashed upon him with his teeth. The wicked show by their gestures what they would do if they could; if they cannot gnaw they will gnash; if they may not bite they will at least bark. This is precisely what the graceless world did with "that just One, "the Prince of Peace. Yet he took no vengeance upon them, but like a silent lamb received injuries in patience.

13 The Lord shall laugh at him: for he seeth that his day is coming.

37:13 The Lord shall laugh at him. The godly man needs not trouble himself, but leave well-deserved vengeance to be dealt out by the Lord, who will utterly deride the malice of the good man's enemies. Let the proud scorner gnash his teeth and foam at the mouth; he has one to deal with who will look down upon him and his ravings with serene contempt.
For he seeth that his day is coming. The evil man does not see how close his destruction is upon his heels; he boasts of crushing others when the foot of justice is already uplifted to trample him as the mire of the streets. Sinners, in the hand of an angry God, and yet plotting against his children! Poor souls, thus to run upon the point of Jehovah’s spear.

14 The wicked have drawn out the sword, and have bent their bow, to cast down the poor and needy, and to slay such as be of upright conversation.

37:14 The wicked have drawn out the sword. They hold their weapon out of its sheath, and watch for a time to use it.

And have bent their bow. One weapon is not enough, they carry another ready for action. They carry so strong a bow that they have trodden upon it to bend it—they will lose nothing for want of force or readiness.

To cast down the poor and needy. These are their game, the objects of their accursed malice. These cowards attack not their equals, but seek out those excellent ones who, from the gentleness of their spirits and the poverty of their estates, are not able to defend themselves. Note how our meek and lowly Lord was beset by cruel foes, armed with all manner of weapons to slay him.

And to slay such as be of upright conversation. Nothing short of the overthrow and death of the just will content the wicked. The sincere and straightforward are hated by the crafty schemers who delight in unrighteousness. See, then, the enemies of the godly doubly armed, and learn how true were our Lord's words, "If ye were of the world, the world would love its own: but because ye are not of this world, but I have chosen you our of the world, therefore the world hateth you."

15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart, and their bows shall be broken.

37:15 Their sword shall enter into their own heart. Like Haman they shall be hanged upon the gallows built by themselves for Mordecai. Hundreds of times has this been the case. Saul, who sought to slay David, fell on his own sword; and the bow, his favorite weapon, the use of which he taught the children of Israel, was not able to deliver him on Gilboa.

And their bows shall be broken. Their inventions of evil shall be rendered useless. Malice outwits itself. It drinks the poisoned cup which it mixed for another, and burns itself in the fire which it kindled for its neighbor. Why need we fret at the prosperity of the wicked when they are so industriously ruining themselves while they fancy they are injuring the saints? The next nine verses mainly describe the character and blessedness of the godly, and the light is brought out with a few black touches descriptive of the wicked and their doom.

16 A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked.
37:16 A little that a righteous man hath is better than the riches of many wicked. This is a fine proverb. The little of one good man is contrasted with the riches of many wicked, and so the expression is rendered the more forcible. There is more happiness in the godly dinner of herbs than in the stalled ox of profane rioters. In the original there is an allusion to the noise of a multitude, as if to hint at the turmoil and hurly burly of riotous wealth, and to contrast it with the quiet of the humbler portion of the godly. We would sooner hunger with John than feast with Herod; better feed on scant fare with the prophets in Obadiah’s cave than riot with the priests of Baal. A man’s happiness consists not in the heaps of gold which he has in store. Content finds multum in parvo [much in less], while for a wicked heart the whole world is too little.

17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken: but the LORD upholdeth the righteous.

37:17 For the arms of the wicked shall be broken. Their power to do mischief shall be effectually taken away, for the arms which they lifted up against God shall be crushed even to the bone. God often makes implacable men incapable men. What is a more contemptible sight than toothless malice, armless malevolence!

But the Lord upholdeth the righteous. Their cause and course shall be safe, for they are in good keeping. The sword of two edges smites the wicked and defends the just.

18 The LORD knoweth the days of the upright: and their inheritance shall be for ever.

13:18 The Lord knoweth the days of the upright. His foreknowledge made him laugh at the proud, but in the case of the upright he sees a brighter future, and treats them as heirs of salvation. Ever is this our comfort, that all events are known to our God, and that nothing in our future can take him at unawares. No arrow can pierce us by accident, no danger smite us by stealth; neither in time nor eternity can any unforeseen ill occur to us. Futurity shall be but a continual development of the good things which the Lord has laid up in store for us.

And their inheritance shall be for ever. Their inheritance fades not away. It is entailed, so that none cam deprive them of it, and preserved, so that none shall destroy it. Eternity is the peculiar attribute of the believer’s portion: what they have on earth is safe enough, but what they shall have in heaven is theirs without end.

19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time: and in the days of famine they shall be satisfied.

37:19 They shall not be ashamed in the evil time. Calamities will come, but deliverances will come also. As the righteous never reckoned upon immunity from trouble, they will not be disappointed when they are called to take their share of it, but the rather they will cast themselves anew upon their God, and prove again his faithfulness and love.

God is not a friend in the sunshine only, he is a friend indeed and a friend in need.
And in the days of famine they shall be satisfied. Their barrel of meal and cruse of oil shall last out the day of distress, and if ravens do not bring them bread and meat, the supply of their needs shall come in some other way, for their bread shall be given them. Our Lord stayed himself upon this when he hungered in the wilderness, and by faith he repelled the tempter; we too may be enabled not to fret ourselves in any wise to do evil by the same consideration. If God's providence is our inheritance, we need not worry about the price of wheat. Mildew, and smut, and bent, are all in the Lord's hands. Unbelief cannot save a single ear from being blasted, but faith, if it do not preserve the crop, can do what is better, namely, preserve our joy in the Lord.

20 But the wicked shall perish, and the enemies of the LORD shall be as the fat of lambs: they shall consume; into smoke shall they consume away.

37:20 But the wicked shall perish. Whatever phantom light may mock their present, their future is black with dark, substantial night. Judgment has been given against them, they are but reserved for execution. Let them flaunt their scarlet and fine linen, and fare sumptuously every day; the sword of Damocles is above their heads, and if their wits were a little more awake, their mirth would turn to misery.

The enemies of the Lord shall be as the fat of lambs. As the sacrificial fat was all consumed upon the altar, so shall the ungodly utterly vanish from the place of their honour and pride. How can it be otherwise? If the stubble dares to contend with the flame, to what end can it hope to come?

They shall consume. As dry wood, as heaps of leaves, as burning coals, they shall soon be gone, and gone altogether, for

“into smoke shall they consume away”. Sic transit gloria mundi. A puff is the end of all their puffing. Their fuming ends in smoke. They made themselves fat, and perished in their own grease. Consumers of the good they tried to be, and consumed they shall be.

21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again: but the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth.

37:21 The wicked borroweth, and payeth not again. Partly because he will not, but mainly because he cannot. Want follows upon waste, and debt remains undischarged. Often are the wicked thus impoverished in this life. Their wanton extravagance brings them down to the usurer's door and to the bankrupt's suit.

But the righteous sheweth mercy, and giveth, Mercy has given to him, and therefore he gives in mercy. He is generous and prosperous. He is not a borrower, but a giver. So far as the good man can do it, he lends an ear to the requests of need, and instead of being impoverished by what he imparts, he grows richer, and is able to do more. He does not give to encourage idleness, but in real mercy, which supposes real need.
The text suggests to us how much better it generally is to give than to lend. Generally, lending comes to giving in the end, and it is as well to anticipate the fact, and by a little liberality forestall the inevitable. If these two sentences describe the wicked and the righteous, the writer of these lines has reason to know that in and about the city of London the wicked are very numerous.

22 For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth; and they that be cursed of him shall be cut off.

For such as be blessed of him shall inherit the earth. God's benediction is true wealth after all. True happiness, such as the covenant secures to all the chosen of heaven, lies wrapped up in the divine favour.

And they that be cursed of him shall be cut off. His frown is death; nay, more, It is hell.

23 The steps of a good man are ordered by the LORD: and he delighteth in his way.

The steps of a good man are ordered by the Lord. All his course of life is graciously ordained, and in lovingkindness all is fixed, settled, and maintained. No reckless fate, no fickle chance rules us; our every step is the subject of divine decree.

He delighteth in his way. As parents are pleased with the tottering footsteps of their babes. All that concerns a saint is interesting to his heavenly Father. God loves to view the holy strivings of a soul pressing forward to the skies. In the trials and the joys of the faithful, Jesus has fellowship with them, and delights to be their sympathizing companion.

24 Though he fall, he shall not be utterly cast down: for the LORD upholdeth him with his hand.

Though he fall. Disasters and reverses may lay him low; he may, like Job, be stripped of everything; like Joseph, be put in prison; like Jonah, be cast into the deep.

He shall not be utterly cast down. He shall not be altogether prostrate. He shall be brought on his knees, but not on his face; or, if laid prone for a moment, he shall be up again ere long. No saint shall fall finally or fatally. Sorrow may bring us to the earth, and death may bring us to the grave, but lower we cannot sink, and out of the lowest of all we shall arise to the highest of all.

For the Lord upholdeth him with his hand. Condescendingly, with his own hand, God upholds his saints; he does not leave them to mere delegated agency, he affords personal assistance. Even in our falls the Lord gives a measure of sustaining. Where grace does not keep from going down, it shall save from keeping down. Job had double wealth at last, Joseph reigned over Egypt, Jonah was safely landed. It is not that the saints are strong, or wise, or meritorious, that therefore they rise after every
25 I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.

37:25 This was David's observation, *I have been young, and now am old; yet have I not seen the righteous forsaken, nor his seed begging bread.* It is not my observation just as it stands, for I have relieved the children of undoubtedly good men, who have appealed to me as common mendicants. But this does not cast a doubt upon the observation of David. He lived under a dispensation more outward, and more of this world than the present rule of personal faith. Never are the righteous forsaken; that is a rule without exception. Seldom indeed do their seed beg bread; and although it does occasionally occur, through dissipation, idleness, or some other causes on the part of their sons, yet doubtless it is so rare a thing that there are many alive who never saw it. Go into the union house and see how few are the children of godly parents; enter the gaol [jail] and see how much rarer still is the case. Poor minister's sons often become rich. I am not old, but I have seen families of the poor godly become rich, and have seen the Lord reward the faithfulness of the father in the success of the son, so that I have often thought that the best way to endow one's seed with wealth is to become poor for Christ's sake. In the Indian mission of the *"Baptist Missionary Society,"* *this is abundantly illustrated.*

26 *He is* ever merciful, and lendeth; and his seed is blessed.

37:26 *He is ever merciful, and lendeth.* The righteous are constantly under generous impulses; they do not prosper through parsimony, but through bounty. Like the bounteous giver of all good, of whom they are the beloved sons, they delight in doing good.

How stingy covetous professors can hope for salvation is a marvel to those who read such verses as this in the *Bible.*

*And his seed is blessed.* God pays back with interest in the next generation. Where the children of the righteous are not godly, there must be some reason for it in parental neglect, or some other guilty cause. The friend of the father is the friend of the family. The God of Abraham is the God of Isaac and of Jacob.

27 Depart from evil, and do good; and dwell for evermore.

37:27-29

Here we have the seventh precept, which takes a negative and positive form, and is the quintessence of the entire Psalm

37:27 *Depart from evil, and do good.* We must not envy the doers of evil, but depart altogether from their spirit and example. As Lot left Sodom without casting a look behind, so must we leave sin. No truce or parley is to be held with sin, we must turn away from it without hesitation, and set ourselves practically to work in the opposite direction. He who neglects to do good will soon fall into evil.

*And dwell for evermore.* Obtain an abiding and quiet inheritance. Short lived are the gains and pleasures of evil, but eternal are the rewards of grace.
28 For the LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off.

37:28 For the Lord loveth judgment. The awarding of honour to whom honour is due is God's delight, especially when the upright man has been traduced by his fellow men. It must be a divine pleasure to right wrongs, and to defeat the machinations of the unjust. The great Arbiter of human destinies is sure to deal out righteous measure both to rich and poor, to good and evil, for such judgment is his delight.

And forsaketh not his saints. This would not be right, and, therefore, shall never be done. God is as faithful to the objects of his love as he is just towards all mankind.

They are preserved for ever. By covenant engagements their security is fixed, and by suretyship fulfillments that safety is accomplished; come what may, the saints are preserved in Christ Jesus, and because he lives, they shall live also. A king will not lose his jewels, nor will Jehovah lose his people. As the manna in the golden pot, which else had melted, was preserved in the Ark of the Covenant beneath the mercyseat, so shall the faithful be preserved in the covenant by the power of Jesus their propitiation.

But the seed of the wicked shall be cut off. Like the house of Jeroboam and Ahab, of which not a dog was left. Honour and wealth ill gotten seldom reach the third generation; the curse grows ripe before many years have passed, and falls upon the evil house. Among the legacies of wicked men the surest entail is a judgment on their family.

29 The righteous shall inherit the land, and dwell therein for ever.

37:29 The righteous shall inherit the land. As heirs with Jesus Christ, the Canaan above, which is the antitype of "the land," shall be theirs with all covenant blessing.

And dwell therein for ever. Tenures differ, but none can match the holding which believers have of heaven. Paradise is theirs for ever by inheritance, and they shall live for ever to enjoy it. Who would not be a saint on such terms? Who would fret concerning the fleeting treasures of the godless?

30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom, and his tongue talketh of judgment.

37:30 The mouth of the righteous speaketh wisdom. Where the whole Psalm is dedicated to a description of the different fates of the just and the wicked, it was meet to give a test by which they could be known. A man's tongue is no ill index of his character. The mouth betrays the heart. Good men, as a rule, speak that which is to edifying, sound speech, religious conversation, consistent with the divine illumination which they have received. Righteousness is wisdom in action, hence all good men are practically wise men, and well may the speech be wise.
His tongue talketh of judgment. He advocates justice, gives an honest verdict on things and men, and he foretells that God's judgments will come upon the wicked, as in the former days. His talk is neither foolish nor ribald, neither vapid nor profane. Our conversation is of far more consequence than some men imagine.

31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide.

37:31 The law of his God is in his heart; none of his steps shall slide. The best thing in the best place, producing the best results. Well might the man's talk be so admirable when his heart was so well stored. To love holiness, to have the motives and desires sanctified, to be in one's inmost nature obedient to the Lord—this is the surest method of making the whole run of our life efficient for its great ends, and even for securing the details of it, our steps from any serious mistake. To keep the even tenor of one's way, in such times as these, is given only to those whose hearts are sound towards God, who can, as in the text, call God their God. Policy slips and trips, it twists and tacks, and after all is worsted in the long run, but sincerity plods on its plain pathway and reaches the goal.

32 The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him.

37:32 The wicked watcheth the righteous, and seeketh to slay him. If it were not for the laws of the land, we should soon see a massacre of the righteous. Jesus was watched by his enemies, who were thirsting for his blood: his disciples must not look for favour where their Master found hatred and death.

33 The LORD will not leave him in his hand, nor condemn him when he is judged.

37:33 The Lord will not leave him in his hand. God often appears to deliver his servants, and when he does not do so in this life as to their bodies, he gives their souls such joy and peace that they triumphantly rise beyond their tormentors' power. We may be in the enemy's hand for awhile, as Job was, but we cannot be left there.

Nor condemn him when he is judged. Time shall reverse the verdict of haste, or else eternity shall clear away the condemnation of time. In due season just men will be justified. Temporary injustices are tolerated, in the order of Providence, for purposes most wise; but the bitter shall not always be called sweet, nor light for ever be traduced as darkness; the right shall appear in due season; the fictitious and pretentious shall be unmasked, and the real and true shall be revealed. If we have done faithfully, we may appeal from the petty sessions of society to the solemn assize of the great day.

34 Wait on the LORD, and keep his way, and he shall exalt thee to inherit the land: when the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.
37:34 **Wait on the Lord.** We have here the eighth precept, and it is a lofty eminence to attain to. Tarry the Lord's leisure. Wait in obedience as a servant, in hope as an heir, in expectation as a believer. This little word "wait" is easy to say, but hard to carry out, yet faith must do it.

**And keep his way.** Continue in the narrow path; let no haste for riches or ease cause unholy action. Let your motto be, "On, on, on."

Never flag, or dream of turning aside. "He that endureth to the end, the same shall be saved."

**And he shall exalt thee to inherit the land.** Thou shalt have all of earthly good which is really good, and of heavenly good there shall be no stint. Exaltation shall be the lot of the excellent.

**When the wicked are cut off, thou shalt see it.** A sight how terrible and how instructive! What a rebuke for fretfulness! What an incentive to gratitude! My soul, be still, as you foresee the end, the awful end of the Lord's enemies.

35 I have seen the wicked in great power, and spreading himself like a green bay tree.

37:35 A second time David turns to his diary, and this time in poetic imagery tells us of what he had observed. It were well if we too took notes of divine providences.

**I have seen the wicked in great power.** The man was terrible to others, ruling with much authority, and carrying things with a high hand, a Caesar in might, a Croesus in wealth.

**And spreading himself like a green bay tree.** Adding house to house and field to field, rising higher and higher in the state. He seemed to be ever verdant like a laurel, he grew as a tree in its own native soil, from which it had never been transplanted. No particular tree is here meant, a spreading beech or a wide expanding oak may serve us to realize the picture; it is a thing of earth, whose roots are in the clay; its honors are fading leaves; and though its shadow dwarfs the plants which are condemned to pine beneath it, yet it is itself a dying thing as the feller's axe shall prove. In the noble tree, which claims to be king of the forest, behold the grandeur of the ungodly today; wait awhile and wonder at the change, as the timber is carried away, and the very root torn from the ground.

36 Yet he passed away, and, lo, he was not: yea, I sought him, but he could not be found.

37:36 **Yet he passed away.** Tree and man both gone, the son of man as surely as the child of the forest. What clean sweeps death makes!

**And, lo, he was not.** To the surprise of all men the great man was gone, his estates sold, his business bankrupt, his house alienated, his name forgotten, and all in a few months.
Yea, I sought him, but he could not be found. Moved by curiosity, if we enquire for the ungodly, they have left no trace; like birds of ill omen none desire to remember them. Some of the humblest of the godly are immortalized, their names are imperishably fragrant in the church, while of the ablest of infidels and blasphemers hardly their names are remembered beyond a few years. Men who were in everybody's mouths but yesterday are forgotten tomorrow, for only virtue is immortal.

37 Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace.

37:37 Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright. After having watched with surprise the downfall of the wicked, give your attention to the sincerely godly man, and observe the blessed contrast. Good men are men of mark, and are worth our study. Upright men are marvels of grace, and worth beholding.

For the end of that man is peace. The man of peace has an end of peace. Peace without end comes in the end to the man of God. His way may be rough, but it leads home. With believers it may rain in the morning, thunder at midday, and pour in torrents in the afternoon, but it must clear up ere the sun goes down. War may last till our last hour, but then we shall hear the last of it.

38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together: the end of the wicked shall be cut off.

37:38 But the transgressors shall be destroyed together. A common ruin awaits those who are joined in common rebellion.

The end of the wicked shall be cut off. Their time shall be shortened, their happiness shall be ended, their hopes for ever blasted, their execution hastened on. Their present is shortened by their sins; they shall not live out half their days. They have no future worth having, while the righteous count their future as their true heritage.

39 But the salvation of the righteous is of the LORD: he is their strength in the time of trouble.

37:39 But the salvation of the righteous is of the Lord. Sound doctrine this. The very marrow of the gospel of free grace. By salvation is meant deliverance of every kind; not only the salvation which finally lands us in glory, but all the minor rescues of the way; these are all to be ascribed unto the Lord, and to him alone. Let him have glory from those to whom he grants salvation.

He is their strength in the time of trouble. While trouble overthrows the wicked, it only drives the righteous to their strong Helper, who rejoices to uphold them.
40 And the LORD shall help them, and deliver them: he shall deliver them from the wicked, and save them, because they trust in him.

37:40 And the Lord shall help them. In all future time Jehovah will stand up for his chosen. Our Great Ally will bring up his forces in the heat of the battle.

He shall deliver them from the wicked. As he rescued Daniel from the lions, so will he preserve his beloved from their enemies; they need not therefore fret, nor be discouraged.

And save them, because they trust in him. Faith shall ensure they safety of the elect. It is the mark of the sheep by which they shall be separated from the goats. Not their merit, but their believing, shall distinguish them. Who would not try the walk of faith? Whoever truly believes in God will be no longer fretful against the apparent irregularities of this present life, but will rest assured that what is mysterious is

nevertheless just, and what seems hard, is, beyond a doubt, ordered in mercy. So the Psalm ends with a note which is the death knell of the unhallowed disquietude with which the Psalm commenced. Happy they who can thus sing themselves out of ill frames into gracious conditions.
Psalm 38

A Psalm of David, to bring to remembrance

TITLE. A Psalm of David, to bring remembrance. David felt as if he had been forgotten of his God, and, therefore, he recounted his sorrows and cried mightily for help under them. The same title is given to Psalm 70, where in like manner the psalmist pours out his complaint before the Lord. It would be foolish to make a guess as to the point in David's history when this was written; it may be a commemoration of his own sickness and endurance of cruelty; it may, on the other hand, have been composed by him for the use of sick and slandered saints, without special reference to himself.

DIVISION. The Psalm opens with a prayer, Ps 38:1; continues in a long complaint, Ps 38:2-8; pauses to dart an eye to heaven, Ps 38:9; proceeds with a second tale of sorrow, Ps 38:10-14; interjects another word of hopeful address to God, Ps 38:15; a third time pours out a flood of griefs, Ps 38:16-20; and then closes as it opened, with renewed petitioning, Ps 38:21-22.

1 O LORD, rebuke me not in thy wrath: neither chasten me in thy hot displeasure.

2 For thine arrows stick fast in me, and thy hand presseth me sore.
applied by the Spirit to the conviction of the soul of sin, wounds deeply and rankles long; it is an arrow not lightly to be brushed out by careless mirthfulness, or to be extracted by the flattering hand of self righteousness. The Lord knows how to shoot so that his bolts not only strike but stick. He can make convictions sink into the innermost spirit like arrows driven in up to the head. It seems strange that the Lord should shoot at his own beloved ones, but in truth he shoots at their sins rather than them, and those who feel his sin killing shafts in this life, shall not be slain with his hot thunderbolts in the next world. And thy hand presseth me sore. The Lord had come to close dealings with him, and pressed him down with the weight of his hand, so that he had no rest or strength left. By these two expressions we are taught that conviction of sin is a piercing and a pressing thing, sharp and sore, smarting and crushing. Those who know by experience "the terrors of the Lord, "will be best able to vouch for the accuracy of such descriptions; they are true to the life.

3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger; neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin.

38:3 There is no soundness in my flesh because of thine anger. Mental depression tells upon the bodily frame; it is enough to create and foster every disease, and is in itself the most painful of all diseases. Soul sickness tells upon the entire frame; it weakens the body, and then bodily weakness reacts upon the mind. One drop of divine anger sets the whole of our blood boiling with misery.

Neither is there any rest in my bones because of my sin. Deeper still the malady penetrates, till the bones, the more solid parts of the system, are affected. No soundness and no rest are two sad deficiencies; yet these are both consciously gone from every awakened conscience until Jesus gives relief. God's anger is a fire that dries up the very marrow; it searches the secret parts of the belly. A man who has pain in his bones tosses to and fro in search of rest, but he finds none; he becomes worn out with agony, and in so many cases a sense of sin creates in the conscience a horrible unrest which cannot be exceeded in anguish except by hell itself.

4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head: as an heavy burden they are too heavy for me.

38:4 For mine iniquities are gone over mine head. Like waves of the deep sea; like black mire in which a man utterly sinks. Above my hopes, my strength, my life itself, my sin rises in its terror. Unawakened sinners think their sins to be mere shallows, but when conscience is aroused they find out the depth of iniquity.

As an heavy burden they are too heavy for me. It is well when sin is an intolerable load, and when the remembrance of our sins burdens us beyond endurance. This verse is the genuine cry of one who feels himself undone by his transgressions and as yet sees not the great sacrifice.

5 My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness.

38:5 My wounds stink and are corrupt because of my foolishness. Apply this to the body, and it pictures a sad condition of disease; but read it of the soul, and it is to the life. Conscience lays on stripe after stripe till the swelling becomes a wound and suppurates, and the corruption within
grows offensive. What a horrible creature man appears to be in his own consciousness when his
depravity and vileness are fully opened up by the law of God, applied by the Holy Spirit! It is
ture there are diseases which are correctly described in this verse, when in the worst stage; but
we prefer to receive the expressions as instructively figurative, since the words “because of my
foolishness” point rather
at a moral than a physical malady. Some of us know what it is to stink in our own nostrils, so as
to loathe ourselves. Even the most filthy diseases cannot be so foul as sin. No ulcers, cancers, or
putrefying sores, can match the unutterable vileness and pollution of iniquity. Our own
perceptions have made us feel this. We write what we do know, and testify what we have seen;
and even now we shudder to think that so much of evil should lie festering deep within our
nature.

6 I am troubled; I am bowed down greatly; I go mourning all the day long.

38:6 I am troubled. I am wearied with distress, writhing with pain, in sore travail on account of
sin revealed within me.

I am bowed down greatly. I am brought very low, grievously weakened and frightfully
depressed. Nothing so pulls a man down from all loftiness as a sense of sin and of divine wrath
concerning it.

I go mourning all the day long. The mourner's soul sorrow knew no intermission, even when he
went about such business as he was able to attend, he went forth like a mourner who goes to the
tomb, and his words and manners were like the lamentations of those who follow the corpse. The
whole verse may be the more clearly understood if we picture the Oriental mourner, covered
with sackcloth and ashes, bowed as in a heap, sitting amid squalor and dirt, performing
contortions and writhings expressive of his grief; such is the awakened sinner, not in outward
guise, but in very deed.

7 For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease: and there is no soundness in
my flesh.

38:7. For my loins are filled with a loathsome disease—a hot, dry, parching disorder, probably
accompanied by loathsome ulcers. Spiritually, the fire burns within when the evil of the heart is
laid bare. Note the emphatic words, the evil is loathsome, it is in the loins, its seat is deep and
vital—the man is filled with it. Those who have passed through the time of conviction
understand all this.

And there is no soundness in my flesh. This he had said before, and thus the Holy Spirit brings
humiliating truth again and again to our memories, tears away every ground of glorying, and
makes us know that in us, that is, in our flesh, there dwelleth no good thing.

8 I am feeble and sore broken: I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my
heart.
I am feeble. The original is "benumbed, "or frozen, such strange incongruities and contradictions meet in a distracted mind and a sick body—it appears to itself to be alternately parched with heat and pinched with cold. Like souls in the Popish fabled Purgatory, tossed from burning furnaces into thick ice, so tormented hearts rush from one extreme to the other, with equal torture in each. A heat of fear, a chill of horror, a flaming desire, a horrible insensibility—by these successive miseries a convinced sinner is brought to death's door.

And sore broken. Crushed as in a mill, pounded as in a mortar. The body of the sick man appears to be all out of joint and smashed into a palpitating pulp, and the soul of the desponding is in an equally wretched case; as a victim crushed under the car of Juggernaut, such is a soul over whose conscience the wheels of divine wrath have forced their awful way.

I have roared by reason of the disquietness of my heart. Deep and hoarse is the voice of sorrow, and often inarticulate and terrible. The heart learns groanings which cannot be uttered, and the voice fails to tone and tune itself to human speech. When our prayers appear to be rather animal than spiritual, they are none the less prevalent with the pitiful Father of mercy. He hears the murmur of the heart and the roaring of the soul because of sin, and in due time he comes to relieve his afflicted. The more closely the preceding portrait of an awakened soul is studied in the light of experience, the more will its striking accuracy appear. It cannot be a description of merely outward disorder, graphic as it might then be; it has a depth and pathos in it which only the soul's mysterious and awful agony can fully match.

9 Lord, all my desire is before thee; and my groaning is not hid from thee.

And my groaning is not hid from thee. "He takes the meaning of our tears, The language of our groans." Sorrow and anguish hide themselves from the observation of man, but God spies them out. None more lonely than the broken hearted sinner, yet hath he the Lord for his companion.

10 My heart panteth, my strength faileth me: as for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me.

My heart panteth. Here begins another tale of woe. He was so dreadfully pained by the unkindness of friends, that his heart was in a state of perpetual palpitation. Sharp and quick were the beatings of his heart; he was like a hunted roe, filled with distressing alarms, and ready to fly out of itself with fear. The soul seeks sympathy in sorrow, and if it finds none, its sorrowful heart throbs are incessant.
My strength faileth me. What with disease and distraction, he was weakened and ready to expire. A sense of sin, and a clear perception that none can help us in our distress, are enough to bring a man to death's door, especially if there be none to speak a gentle word, and point the broken spirit to the beloved Physician.

As for the light of mine eyes, it also is gone from me. Sweet light departed from his bodily eye, and consolation vanished from his soul. Those who were the very light of his eyes forsook him. Hope, the last lamp of night, was ready to go out. What a plight was the poor convict in! Yet here, we have some of us been; and here should we have perished had not infinite mercy interposed. Now, as we remember the lovingkindness of the Lord, we see how good it was for us to find our own strength fail us, since it drove us to the strong for strength; and how right it was that our light should all be quenched, that the Lord's light should be all in all to us.

11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore; and my kinsmen stand afar off.

38:11 My lovers and my friends stand aloof from my sore. Whatever affection they might pretend to, they kept out of his company, lest as a sinking vessel often draws down boats with it, they might be made to suffer through his calamities. It is very hard when those who should be the first to come to the rescue, are the first to desert us. In times of deep soul trouble, even the most affectionate friends cannot enter into the sufferer's case; let them be as anxious as they may, the sores of a tender conscience they cannot bind up. Oh, the loneliness of a soul passing under the convincing power of the Holy Ghost!

And my kinsmen stand afar off. As the women and others of our Lord's acquaintances from afar gazed on his cross, so a soul wounded for sin sees all mankind as distant spectators, and in the whole crowd finds none to aid. Often relatives hinder seekers after Jesus, oftener still they look on with unconcern, seldom enough do they endeavor to lead the penitent to Jesus.

12 They also that seek after my life lay snares for me: and they that seek my hurt speak mischievous things, and imagine deceits all the day long.

38:12 They also that seek after my life lay snares for me. Alas! For us when in addition to inward grieves, we are beset by outward temptations. David's foes endeavored basely to ensnare him. If fair means would not overthrow him, foul should be tried. This snaring business is a vile one, the devil's own poachers alone condescend to it; but prayer to God will deliver us, for the craft of the entire college of tempters can be met and overcome by those who are led of the Spirit.

They that seek my hurt speak mischievous things. Lies and slanders poured from them like water from the town pump. Their tongue was for ever going, and their heart fore ever inventing lies.

And imagine deceit all the day long. They were never done, their forge was going from morning to night. When they could not act they talked, and when they could not talk they imagined, and schemed, and plotted. Restless is the activity of malice. Bad men never have enough of evil.
They compass sea and land to injure a saint; no labour is too severe, no cost too great if they may utterly destroy the innocent. Our comfort is, that our glorious Head knows the pertinacious malignity of our foes, and will in due season put an end to it, as he even now sets a bound about it.

13 But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth.

38:13 But I, as a deaf man, heard not. Well and bravely was this done. A sacred indifference to the slanders of malevolence is true courage and wise policy. It is well to be as if we could not hear or see. Perhaps the psalmist means that this deafness on his part was unavoidable because he had no power to answer the taunts of the cruel, but felt much of the truth of their ungenerous accusations.

And I was as a dumb man that openeth not his mouth. David was bravely silent, and herein was eminently typical of our Lord Jesus, whose marvelous silence before Pilate was far more eloquent than words. To abstain from self defense is often most difficult, and frequently most wise.

14 Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs.

38:14 Thus I was as a man that heareth not, and in whose mouth are no reproofs. He repeats the fact of his silence that we may note it, admire it, and imitate it. We have an advocate, and need not therefore plead our own cause. The Lord will rebuke our foes, for vengeance belongs to him; we may therefore wait patiently and find it our strength to sit still.

15 For in thee, O LORD, do I hope: thou wilt hear, O Lord my God.

38:15 David committed himself to him that judgeth righteously, and so in patience was able to possess his soul. Hope in God's intervention, and belief in the power of prayer, are two most blessed stays to the soul in time of adversity. Turning right away from the creature to the sovereign Lord of all, and to him as our own covenant God, we shall find the richest solace in waiting upon him. Reputation like a fair pearl may be cast into the mire, but in due time when the Lord makes up his jewels, the godly character shall shine with unclouded splendor. Rest then, O slandered one, and let not thy soul be tossed to and fro with anxiety.

16 For I said, Hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me: when my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me.

38:16 For I said, hear me, lest otherwise they should rejoice over me. The good man was not insensible, he dreaded the sharp stings of taunting malice; he feared lest either by his conduct or his condition, he should give occasion to the wicked to triumph. This fear his earnest desires used as an argument in prayer as well as an incentive to prayer.
When my foot slippeth, they magnify themselves against me. The least flaw in a saint is sure to be noticed; long before it comes to a fall the enemy begins to rail, the merest trip of the foot sets all the dogs of hell barking. How careful ought we to be, and how importunate in prayer for upholding grace! We do not wish, like blind Samson, to make sport for our enemies; let us then beware of the treacherous Delilah of sin, by whose means our eyes may soon be put out.

17 For I am ready to halt, and my sorrow is continually before me.

38:17 For I am ready to halt. Like one who limps, or a person with tottering footsteps, in danger of falling. How well this befits us all. "Let him that thinketh he standeth, take heed lest he fall." How small a thing will lame a Christian, how insignificant a stumbling block may cause him to fall! This passage refers to a weakness caused by pain and sorrow; the sufferer was ready to give up in despair; he was so depressed in spirit that he stumbled at a straw. Some of us painfully know what it is to be like dry tinder for the sparks of sorrow; ready to halt, ready to mourn, and sigh and cry upon any occasion, and for any cause.

And my sorrow is continually before me. He did not need to look out of window to find sorrow, he felt it within, and groaned under a body of sin which was an increasing plague to him. Deep conviction continues to irritate the conscience; it will not endure a patched up peace; but cries war to the knife till the enmity is slain. Until the Holy Ghost applies the precious blood of Jesus, a truly awakened sinner is covered with raw wounds which cannot be healed nor bound up, nor mollified with ointment.

18 For I will declare mine iniquity; I will be sorry for my sin.

38:18 For I will declare mine iniquity. The slander of his enemies he repudiates, but the accusations of his conscience he admits. Open confession is good for the soul. When sorrow leads to hearty and penitent acknowledgment of sin it is blessed sorrow, a thing to thank God for most devoutly.

I will be sorry for my sin. My confession will be salted with briny tears. It is well not so much to bewail our sorrows as to denounce the sins which lie at the root of them. To be sorry for sin is no atonement for it, but it is the right spirit in which to repair to Jesus, who is the reconciliation and the Saviour. A man is near to the end of his trouble when he comes to an end with his sins.

19 But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong: and they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied.

38:19 But mine enemies are lively, and they are strong. However weak and dying the righteous man may be, the evils which oppose him are sure to be lively enough. Neither the world, the flesh, nor the devil, are ever afflicted with debility or inertness; this trinity if evils labour with mighty unremitting energy to overthrow us. If the devil were sick, or our lusts feeble, or Madame Bubble infirm, we might slacken prayer; but with such lively and vigorous enemies we must not cease to cry mightily unto our God.

And they that hate me wrongfully are multiplied. Here is another misery, that as we are no match for our enemies in strength, so also they outnumber us as a hundred to one. Wrong as the
cause of evil is, it is a popular one. More and more the kingdom of darkness grows. Oh, misery of miseries, that we see the professed friends of Jesus forsaking him, and the enemies of his cross and his cause mustering in increasing bands!

20 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries; because I follow the thing that good is.

38:20 They also that render evil for good are mine adversaries. Such would a wise man wish his enemies to be. Why should we seek to be beloved of such graceless souls? It is a fine plea against our enemies when we can without injustice declare them to be like the devil, whose nature it is to render evil for good.

Because I follow the thing that good is. If men hate us for this reason we may rejoice to bear it: their wrath is the unconscious homage which vice renders to virtue. This verse is not inconsistent with the writer's previous confession; we may feel equally guilty before God, and yet be entirely innocent of any wrong to our fellow men. It is one sin to acknowledge the truth, quite another thing to submit to be belied. The Lord may smite me justly, and yet I may be able to say to my fellow man, "Why smitest thou me?"

21 Forsake me not, O LORD: O my God, be not far from me.

38:21 Forsake me not, O Lord. Now is the time I need thee most. When sickness, slander, and sin, all beset a saint, he requires the especial aid of heaven, and he shall have it too. He is afraid of nothing while God is with him, and God is with him evermore.

Be not far from me. Withhold not the light of thy near and dear love. Reveal thyself to me. Stand at my side. Let me feel that though friendless besides, I have a most gracious and all sufficient friend in thee.

22 Make haste to help me, O Lord my salvation.

38:22 Make haste to help me. Delay would prove destruction. The poor pleader was far gone and ready to expire, only speedy help would serve his turn. See how sorrow quickens the importunity of prayer! Here is one of the sweet results of affliction, it gives new life to our pleading, and drives us with eagerness to our God.

O Lord my salvation. Not my Saviour only, but my salvation. He who has the Lord on his side has salvation in present possession. Faith foresees the blessed issue of all her pleas, and in this verse begins to ascribe to God the glory of the expected mercy. We shall not be left of the Lord. His grace will succor us most opportunely, and in heaven we shall see that we had not one trial too many, or one pang too severe. A sense of sin shall melt into the joy of salvation; grief shall lead on to gratitude, and gratitude to joy unspeakable and full of glory.
Psalm 39

To the chief Musician, even to Jeduthun, A Psalm of David

TITLE. To the Chief Musician, even to Jeduthun. Jeduthun's name, which signifies praising or celebrating, was a most appropriate one for a leader in sacred psalmody. He was one of those ordained by the King's order "for song in the house of the Lord with cymbals, psaltery, and harps" 1Ch 15:6, and his children after him appear to have remained in the same hallowed service, even so late as the days of Nehemiah. To have a name and a place in Zion is no small honour, and to hold this place by a long entail of grace is an unspeakable blessing. O that our household may never lack a man to stand before the Lord God of Israel to do him service. David left this somewhat sorrowful ode in Jeduthun's hands because he thought him most fit to set it to music, or because he would distribute the sacred honour of song among all the musicians who in their turn presided in the choir. A Psalm of David. Such as his checkered life would be sure to produce; fit effusions for a man so tempted, so strong in his passions, and yet so firm in faith.

DIVISION. The psalmist, bowed down with sickness and sorrow, is burdened with unbelieving thoughts, which he resolves to stifle, lest any evil should come from their expression, Ps 39:1-2. But silence creates an insupportable grief, which at last demands utterance, and obtains it in the prayer of Ps 39:3-6, which is almost a complaint and a sigh for death, or at best a very desponding picture of human life. From Ps 39:7-13 the tone is more submissive, and the recognition of the divine hand more distinct; the cloud has evidently passed, and the mourner's heart is relieved.

1 I said, I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue: I will keep my mouth with a bridle, while the wicked is before me.

39:1 I said. I steadily resolved and registered a determination. In his great perplexity his greatest fear was lest he should sin; and, therefore, he cast about for the most likely method for avoiding it, and he determined to be silent. It is right excellent when a man can strengthen himself in a good course by the remembrance of a well and wisely formed resolve. "What I have written I
have written," or what I have spoken I will perform, may prove a good strengthener to a man in a fixed course of right.

**I will take heed to my ways.** To avoid sin one had need be very circumspect, and keep one's actions as with a guard or garrison. Unguarded ways are generally unholy ones. Needless is another word for graceless. In times of sickness or other trouble we must watch against the sins peculiar to such trials, especially against murmuring and repining. *That I sin not with my tongue.* Tongue sins are great sins; like sparks of fire ill words spread, and do great damage. If believers utter hard words of God in times of depression, the ungodly will take them up and use them as a justification for their sinful courses. If a man's own children rail at him, no wonder if his enemies' mouths are full of abuse. Our tongue always wants watching, for it is restive as an ill broken horse; but especially must we hold it in when the sharp cuts of the Lord's rod excite it to rebel.

**I will keep my mouth with a bridle,** or more accurately, with a muzzle. The original does not so much mean a bridle to check the tongue as a muzzle to stop it altogether. David was not quite so wise as our translation would make him; if he had resolved to be very guarded in his speech, it would have been altogether commendable; but when he went so far as to condemn himself to entire silence, "even from good," there must have been at least a little sullenness in his soul. In trying to avoid one fault, he fell into another. To use the tongue against God is a sin of commission, but not to use it at all involves an evident sin of omission. Commendable virtues may be followed so eagerly that we may fall into vices; to avoid Scylla [a Greek sea monster] we run into Charybdis [another sea monster literally meaning "sucker down." Charybdis was believed to be the daughter of Poseidon the sea god and Gaia the earth goddess, who swallowed huge amounts of water three times a day and then belched them back out again. She took the form as a whirlpool and devoured anything within range. She laid on one side of a narrow channel of water].

**While the wicked is before me.** This qualifies the silence, and almost screens it from criticism, for bad men are so sure to misuse even our holiest speech, that it is as well not to cast any of our pearls before such swine; but what if the psalmist meant, "I was silent while I had the prosperity of the wicked in my thoughts," then we see the discontent and questioning of his mind, and the muzzled mouth indicates much that is not to be commended. Yet, if we blame we must also praise, for the highest wisdom suggests that when good men are bewildered with skeptical thoughts, they should not hasten to repeat them, but should fight out their inward battle upon its own battlefield. The firmest believers are exercised with unbelief, and it would be doing the devil's work with a vengeance if they were to publish abroad all their questionings and suspicions. If I have the fever myself, there is no reason why I should communicate it to my neighbours. If any on board the vessel of my soul are diseased, I will put my heart in quarantine, and allow none to go on shore in the boat of speech till I have a clean bill of health.

2 I was dumb with silence, I held my peace, even from good; and my sorrow was stirred.
39:2 I was dumb with silence. He was as strictly speechless as if he had been tongue-less, not a word escaped him. He was as silent as the dumb.

I held my peace, even from good. Neither bad nor good escaped his lips. Perhaps he feared that if he began to talk at all, he would be sure to speak amiss, and, therefore, he totally abstained. It was an easy, safe, and effectual way of avoiding sin, if it did not involve a neglect of the duty which he owed to God to speak well of his name. Our divine Lord was silent before the wicked, but not altogether so, for before Pontius Pilate he witnessed a good confession, and asserted his kingdom.

A sound course of action may be pushed to the extreme, and become a fault.

And my sorrow was stirred. Inward grief was made to work and ferment by want of vent. The pent up floods are swollen and agitated. Utterance is the natural outlet for the heart's anguish, and silence is, therefore, both an aggravation of the evil and a barrier against its cure. In such a case the resolve to hold one's peace needs powerful backing, and even this is most likely to give way when grief rushes upon the soul. Before a flood gathering in force and foaming for outlet the strongest banks are likely to be swept away. Nature may do her best to silence the expression of discontent, but unless grace comes to her rescue, she will be sure to succumb.

3 My heart was hot within me, while I was musing the fire burned: then spake I with my tongue,

39:3 My heart was hot within me. The friction of inward thoughts produced an intense mental heat. The door of his heart was shut, and with the fire of sorrow burning within, the chamber of his soul soon grew unbearable with heat. Silence is an awful thing for a sufferer, it is the surest method to produce madness. Mourner, tell your sorrow; do it first and most fully to God, but even to pour it out before some wise and godly friend is far from being wasted breath.

While I was musing the fire burned. As he thought upon the ease of the wicked and his own daily affliction, he could not unravel the mystery of providence, and therefore he became greatly agitated. While his heart was musing it was fusing, for the subject was confusing. It became harder every moment to be quiet; his volcanic soul was tossed with an inward ocean of fire, and heaved to and fro with a mental earthquake; and eruption was imminent, the burning lava must pour forth in a fiery stream.

Then spake I with my tongue. The original is grandly laconic. I spake. The muzzled tongue burst all its bonds. The gag was hurled away. Misery, like murder, will out. You can silence praise, but anguish is clamorous. Resolve or no resolve, heed or no heed, sin or no sin, the impetuous torrent forced for itself a channel and swept away every restraint.

4 LORD, make me to know mine end, and the measure of my days, what it is; that I may know how frail I am.

38:4 Lord. It is well that the vent of his soul was toward God and not towards man. Oh! if my swelling heart must speak, Lord let it speak with thee; even if there be too much of natural heat in what I say, thou wilt be more patient with me than man, and upon thy purity it can cast no
stain; whereas if I speak to my fellows, they may harshly rebuke me or else learn evil from my petulance.

**Make me to know mine end.** Did he mean the same as Elias in his agony, "Let me die, I am no better than my father"? Perhaps so. At any rate, he rashly and petulantly desired to know the end of his wretched life, that he might begin to reckon the days till death should put a finish to his woe. Impatience would pry between the folded leaves. As if there were no other comfort to be had, unbelief would fain hide itself in the grave and sleep itself into oblivion. David was neither the first nor the last who have spoken unadvisedly in prayer. Yet, there is a better meaning: the psalmist would know more of the shortness of life, that he might better bear its transient ills, and herein we may safely kneel with him, uttering the same petition. That there is no end to its misery is the hell of hell; that there is an end to life's sorrow is the hope of all who have a hope beyond the grave. God is the best teacher of the divine philosophy which looks for an expected end. They who see death through the Lord's glass, see a fair sight, which makes them forget the evil of life in foreseeing the end of life.

**And the measure of my days.** David would fain be assured that his days would be soon over and his trials with them; he would be taught anew that life is measured out to us by wisdom, and is not a matter of chance. As the trader measures his cloth by inches, and ells, and yards, so with scrupulous accuracy is life measured out to man. *That I may know how frail I am,* or when I shall cease to be. Alas! poor human nature, dear as life is, man quarrels with God at such a rate that he would sooner cease to be than bear the Lord's appointment. Such pettishness in a saint! Let us wait till we are in a like position, and we shall do no better. The ship on the stocks wonders that the bark springs a leak, but when it has tried the high seas, it marvels that its timbers hold together in such storms. David's case is not recorded for our imitation, but for our learning.

5 Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee: verily every man at his best state is altogether vanity. Selah.

**39:5 Behold, thou hast made my days as an handbreadth.** Upon consideration, the psalmist finds little room to bewail the length of life, but rather to bemoan its shortness. What changeful creatures we are! One moment we cry to be rid of existence, and the next instant beg to have it prolonged! A handbreadth is one of the shortest natural measures, being the breadth of four fingers; such is the brevity of life, by divine appointment; God hath made it so, fixing the period in wisdom. The *behold* calls us to attention; to some the thoughts of life's hastiness will bring the most acute pain, to others the most solemn earnestness. How well should those live who are to live so little! Is my earthly pilgrimage so brief? then let me watch every step of it, that in the little of time there may be much of grace. *And mine age is as nothing before thee.* So short as not to amount to an entity. Think of eternity, and an angel is as a newborn babe, the world a fresh blown bubble, the sun a spark just fallen from the fire, and man a nullity. Before the Eternal, all the age of frail man is less than one ticking of a clock. *Verily, every man at his best state is altogether vanity.* This is the surest truth, that nothing about man is either sure or true. Take man at his best, he is but a man, and a man is a mere breath, unsubstantial as the wind. Man is *settled,* as the margin has it, and by divine decree it is settled that he shall not be settled. He is constant only in inconstancy. His vanity is his only verity; his best, of which he is vain, is but vain; and this is verily true of every man, that everything about him is every way fleeting. This is sad news
for those whose treasures are beneath the moon; those whose glorying is in themselves may well hang the flag half mast; but those whose best estate is settled upon them in Christ Jesus in the land of unfading flowers, may rejoice that it is no vain thing in which they trust.

6 Surely every man walketh in a vain shew: surely they are disquieted in vain: he heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them.

39:6 Surely every man walketh in a vain shew. Life is but a passing pageant. This alone is sure, that nothing is sure. All around us shadows mock us; we walk among them, and too many live for them as if the mocking images were substantial; acting their borrowed parts with zeal fit only to be spent on realities, and lost upon the phantoms of this passing scene. Worldly men walk like travelers in a mirage, deluded, duped, deceived, soon to be filled with disappointment and despair.

Surely they are disquieted in vain. Men fret, and fume, and worry, and all for mere nothing. They are shadows pursuing shadows, while death pursues them. He who toils and contrives, and wearies himself for gold, for fame, for rank, even if he wins his desire, finds at the end of his labour lost; for like the treasure of the miser's dream, it all vanishes when the man awakes in the world of reality. Read well this text, and then listen to the clamor of the market, the hum of the exchange, the din of the city streets, and remember that all this noise (for so the word means), this breach of quiet, is made about unsubstantial, fleeting vanities. Broken rest, anxious fear, over worked brain, failing mind, lunacy, these are the steps in the process of disquieting with many, and all to be rich, or, in other words, to load one's self with the thick clay; clay, too, which a man must leave so soon.

He heapeth up riches, and knoweth not who shall gather them. He misses often the result of his ventures, for there are many slips between the cup and the lips. His wheat is sheaved, but an interloping robber bears it away—as often happens with the poor Eastern husbandman; or, the wheat is even stored, but the invader feasts thereon. Many work for others all unknown to them. Especially does this verse refer to those all gathering muckrakes, who in due time are succeeded by all scattering forks, which scatter riches as profusely as their sires gathered them parsimoniously. We know not our heirs, for our children die, and strangers fill the old ancestral halls; estates change hands, and entail, though riveted with a thousand bonds, yields to the corroding power of time. Men rise up early and sit up late to build a house, and then the stranger tramps along its passages, laughs in its chambers, and forgetful of its first builder, calls it all his own. Here is one of the evils under the sun for which no remedy can be prescribed.

7 And now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee.

39:7 And now, Lord, what wait I for? What is there in these phantoms to enchant me? Why should I linger where the prospect is so uninviting, and the present so trying? It was worse than vanity to linger in the abodes of sorrow to gain a heritage of emptiness. The psalmist, therefore, turns to his God, in disgust of all things else; he has thought on the world and all things in it, and is relieved by knowing that such vain things are all passing away; he has cut all cords which bound him to earth, and is ready to sound "Boot and saddle, up and away."
My hope is in thee. The Lord is self existent and true, and therefore worthy of the confidence of men; he will live when all the creatures die, and his fullness will abide when all second causes are exhausted; to him, therefore, let us direct our expectation, and on him let us rest our confidence. Away from sand to rock let all wise builders turn themselves, for if not today, yet surely ere long, a storm will rise before which nothing will be able to stand but that which has the lasting element of faith in God to cement it. David had but one hope, and that hope entered within the veil, hence he brought his vessel to safe anchorage, and after a little drifting all was peace.

8 Deliver me from all my transgressions: make me not the reproach of the foolish.

39:8 Deliver me from all my transgressions. How fair a sign it is when the psalmist no longer harps upon his sorrows, but begs freedom from his sins! What is sorrow when compared with sin! Let but the poison of sin be gone from the cup, and we need not fear its gall, for the bitter will act medicinally. None can deliver a man from his transgression but the blessed One who is called Jesus, because he saves his people from their sins; and when he once works this great deliverance for a man from the cause, the consequences are sure to disappear too. The thorough cleansing desired is well worthy of note: to be saved from some transgressions would be of small benefit; total and perfect deliverance is needed.

Make me not the reproach of the foolish. The wicked are the foolish here meant: such are always on the watch for the faults of saints, and at once make them the theme of ridicule. It is a wretched thing for a man to be suffered to make himself the butt of unholy scorn by apostasy from the right way. Alas, how many have thus exposed themselves to well deserved reproach! Sin and shame go together, and from both David would fain be preserved.

9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it.

39:9 I was dumb, I opened not my mouth; because thou didst it. This had been far clearer if it had been rendered, "I am silenced, I will not open my mouth." Here we have a nobler silence, purged of all sullenness, and sweetened with submission. Nature failed to muzzle the mouth, but grace achieved the work in the worthiest manner. How like in appearance may two very different things appear! silence is ever silence, but it may be sinful in one case and saintly in another. What a reason for hushing every murmuring thought is the reflection, "because thou didst it."! It is his right to do as he wills, and he always wills to do that which is wisest and kindest; why should I then arraign his dealings? Nay, if it be indeed the Lord, let him do what seemeth him good.

10 Remove thy stroke away from me: I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.

39:10 Remove thy stroke away from me. Silence from all repining did not prevent the voice of prayer, which must never cease. In all probability the Lord would grant the psalmist's petition, for he usually removes affliction when we are resigned to it; if we kiss the rod, our Father always burns it. When we are still, the rod is soon still. It is quite consistent with resignation to pray for the removal of a trial. David was fully acquiescent in the divine will, and yet found it in his heart
to pray for deliverance; indeed, it was while he was rebellious that he was prayerless about his trial, and only when he became submissive did he plead for mercy.

*I am consumed by the blow of thine hand.* Good pleas may be found in our weakness and distress. It is well to show our Father the bruises which his scourge has made, for peradventure his fatherly pity will bind his hands, and move him to comfort us in his bosom. It is not to consume us, but to consume our sins, that the Lord aims at in his chastisements.

11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity, thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth: surely every man is vanity. Selah.

**39:11 When thou with rebukes dost correct man for iniquity.** God does not trifle with his rod; he uses it because of sin, and with a view to whip us from it; hence he means his strokes to be felt, and felt they are.

*Thou makest his beauty to consume away like a moth.* As the moth frets the substance of the fabric, mars all its beauty, and leaves it worn out and worthless, so do the chastisements of God discover to us our folly, weakness, and nothingness, and make us feel ourselves to be as worn out vesture, worthless and useless. Beauty must be a poor thing when a moth can consume it and a rebuke can mar it. All our desires and delights are wretched moth eaten things when the Lord visits us in his anger.

*Surely every man is vanity.* He is as John Trapp (1611-1669) wittily says *"a curious picture of nothing."* He is unsubstantial as his own breath, a vapor which appeareth for a little while, and then vanisheth away. *Selah.* Well may this truth bring us to a pause, like the dead body of Amasa, which, lying in the way, stopped the hosts of Joab.

12 Hear my prayer, O LORD, and give ear unto my cry; hold not thy peace at my tears: for I am a stranger with thee, *and* a sojourner, as all my fathers were.

**39:12 Hear my prayer, O Lord.** Drown not my pleadings with the sound of thy strokes. Thou hast heard the clamor of my sins, Lord; hear the laments of my prayers.

*And give ear unto my cry.* Here is an advance in intensity: a cry is more vehement, pathetic, and impassioned, than a prayer. The main thing was to have the Lord's ear and heart.

*Hold not thy peace at my tears.* This is a yet higher degree of importunate pleading. Who can withstand tears, which are the irresistible weapons of weakness? How often women, children, beggars, and sinners, have betaken themselves to tears as their last resort, and therewith have won the desire of their hearts! —*"This shower, blown up by tempest of the soul," falls not in vain. Tears speak more eloquently than ten thousand tongues; they act as keys upon the wards of tender hearts, and mercy denies them nothing, if through them the weeper looks to richer drops, even to the blood of Jesus. When our sorrows pull up the sluices of our eyes, God will ere long interpose and turn our mourning into joy. Long may he be quiet as though he regarded not, but the hour of deliverance will come, and come like the morning when the dewdrops are plentiful.*
For I am a stranger with thee. Not to thee, but with thee. Like thee, my Lord, a stranger among the sons of men, an alien from my mother's children. God made the world, sustains it, and owns it, and yet men treat him as though he were a foreign intruder; and as they treat the Master, so do they deal with the servants. "It is no surprising thing that we should be unknown." These words may also mean, "I share the hospitality of God," like a stranger entertained by a generous host. Israel was bidden to deal tenderly with the stranger, and the God of Israel has in much compassion treated us poor aliens with unbounded liberality.

And a sojourner, as all my fathers were. They knew that this was not their rest; they passed through life in pilgrim guise, they used the world as travelers use an inn, and even so do I. Why should we dream of rest on earth when our fathers' sepulchres are before our eyes? If they had been immortal, their sons would have had an abiding city this side the tomb; but as the sires were mortal, so must their offspring pass away. All of our lineage, without exception, were passing pilgrims, and such are we. David uses the fleeting nature of our life as an argument for the Lord's mercy, and it is such a one as God will regard. We show pity to poor pilgrims, and so will the Lord.

13 O spare me, that I may recover strength, before I go hence, and be no more.
Psalm 40

To the chief Musician,
A Psalm of David

TITLE. To the Chief Musician. Well might so exceedingly precious a Psalm be specially committed to the most skilled of the sacred musicians. The noblest music should be made tributary to a subject so incomparable. The dedication shows that the song was intended for public worship, and was not a merely personal hymn, as its being in the first person singular might lead us to suppose. A Psalm of David. This is conclusive as to the authorship: lifted by the Holy Spirit into the region of prophecy, David was honored to write concerning a far greater than himself.

SUBJECT. Jesus is evidently here, and although it might not be a violent wresting of language to see both David and his Lord, both Christ and the church, the double comment might involve itself in obscurity, and therefore we shall let the sun shine even though this should conceal the stars. Even if the New Testament were not so express upon it, we should have concluded that David spoke of our Lord in Ps 40:6-9, but the apostle in Heb 10:5-9, puts all conjecture out of court, and confines the meaning to him who came into the world to do the Father's will.

DIVISION. From Ps 40:1-3, is a personal thanksgiving, followed by a general declaration of Jehovah's goodness to his saints, Ps 40:4-5. In Ps 40:6-10, we have an avowal of dedication to the Lord's will; Ps 40:11-17, contains a prayer for deliverance from pressing trouble, and for the overthrow of enemies.

1 I waited patiently for the Lord; and he inclined unto me, and heard my cry.

40:1 I waited patiently for the Lord. Patient waiting upon God was a special characteristic of our Lord Jesus. Impatience never lingered in his heart, much less escaped his lips. All through his agony in the garden, his trial of cruel mockings before Herod and Pilate, and his passion on the tree, he waited in omnipotence of patience. No glance of wrath, no word of murmuring, no deed of vengeance came from God's patient Lamb; he waited and waited on; was patient, and patient to perfection, far excelling all others who have according to their measure glorified God in the fires. Job on the dunghill does not equal Jesus on the cross. The Christ of God wears the imperial crown among the patient. Did the Only Begotten wait, and shall we be petulant and rebellious?

And he inclined unto me, and heard my cry. Neither Jesus the head, nor any one of the members of his body, shall ever wait upon the Lord in vain. Mark the figure of inclining, as though the suppliant cried out of the lowest depression, and condescending love stooped to hear his feeble moans. What a marvel is it that our Lord Jesus should have to cry as we do, and wait as we do, and should receive the Father's help after the same process of faith and pleading as must be gone through by ourselves! The Savior’s prayers among the midnight mountains and in Gethsemane expound this verse. The Son of David was brought very low, but he rose to victory; and here he teaches us how to conduct our conflicts so as to succeed after the same glorious pattern of triumph.
Let us arm ourselves with the same mind; and panoplied [equipped with the complete arms and armor of a warrior] in patience, armed with prayer, and girt with faith, let us maintain the Holy War.

2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings.

40:2 He brought me up also out of an horrible pit. When our Lord bore in his own person the terrible curse which was due to sin, he was so cast down as to be like a prisoner in a deep, dark, fearful dungeon, amid whose horrible glooms the captive heard a noise as of rushing torrents, while overhead resounded the tramp of furious foes. Our Lord in his anguish was like a captive in the oubliettes, forgotten of all mankind, immured amid horror, darkness, and desolation. Yet the Lord Jehovah made him to ascend from all his abasement; he retraced his steps from that deep hell of anguish into which he had been cast as our substitute. He who thus delivered our surety in extremis, will not fail to liberate us from our far lighter griefs.

Out of the miry clay. The sufferer was as one who cannot find a foothold, but slips and sinks. The figure indicates not only positive misery as in the former figure, but the absence of solid comfort by which sorrow might have been rendered supportable. Once give man a good foothold, and a burden is greatly lightened, but to be loaded and to be placed on slimy, slippery clay, is to be tried doubly. Reader, with humble gratitude, adore the dear Redeemer who, for thy sake, was deprived of all consolation while surrounded with every form of misery; remark his gratitude at being born up amid his arduous labors and sufferings, and if thou too hast experienced the divine help, be sure to join thy Lord in this song.

And set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. The Redeemer's work is done. He reposes on the firm ground of his accomplished engagements; he can never suffer again; for ever does he reign in glory. What a comfort to know that Jesus our Lord and Saviour stands on a sure foundation in all that he is and does for us, and his goings forth in love are not liable to be cut short by failure in years to come, for God has fixed him firmly. He is for ever and eternally able to save unto the uttermost them that come unto God by him, seeing that in the highest heavens he ever liveth to make intercession for them. Jesus is the true Joseph taken from the pit to be Lord of all. It is something more than a "sip of sweetness" to remember that if we are cast like our Lord into the lowest pit of shame and sorrow, we shall by faith rise to stand on the same elevated, sure, and everlasting rock of divine favour and faithfulness.

3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the LORD.

40:3 And he hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God. At the Passover, before his passion, our Lord sang one of the grand old Psalms of praise; but what is the music of his heart now, in the midst of his redeemed! What a song is that in which his glad heart for ever leads the chorus of the elect! Not Miriam's tabor nor Moses' triumphant hymn over Miriam's chivalry can for a
moment rival that ever new and exulting song. Justice magnified and grace victorious; hell subdued and heaven glorified; death destroyed and immortality established; sin overthrown and righteousness resplendent; what a theme for a hymn in that day when our Lord drinketh the red wine new with us all in our heavenly Father's kingdom! Even on earth, and before his great passion, he foresaw the joy which was set before him, and was sustained by the prospect.

**Our God.** The God of Jesus, the God of Israel, "my God and your God." How will we praise him, but ah! Jesus will be the chief player on our stringed instruments; he will lead the solemn hallelujah which shall go up from the sacramental host redeemed by blood.

**Many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord.** A multitude that no man can number shall see the griefs and triumphs of Jesus, shall tremble because of their sinful rejection of him, and then through grace shall receive faith and become trusters in Jehovah. Here is our Lord's reward. Here is the assurance which makes preachers bold and workers persevering. Reader, are you one among the many? Note the way of salvation, a sight, a fear, a trust! Do you know what these mean by possessing and practicing them in your own soul? Trusting in the Lord is the evidence, nay, the essence of salvation. He who is a true believer is evidently redeemed from the dominion of sin and Satan.

4 Blessed is that man that maketh the LORD his trust, and respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.

**40:4 Blessed.** This is an exclamation similar to that of the first Psalm, "Oh, the happiness of the man." God's blessings are emphatic, "I wot [know] that he whom thou blessest is blessed," indeed and in very truth.

**Is that man that maketh the Lord his trust.** Faith obtaineth promises. A simple single eyed confidence in God is the sure mark of blessedness. A man may be as poor as Lazarus, as hated as Mordecai, as sick as Hezekiah, as lonely as Elijah, but while his hand of faith can keep its hold on God, none of his outward afflictions can prevent his being numbered among the blessed; but the wealthiest and most prosperous man who has no faith is accursed, be he who he may.

**And respecteth not the proud.** The proud expect all men to bow down and do them reverence, as if the worship of the golden calves were again set up in Israel; but believing men are too noble to honour mere money bags, or cringe before bombastic dignity. The righteous pay their respect to humble goodness, rather than to inflated self consequence. Our Lord Jesus was in this our bright example. No flattery of kings and great ones ever fell from his lips; he gave no honour to dishonorable men. The haughty were never his favorites.

**Nor such as turn aside to lies.** Heresies and idolatries are lies, and so are avarice, worldliness, and pleasure seeking. Woe to those who follow such deceptions. Our Lord was ever both the truth and the lover of truth, and the father of lies had no part in him. We must never pay deference to apostates, time servers, and false teachers; they are an ill leaven, and the more we purge ourselves of them the better; they are blessed whom God preserves from all error in creed and practice. Judged by this verse, many apparently happy persons must be the reverse of blessed, for anything in the shape of a purse, a fine equipage, or a wealthy establishment, commands their reverence, whether the
owner be a rake or a saint, an idiot or a philosopher. Verily, were the arch fiend of hell to start a carriage and pair, and live like a lord, he would have thousands who would court his acquaintance.

5 Many, O LORD my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done, and thy thoughts which are to us-ward: they cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee: if I would declare and speak of them, they are more than can be numbered.

40:5 Many, O Lord my God, are thy wonderful works which thou hast done. Creation, providence, and redemption, teem with wonders as the sea with life. Our special attention is called by this passage to the marvels which cluster around the cross and flash from it. The accomplished redemption achieves many ends, and compasses a variety of designs; the outgoings of the atonement are not to be reckoned up, the influences of the cross reach further than the beams of the sun. Wonders of grace beyond all enumeration take their rise from the cross; adoption, pardon, justification, and a long chain of godlike miracles of love proceed from it. Note that our Lord here speaks of the Lord as "my God." The man Christ Jesus claimed for himself and us a covenant relationship with Jehovah. Let our interest in our God be ever to us our peculiar treasure.

And thy thoughts which are toward us. The divine thoughts march with the divine acts, for it is not according the God's wisdom to act without deliberation and counsel. All the divine thoughts are good and gracious towards his elect. God's thoughts of love are very many, very wonderful, very practical! Muse on them, dear reader; no sweeter subject ever occupied your mind. God's thoughts of you are many, let not yours be few in return.

They cannot be reckoned up in order unto thee. Their sum is so great as to forbid alike analysis and numeration. Human minds fail to measure, or to arrange in order, the Lord's ways and thoughts; and it must always be so, for he hath said, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts." No maze to lose oneself in like the labyrinth of love. How sweet to be outdone, overcome and overwhelmed by the astonishing grace of the Lord our God!

If I would declare and speak of them, and surely this should be the occupation of my tongue at all seasonable opportunities,

they are more than can be numbered; far beyond all human arithmetic they are multiplied; thoughts from all eternity, thoughts of my fall, my restoration, my redemption, my conversion, my pardon, my upholding, my perfecting, my eternal reward; the list is too long for writing, and the value of the mercies too great for estimation. Yet, if we cannot show forth all the works of the Lord, let us not make this an excuse for silence; for our Lord, who is in this our best example, often spake of the tender thoughts of the great Father.

6 Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire; mine ears hast thou opened: burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.
40:6 Here we enter upon one of the most wonderful passages in the whole of the Old Testament, a passage in which the incarnate Son of God is seen not through a glass darkly, but as it were face to face.

**Sacrifice and offering thou didst not desire.** In themselves considered, and for their own sakes, the Lord saw nothing satisfactory in the various offerings of the ceremonial law. Neither the victim pouring forth its blood, nor the fine flour rising in smoke from the altar, could yield content to Jehovah's mind; he cared not for the flesh of bulls or of goats, neither had he pleasure in corn and wine, and oil. Typically these offerings had their worth, but when Jesus, the Antitype, came into the world, they ceased to be of value, as candles are of no estimation when the sun has arisen.

**Mine ears hast thou opened.** Our Lord was quick to hear and perform his Father's will; his ears were as if excavated down to his soul; they were not closed up like Isaac's wells, which the Philistines filled up, but clear passages down to the fountains of his soul. The prompt obedience of our Lord is here the first idea. There is, however, no reason whatever to reject the notion that the digging of the ear here intended may refer to the boring of the ear of the servant, who refused out of love to his master to take his liberty, at the year of jubilee; his perforated ear, the token of perpetual service, is a true picture of our blessed Lord's fidelity to his Father's business, and his love to his Father's children. Jesus irrevocably gave himself up to be the servant of servants for our sake and God's glory. The Septuagint, from which Paul quoted, has translated this passage, "A body hast thou prepared me:" how this reading arose it is not easy to imagine, but since apostolical authority has sanctioned the variation, we accept it as no mistake, but as an instance of various readings equally inspired. In any case, the passage represents the Only Begotten as coming into the world equipped for service; and in a real and material body, by actual life and death, putting aside all the shadows of the Mosaic law.

**Burnt offering and sin offering hast thou not required.** Two other forms of offerings are here mentioned; tokens of gratitude and sacrifices for sin as typically presented are set aside; neither the general nor the private offerings are any longer demanded. What need of mere emblems when the substance itself is present? We learn from this verse that Jehovah values far more the obedience of the heart than all the imposing performances of ritualistic worship; and that our expiation from sin comes not to us as the result of an elaborate ceremonial, but as the effect of our great Substitute's obedience to the will of Jehovah.

7 Then said I, Lo, I come: in the volume of the book it is written of me,
Lo, I come. Behold, O heavens, and thou earth, and ye places under the earth! Here is something worthy of your most intense gaze. Sit ye down and watch with earnestness, for the invisible God comes in the likeness of sinful flesh, and as an infant the Infinite hangs at a virgin's breast! Immanuel did not send but came; he came in his own personality, in all that constituted his essential self he came forth from the ivory palaces to the abodes of misery; he came promptly at the destined hour; he came with sacred alacrity as one freely offering himself.

In the volume of the book it is written of me. In the eternal decree it is thus recorded. The mystic roll of predestination which providence gradually unfolds, contained within it, to the Savior's knowledge, a written covenant, that in the fullness of time the divine I should descend to earth to accomplish a purpose which hecatombs of bullocks and rams could not achieve. What a privilege to find our names written in the book of life, and what an honour, since the name of Jesus heads the page! Our Lord had respect to his ancient covenant engagements, and herein he teaches us to be scrupulously just in keeping our word; have we so promised, it is so written in the book of remembrance? Then let us never be defaulters.

8 I delight to do thy will, O my God: yea, thy law is within my heart.

40:8 I delight to do thy will, O my God. Our blessed Lord alone could completely do the will of God. The law is too broad for such poor creatures as we are to hope to fulfill it to the uttermost: but Jesus not only did the Father's will, but found a delight therein; from old eternity he had desired the work set before him; in his human life he was straitened till he reached the baptism of agony in which he magnified the law, and even in Gethsemane itself he chose the Father's will, and set aside his own. Herein is the essence of obedience, namely, in the soul's cheerful devotion to God: and our Lord's obedience, which is our righteousness, is in no measure lacking in this eminent quality. Notwithstanding his measureless griefs, our Lord found delight in his work, and for "the joy that was set before him he endured the cross, despising the shame."

Yea, thy law is within my heart. No outward, formal devotion was rendered by Christ; his heart was in his work, holiness was his element, the Father's will his meat and drink. We must each of us be like our Lord in this, or we shall lack the evidence of being his disciples. Where there is no heart work, no pleasure, no delight in God's law, there can be no acceptance. Let the devout reader adore the Saviour for the spontaneous and hearty manner in which he undertook the great work of our salvation.

9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation: lo, I have not refrained my lips, O LORD, thou knowest.

40:9 I have preached righteousness in the great congregation. The purest morality and the highest holiness were preached by Jesus. Righteousness divine was his theme. Our Lord's whole life was a sermon, eloquent beyond compare, and it is heard each day by myriads. Moreover, he never shunned in his ministry to declare the whole counsel of God; God's great plan of righteousness he plainly set forth. He taught openly in the temple, and was not ashamed to be a faithful and a true witness. He was the great evangelist; the master of itinerant preachers; the
head of the clan of open air missionaries. O servants of the Lord, hide not your lights, but reveal to others what your God has revealed to you; and especially by your lives testify for holiness, be champions for the right, both in word and deed.

Lo, I have not refrained my lips, O Lord, thou knowest. Never either from love of ease, of fear of men, did the Great Teacher's lips become closed. He was instant in season and out of season. The poor listened to him, and princes heard his rebuke; Publicans rejoiced at him, and Pharisees raged, but to them both he proclaimed the truth from heaven. It is well for a tried believer when he can appeal to God and call him to witness that he has not been ashamed to bear witness for him; for rest assured if we are not ashamed to confess our God, he will never be ashamed to own us. Yet what a wonder is here, that the Son of God should plead, just as we plead, and urge just such arguments as would befit the mouths of his diligent ministers! How truly is he "made like unto his brethren."

10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart; I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation: I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation.

40:10 I have not hid thy righteousness within my heart. On the contrary, "Never man spake like this man." God's divine plan of making men righteous was well known to him, and he plainly taught it. What was in our great Master's heart he poured forth in holy eloquence from his lips. The doctrine of righteousness by faith he spake with great simplicity of speech. Law and gospel equally found in him a clear expositor.

I have declared thy faithfulness and thy salvation. Jehovah's fidelity to his promises and his grace in saving believers were declared by the Lord Jesus on many occasions, and are blessedly blended in the gospel which he came to preach. God, faithful to his own character, law and threatenings, and yet saving sinners, is a peculiar revelation of the gospel. God faithful to the saved ones evermore is the joy of the followers of Christ Jesus.

I have not concealed thy lovingkindness and thy truth from the great congregation. The tender as well as the stern attributes of God, our Lord Jesus fully unveiled. Concealment was far from the Great Apostle of our profession. Cowardice he never exhibited, hesitancy never weakened his language. He who as a child of twelve years spake in the temple among the doctors, and afterward preached to five thousand at Gennesaret, and to the vast crowds at Jerusalem on that great day, the last day of the feast, was always ready to proclaim the name of the Lord, and could never be charged with unholy silence. He could be dumb when so the prophecy demanded and patience suggested, but otherwise, preaching was his meat and his drink, and he kept back nothing which would be profitable to his disciples. This in the day of his trouble, according to this Psalm, he used as a plea for divine aid. He had been faithful to his God, and now begs the Lord to be faithful to him. Let every dumb professor, tongue tied by sinful shame, bethink himself how little he will be able to plead after this fashion in the day of his distress.

11 Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O LORD: let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.
40:11 *Withhold not thou thy tender mercies from me, O Lord.* Alas! These were to be for awhile withheld from our Lord while on the accursed tree, but meanwhile in his great agony he seeks for gentle dealing; and the coming of the angel to strengthen him was a clear answer to his prayer. He had been blessed aforetime in the desert, and now at the entrance of the valley of the shadow of death, like a true, trustful, and experienced man, he utters a holy, plaintive desire for the tenderness of heaven. He had not withheld his testimony to God's truth, now in return he begs his Father not to withhold his compassion. This verse might more correctly be read as a declaration of his confidence that help would not be refused; but whether we view this utterance as the cry of prayer, or the avowal of faith, in either case it is instructive to us who take our suffering Lord for an example, and it proves to us how thoroughly he was made like unto his brethren.

*Let thy lovingkindness and thy truth continually preserve me.* He had preached both of these, and now he asks for an experience of them, that he might be kept in the evil day and rescued from his enemies and his afflictions. Nothing endears our Lord to us more than to hear him thus pleading with strong crying and tears to him who was able to save. O Lord Jesus, in our nights of wrestling we will remember thee.

12 For innumerable evils have compassed me about: mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up; they are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.

40:12 *For innumerable evils have compassed me about.* On every side he was beset with evils; countless woes environed the great Substitute for our sins. Our sins were innumerable, and so were his griefs. There was no escape for us from our iniquities, and there was no escape for him from the woes which we deserved. From every quarter evils accumulated about the blessed One, although in his heart evil found no place.

*Mine iniquities have taken hold upon me, so that I am not able to look up.* He had no sin, but sins were laid on him, and he took them as if they were his. "He was made sin for us." The transfer of sin to the Saviour was real, and produced in him as man the horror which forbade him to look into the face of God, bowing him down with crushing anguish and woe intolerable. O my soul, what would thy sins have done for thee eternally if the Friend of sinners had not condescended to take them all upon himself? Oh, blessed Scripture! "The Lord hath made to meet upon him the iniquity of us all." Oh, marvelous depth of love, which could lead the perfectly immaculate to stand in the sinner's place, and bear the horror of great trembling which sin must bring upon those conscious of it.

*They are more than the hairs of mine head: therefore my heart faileth me.* The pains of the divine penalty were beyond compute, and the Savior's soul was so burdened with them, that he was sore amazed, and very heavy even unto a sweat of blood. His strength was gone, his spirits sank, he was in an agony.

13 Be pleased, O LORD, to deliver me: O LORD, make haste to help me.
40:13 Be pleased, O Lord, to deliver me: O Lord, make haste to help me. How touching! How humble! How plaintive! The words thrill us as we think that after this sort our Lord and Master prayed. His petition is not so much that the cup should pass away undrained, but that he should be sustained while drinking it, and set free from its power at the first fitting moment. He seeks deliverance and help; and he entreats that the help may not be slow in coming; this is after the manner of our pleadings. Is it not? Note, reader, how our Lord was heard in that he feared, for there was after Gethsemane a calm endurance which made the fight as glorious as the victory.

14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it; let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil.

40:14 Let them be ashamed and confounded together that seek after my soul to destroy it. Whether we read this as a prayer or a prophecy it matters not, for the powers of sin, and death, and hell, may well be ashamed as they see the result of their malice for ever turned against themselves. It is to the infinite confusion of Satan that his attempts to destroy the Saviour destroyed himself; the diabolical conclave who plotted in council are now all alike put to shame, for the Lord Jesus has met them at all points, and turned all their wisdom into foolishness.

Let them be driven backward and put to shame that wish me evil. It is even so; the hosts of darkness are utterly put to the rout, and made a theme for holy derision forever and ever. How did they gloat over the thought of crushing the seed of the woman! But the Crucified has conquered, the Nazarene has laughed them to scorn, the dying Son of Man has become the death of death and hell's destruction. For ever blessed be his name.

15 Let them be desolate for a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha.

40:15 Let them be desolate, or amazed; even as Jesus was desolate in his agony, so let his enemies be in their despair when he defeats them. The desolation caused in the hearts of evil spirits and evil men by envy, malice, chagrin, disappointment, and despair, shall be a fit recompense for their cruelty to the Lord when he was in their hands.

For a reward of their shame that say unto me, Aha, aha. Did the foul fiend insult over our Lord? Behold how shame is now his reward! Do wicked men today pour shame upon the name of the Redeemer? Their desolation shall avenge him of his adversaries! Jesus is the gentle Lamb to all who seek mercy through his blood; but let despisers beware, for he is the Lion of the tribe of Judah, and "who shall rouse him up?" The Jewish rulers exulted and scornfully said, "Aha, aha;" but when the streets of Jerusalem ran like rivers deep with gore, "and the temple was utterly consumed," then their house was left unto them desolate, and the blood of the last of the prophets, according to their own desire, came upon themselves and upon their children. O ungodly reader, if such a person glance over this page, beware of persecuting Christ and his
people, for God will surely avenge his own elect. Your "ahas" will cost you dear. It is hard for you to kick against the pricks.

16 Let all those that seek thee rejoice and be glad in thee: let such as love thy salvation say continually, The LORD be magnified.

40:16 Let all those that seek thee, rejoice and be glad in thee. We have done with Ebal and turn to Gerizim. Here our Lord pronounces benedictions on his people. Note who the blessed objects of his petition are: not all men, but some men, "I pray for them, I pray not for the world." He pleads for seekers: the lowest in the kingdom, the babes of the family; those who have true desires, longing prayers, and consistent endeavors after God. Let seeking souls pluck up heart when they hear of this. What riches of grace, that in his bitterest hour Jesus should remember the lambs of the flock! And what does he entreat for them? it is that they may be doubly glad, intensely happy, emphatically joyful, for such the repetition of terms implies. Jesus would have all seekers made happy, by finding what they seek after, and by winning peace through his grief. As deep as were his sorrows, so high would he have their joys. He groaned that we might sing, and was covered with a bloody sweat that we might be anointed with the oil of gladness.

Let such as love thy salvation say continually, The Lord be magnified. Another result of the Redeemer's passion is the promotion of the glory of God by those who gratefully delight in his salvation. Our Lord's desire should be our directory; we love with all our hearts his great salvation, let us then, with all our tongues proclaim the glory of God which is resplendent therein. Never let his praises cease. As the heart is warm with gladness let it incite the tongue to perpetual praise. If we cannot do what we would for the spread of the kingdom, at least let us desire and pray for it. Be it ours to make God's glory the chief end of every breath and pulse. The suffering Redeemer regarded the consecration of his people to the service of heaven as a grand result of his atoning death; it is the joy which was set before him; that God is glorified as the reward of the Savior's travail.

17 But I am poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me: thou art my help and my deliverer; make no tarrying, O my God.

40:17 But I am poor and needy. The man of sorrows closes with another appeal, based upon his affliction and poverty.

Yet the Lord thinketh upon me. Sweet was this solace to the holy heart of the great sufferer. The Lord's thoughts of us are a cheering subject of meditation, for they are ever kind and never cease. His disciples forsook him, and his friends forgot him, but Jesus knew that Jehovah never turned away his heart from him, and this upheld him in the hour of need.
Thou art my help and my deliverer. His unmoved confidence stayed itself alone on God. O that all believers would imitate more fully their great Apostle and High Priest in his firm reliance upon God, even when afflictions abounded and the light was veiled.

Make no tarrying, O my God. The peril was imminent, the need urgent, the suppliant could not endure delay, nor was he made to wait, for the angel came to strengthen, and the brave heart of Jesus rose up to meet the foe. Lord Jesus, grant that in all our adversities we may possess like precious faith, and be found like thee, more than conquerors.

Psalm 41

To the chief Musician
A Psalm of David

TITLE. To the Chief Musician. A Psalm of David. This title has frequently occurred before, and serves to remind us of the value of the Psalm, seeing that it was committed to no mean songster; and also to inform us as to the author who has made his own experience the basis of a prophetic song, in which a far greater than David is set forth. How wide a range of experience David had! What power it gave him to edify future ages! And how full a type of our Lord did he become! What was bitterness to him has proved to be a fountain of unfailing sweetness to many generations of the faithful.

Jesus Christ betrayed by Judas Iscariot is evidently the great theme of this Psalm, but we think not exclusively. He is the antitype of David, and all his people are in their measure like him; hence words suitable to the Great Representative are most applicable to those who are in him. Such as receive a vile return for long kindness to others, may read this song with much comfort, for they will see that it is alas! too common for the best of men, to be rewarded for their holy charity with cruelty and scorn; and when they have been humbled by falling into sin, advantage has been taken of their low estate, their good deeds have been forgotten and the vilest spite has been vented upon them.

DIVISION. The psalmist in Ps 41:1-3, describes the mercies which are promised to such as consider the poor, and this he uses as a preface to his own personal plea for succor: from Ps 41:4-9 he states his own case, proceeds to prayer in Ps 41:10, and closes with thanksgiving, Ps 41:11-13.

1 Blessed is he that considereth the poor: the LORD will deliver him in time of trouble.

41:1 Blessed is he that considereth the poor. This is the third Psalm opening with a benediction, and there is a growth in it beyond the first two. To search the word of God comes first, pardoned sin is second, and now the forgiven sinner brings forth fruit unto God available for the good of others. The word used is as emphatic as in the former cases, and so is the blessing which follows it. The poor intended, are such as are poor in substance, weak in bodily strength, despised in repute, and desponding in spirit. These are mostly avoided and frequently scorned. The worldly proverb bequeatheth the hindmost to one who has no mercy. The sick and the sorry are poor company, and the world deserts them as the Amalekite left his dying servant. Such as have been
made partakers of divine grace receive a tenderer nature, and are not hardened against their own flesh and blood; they undertake the cause of the downtrodden, and turn their minds seriously to the promotion of their welfare. They do not toss them a penny and go on their way, but enquire into their sorrows, sift out their cause, study the best ways for their relief, and practically come to their rescue: such as these have the mark of the divine favor plainly upon them, and are as surely the sheep of the Lord's pasture as if they wore a brand upon their foreheads. They are not said to have considered the poor years ago, but they still do so. Stale benevolence, when boasted of, argues present churlishness. First and foremost, yea, far above all others put together in tender compassion for the needy is our Lord Jesus, who so remembered our low estate, that though he was rich, for our sakes he became poor. All his attributes were charged with the task of our uplifting. He weighed our case and came in the fullness of wisdom to execute the wonderful work of mercy by which we are redeemed from our destructions. Wretchedness excited his pity, misery moved his mercy, and thrice blessed is he both by his God and his saints for his attentive care and wise action towards us. He still considereth us; his mercy is always in the present tense, and so let our praises be.

The Lord will deliver him in time of trouble. The compassionate lover of the poor thought of others, and therefore God will think of him. God measures to us with our own bushel. Days of trouble come even to the most generous, and they have made the wisest provision for rainy days who have lent shelter to others when times were better with them. The promise is not that the generous saint shall have no trouble, but that he shall be preserved in it, and in due time brought out of it. How true was this of our Lord! never trouble deeper nor triumph brighter than his, and glory be to his name, he secures the ultimate victory of all his blood bought ones. Would that they all were more like him in putting on bowels of compassion to the poor. Much blessedness they miss who stint their alms. The joy of doing good, the sweet reaction of another's happiness, the approving smile of heaven upon the heart, if not upon the estate; all these the niggardly soul knows nothing of. Selfishness bears in itself a curse, it is a cancer in the heart; while liberality is happiness, and maketh fat the bones. In dark days we cannot rest upon the supposed merit of alms giving, but still the music of memory brings with it no mean solace when it tells of widows and orphans whom we have succored, and prisoners and sick folk to whom we have ministered.

2 The LORD will preserve [protect] him, and keep him alive; and he shall be blessed upon the earth: and thou wilt not deliver him unto the will of his enemies.

41:2 The Lord will preserve him, and keep him alive. His noblest life shall be immortal, and even his mortal life shall be sacredly guarded by the power of Jehovah. Jesus lived on till his hour came, nor could the devices of crafty Herod take away his life till the destined hour had struck; and even then no man took his life from him, but he laid it down of himself, to take it again. Here is the portion of all those who are made like their Lord, they bless and they shall be blessed, they preserve and shall be preserved, they watch over the lives of others and they themselves shall be precious in the sight of the Lord. The miser like the hog is of no use till he is dead—then let him die; the righteous like the ox is of service during life—then let him live.

And he shall be blessed upon the earth. Prosperity shall attend him. His cruse of oil shall not be dried up because he fed the poor prophet. He shall cut from his roll of cloth and find it longer at both ends.
"There was a man,  
and some did count him mad,  
The more he gave away the more he had."

If temporal gains be not given him, spirituals shall be doubled to him. His little shall be blessed, 
bread and water shall be a feast to him. The liberal are and must be blessed even here; they have 
a present as well as a future portion. Our Lord's real blessedness of heart in the joy that was set 
before him is a subject worthy of earnest thought, especially as it is the picture of the blessing 
which all liberal saints may look for.

And thou wilt not deliver him 
unto the will of his enemies. He helped the distressed, and now he 
shall find a champion in his God. What would not the good man's enemies do to him if they had 
him at their disposal? Better be in a pit with vipers than to be at the mercy of persecutors. This 
sentence sets before us a sweet negative, and yet it were not easy to have seen how it could be 
true of our Lord Jesus, did we not know that although he was exempted from much of blessing, 
being made a curse for us, yet even he was not altogether nor for ever left of God, but in due 
time was exalted above all his enemies.

3 The LORD will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing [sickness]: thou 
wilt make [restore] all his bed in his sickness.

41:3 The Lord will strengthen him upon the bed of languishing. The everlasting arms shall stay 
up his soul as friendly hands and downy pillows stay up the body of the sick. How tender and 
sympathizing is this image; how near it brings our God to our infirmities and sicknesses! 
Whoever heard this of the old heathen Jove, or of the gods of India or China? This is language 
peculiar to the God of Israel; he it is who deigns to become nurse and attendant upon good men. 
If he smites with one hand he sustains with the other. Oh, it is blessed fainting when one falls 
on the Lord's own bosom, and is borne up thereby! Grace is the best of restoratives; divine 
love is the noblest stimulant for a languishing patient; it makes the soul strong as a giant, even 
when the aching bones are breaking through the skin. No physician like the Lord, no tonic like 
his promise, no wine like his love.

Thou wilt make all his bed in his sickness. What, doth the Lord turn bed maker to his sick 
children? Herein is love indeed. Who would not consider the poor if such be the promised 
reward? A bed soon grows hard when the body is weary with tossing to and fro upon it, but grace 
gives patience, and God's smile gives peace, and the bed is made soft because the man's heart is 
content; the pillows are downy because the head is peaceful. Note that the Lord will make all his 
bed, from head to foot. What considerate and indefatigable kindness! Our dear and ever blessed 
Lord Jesus, though in all respects an inheritor of this promise, for our sakes condescended to 
forego the blessing, and died on a cross and not upon a bed; yet, even there, he was after awhile 
upheld and cheered by the Lord his God, so that he died in triumph.
We must not imagine that the benediction pronounced in these three verses belongs to all who casually give money to the poor, or leave it in their wills, or contribute to societies. Such do well, or act from mere custom, as the case may be, but they are not here alluded to. The blessing is for those whose habit it is to love their neighbor as themselves, and who for Christ's sake feed the hungry and clothe the naked. To imagine a man to be a saint who does not consider the poor as he has ability, is to conceive the fruitless fig tree to be acceptable; there will be sharp dealing with many professors on this point in the day when the King cometh in his glory.

4 I said, LORD, be merciful unto me: heal my soul; for I have sinned against thee.

41:4-9

Here we have a controversy between the pleader and his God. He has been a tender friend to the poor, and yet in the hour of his need the promised assistance was not forthcoming. In our Lord's case there was a dark and dreary night in which such arguments were well befitting himself and his condition.

41:4 I said—said it in earnest prayer—

Lord, be merciful unto me. Prove now thy gracious dealings with my soul in adversity, since thou didst aforetime give me grace to act liberally in my prosperity. No appeal is made to justice; the petitioner but hints at the promised reward, but goes straightforward to lay his plea at the feet of mercy. How low was our Redeemer brought when such petitions could come from his reverend mouth, when his lips like lilies dropped such sweet smelling but bitter myrrh!

Heal my soul. My time of languishing is come, now do as thou hast said, and strengthen me, especially in my soul. We ought to be far more earnest for the soul's healing than for the body's ease. We hear much of the cure of souls, but we often forget to care about it.

For I have sinned against thee. Here was the root of sorrow. Sin and suffering are inevitable companions. Observe that by the psalmist sin was felt to be mainly evil because directed against God. This is of the essence of true repentance. The immaculate Savior could never have used such language as this unless there be here a reference to the sin which he took upon himself by imputation; and for our part we tremble to apply words so manifestly indicating personal rather than imputed sin. Applying the petition to David and other sinful believers, how strangely evangelical is the argument: heal me, not for I am innocent, but I have sinned. How contrary is this to all self righteous pleading! How consonant with grace! How inconsistent with merit! Even the fact that the confessing penitent had remembered the poor, is but obliquely urged, but a direct appeal is made to mercy on the ground of great sin. O trembling reader, here is a divinely revealed precedent for thee, be not slow to follow it.

5 Mine enemies speak evil of me, When shall he die, and his name perish?
Mine enemies speak evil of me. It was their nature to do and speak evil; it was not possible that the child of God could escape them. The viper fastened on Paul's hand: the better the man the more likely, and the more venomous the slander. Evil tongues are busy tongues, and never deal in truth. Jesus was traduced to the utmost, although no offence was in him.

When shall he die, and his name perish? They could not be content till he was away. The world is not wide enough for evil men to live in while the righteous remain, yea, the bodily presence of the saints may be gone, but their memory is an offence to their foes. It was never merry England, say they, since men took to Psalm singing. In the Master's case, they cried,

"Away with such a fellow from the earth, it is not fit that he should live." If persecutors could have their way, the church should have but one neck, and that should be on the block. Thieves would fain blow out all candles. The lights of the world are not the delights of the world. Poor blind bats, they fly at the lamp, and try to dash it down; but the Lord liveth, and preserveth both the saints and their names.

6 And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity: his heart gathereth iniquity to itself; when he goeth abroad, he telleth it.

And if he come to see me, he speaketh vanity. His visits of sympathy are visitations of mockery. When the fox calls on the sick lamb his words are soft, but he licks his lips in hope of the carcass. It is wretched work to have spies haunting one's bedchamber, calling in pretence of kindness, but with malice in their hearts. Hypocritical talk is always fulsome and sickening to honest men, but especially to the suffering saint. Our divine Lord had much of this from the false hearts that watched his words.

His heart gathereth iniquity to itself. Like will to like. The bird makes its nest of feathers. Out of the sweetest flowers chemists can distil poison, and from the purest words and deeds malice can gather groundwork for calumnious report. It is perfectly marvelous how spite spins webs out of no materials whatever. It is no small trial to have base persons around you lying in wait for every word which they may pervert into evil. The Master whom we serve was constantly subject to this affliction.

When he goeth abroad, he telleth it. He makes his lies, and then vends them in open market. He is no sooner out of the house than he outs with his lie, and this against a sick man whom he called to see as a friend—a sick man to whose incoherent and random speeches pity should be showed. Ah, black hearted wretch! A devil's cub indeed. How far abroad men will go to publish their slanders! They would fain placard the sky with their falsehoods. A little fault is made much of; a slip of the tongue is a libel, a mistake a crime, and if a word can bear two meanings the worse is always fathered upon it. Tell it in Gath, publish it in Askelon, that the daughters of the uncircumcised may triumph. It is base to strike a man when he is down, yet such is the meanness of mankind towards a Christian hero should he for awhile chance to be under a cloud.
7 All that hate me whisper together against me: against me do they devise my hurt.

41:7 *All that hate me whisper together against me.* The spy meets his comrades in conclave and sets them all a whispering. Why could they not speak out? Were they afraid of the sick warrior? Or were their designs so treacherous that they must needs be hatched in secrecy? Mark the unanimity of the wicked—*all*. How heartily the dogs unite to hunt the stag! Would God we were half as united in holy labor as persecutors in their malicious projects, and were half as wise as they are crafty, for their whispering was craft as well as cowardice, the conspiracy must not be known till all is ready.

*Against me do they devise my hurt.* They lay their heads together, and scheme and plot. So did Ahithophel and the rest of Absalom’s counselors, so also did the chief priests and Pharisees. Evil men are good at devising; they are given to meditation, they are deep thinkers, but the mark they aim at is evermore the hurt of the faithful. Snakes in the grass are never there for a good end.

8 An evil disease [A thing of Belial], *say they*, cleaveth fast unto him: and *now* that he lieth he shall rise up no more.

8. **An evil disease, say they, cleaveth fast unto him.** They whisper that some curse has fallen upon him, and is riveted to him. They insinuate that a foul secret stains his character, the ghost whereof haunts his house, and never can be laid. An air of mystery is cast around this doubly dark saying, as if to show how indistinct are the mutterings of malice. Even thus was our Lord accounted "*smitten of God and afflicted.*" His enemies conceived that God had forsaken him, and delivered him for ever into their hands.

**And now that he lieth he shall rise up no more.** His sickness they hoped was mortal, and this was fine news for them. No more would the good man’s holiness chide their sin, they would now be free from the check of his godliness. Like the friars around John Wycliffe’s (1320-1384) bed, their prophesying were more jubilant than accurate, but they were a sore scourge to the sick man. When the Lord smites his people with his rod of affliction for a small moment, their enemies expect to see them capitally executed, and prepare their *jubilates* to celebrate their funerals, but they are in too great a hurry, and have to alter their ditties and sing to another tune. Our Redeemer eminently foretokened this, for out of his lying in the grave he has gloriously risen. Vain the watch, the stone, the seal! Rising he pours confusion on his enemies.

9 Yea, mine own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.

41:9 *Yea.* Here is the climax of the sufferer’s woe, and he places before it the emphatic affirmation, as if he thought that such villainy would scarcely be believed.

*Mine own familiar friend.* "*The man of my peace,*" so runs the original, with whom I had no differences, with whom I was in league, who had aforetime ministered to my peace and comfort.
This was Ahithophel to David, and Iscariot with our Lord. Judas was an apostle, admitted to the privacy of the Great Teacher, hearing his secret thoughts, and, as it were, allowed to read his very heart. "Et tu Brute?" [You too Brutus] said the expiring Caesar. The kiss of the traitor wounded our Lord's heart as much as the nail wounded his hand.

**In whom I trusted.** Judas was the treasurer of the apostolic college. Where we place great confidence an unkind act is the more severely felt.

**Which did eat of my bread.** Not only as a guest but as a dependant, a pensioner at my board. Judas dipped in the same dish with his Lord, and hence the more accursed was his treachery in his selling his Master for a slave's price.

**Hath lifted up his heel against me.** Not merely turned his back on me, but left me with a heavy kick such as a vicious horse might give. Hard is it to be spurned in our need by those who formerly fed at our table. It is noteworthy that the Redeemer applied only the last words of this verse to Judas, perhaps because, knowing his duplicity, he had never made a familiar friend of him in the fullest sense, and had not placed implicit trust in him. Infernal malice so planned it that every circumstance in Jesus' death should add wormwood to it; and the betrayal was one of the bitterest drops of gall. We are indeed, wretched when our quondam friend becomes our relentless foe, when confidence is betrayed, when all the rites of hospitality are perverted, and ingratitude is the only return for kindness; yet in so deplorable a case we may cast ourselves upon the faithfulness of God, who, having, delivered our Covenant Head, is in verity engaged to be the very present help of all for whom that covenant was made.

10 But thou, O LORD, be merciful unto me, and raise me up, that I may requite [repay] them.

**41:10 But thou, O Lord, be merciful unto me.** How the hunted and affrighted soul turns to her God! How she seems to take breath with a "but, thou!" How she clings to the hope of mercy from God when every chance of pity from man is gone!

**And raise me up.** Recover me from my sickness, give me to regain my position. Jesus was raised up from the grave; his descent was ended by an ascent.

**That I may requite them.** This as it reads is a truly Old Testament sentence, and quite aside from the spirit of Christianity, yet we must remember that David was a person in magisterial office, and might without any personal revenge, desire to punish those who had insulted his authority and libeled his public character. Our great Apostle and High Priest had no personal animosities, but even he by his resurrection has requited the powers of evil, and avenged on death and hell all their base attacks upon his cause and person. Still the strained application of every sentence of this Psalm to Christ is not to our liking, and we prefer to call attention to the better spirit of the gospel beyond that of the old dispensation.

11 By this I know that thou favourest me, because mine enemy doth not triumph over me.
41:11 We are all cheered by tokens for good, and the psalmist felt it to be an auspicious omen, that after all his deep depression he was not utterly given over to his foe.

By this I know that thou favourest me. Thou hast a special regard to me, I have the secret assurance of this in my heart, and, therefore, thine outward dealings do not dismay me, for I know that thou lovtest me in them all.

Because mine enemy doth not triumph over me. What if the believer has no triumph over his foes, he must be glad that they do not triumph over him. If we have not all we would we should praise God for all we have. Much there is in us over which the ungodly might exult, and if God's mercy keeps the dog's mouths closed when they might be opened, we must give him our heartiest gratitude. What a wonder it is that when the devil enters the lists with a poor, erring, bedridden, deserted, slandered saint, and has a thousand evil tongues to aid him, yet he cannot win the day, but in the end slinks off without renown.

"The feeblest saint shall win the day
Though death and hell obstruct the way."

12 And as for me, thou upholdest me in mine integrity, and settest me before thy face for ever.

41:12. And as for me, despite them all and in the sight of them all,

thou upholdest me in mine integrity; thy power enables me to rise above the reach of slander by living in purity and righteousness. Our innocence and consistency are the result of the divine upholding. We are like those glasses without feet, which can only be upright while they are held in the hand; we fall, and spill, and spoil all, if left to ourselves. The Lord should be praised every day if we are preserved from gross sin. When others sin they show us what we should do but for grace. "He today and I tomorrow," was the exclamation of a holy man, whenever he saw another falling into sin. Our integrity is comparative as well as dependent, we must therefore be humbled while we are grateful. If we are clear of the faults alleged against us by our calumniators, we have nevertheless quite enough of actual blameworthiness to render it shameful for us to boast.

And settest me before thy face for ever. He rejoiced that he lived under the divine surveillance; tended, cared for, and smiled upon by his Lord; and yet more, that it would be so world without end. To stand before an earthly monarch is considered to be a singular honor, but what must it be to be a perpetual courtier in the palace of the King Eternal, Immortal, Invisible?

13 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting, and to everlasting. Amen, and Amen.
41:13. The Psalm ends with a doxology. *Blessed be the Lord*, i.e., let him be glorified. The blessing at the beginning from the mouth of God is returned from the mouth of his servant. We cannot add to the Lord's blessedness, but we can pour out our grateful wishes, and these he accepts, as we receive little presents of flowers from children who love us. Jehovah is the personal name of our God.

*God of Israel* is his covenant title, and shows his special relation to his elect people.

*From everlasting and to everlasting.* The strongest way of expressing endless duration. We die, but the glory of God goes on and on without pause.

*Amen and amen.* So let it surely, firmly, and eternally be. Thus the people joined in the Psalm by a double shout of holy affirmation; let us unite in it with all our hearts. This last verse may serve for the prayer of the universal church in all ages, but none can sing it so sweetly as those who have experienced as David did the faithfulness of God in times of extremity.
Psalm 42

To the chief Musician
Maschil, for the sons of Korah

TITLE. To the chief Musician, Maschil, for the sons of Korah. Dedicated to the Master of Music, this Psalm is worthy of his office; he who can sing best can have nothing better to sing. It is called, Maschil, or an instructive ode; and full as it is of deep experimental expressions, it is eminently calculated to instruct those pilgrims whose road to heaven is of the same trying kind as David's was. It is always edifying to listen to the experience of a thoroughly gracious and much afflicted saint.

That choice band of singers, the sons of Korah, are bidden to make this delightful Psalm one of their peculiar. They had been spared when their father and all his company, and all the children of his associates were swallowed up alive in their sin Numbers 27:11. They were the spared ones of sovereign grace. Preserved, we know not why, by the distinguishing favor of God, it may be surmised that after their remarkable election to mercy, they became so filled with gratitude that they addicted themselves to sacred music in order that their spared lives might be consecrated to the glory of God. At any rate, we who have been rescued as they were from going down into the pit, out of the mere good pleasure of Jehovah, can heartily join in this Psalm, and indeed in all the songs which show forth the praises of our God and the pantings of our hearts after him. Although David is not mentioned as the author, this Psalm must be the offspring of his pen; it is so Davidic, it smells of the son of Jesse, it bears the marks of his style and experience in every letter.

We could sooner doubt the authorship of the second part of Pilgrim's Progress than question David's title to be the composer of this Psalm.

SUBJECT. It is the cry of a man far removed from the outward ordinances and worship of God, sighing for the long loved house of his God; and at the same time it is the voice of a spiritual believer, under depressions, longing for the renewal of the divine presence, struggling with doubts and fears, but yet holding his ground by faith in the living God. Most of the Lord's family have sailed on the sea which is here so graphically described. It is probable that David's flight from Absalom may have been the occasion for composing this Maschil.

DIVISION. The structure of the song directs us to consider it in two parts which end with the same refrain; Ps 42:1-5 and then Ps 42:6-11.

MASCHIL (mas'-kil), is a Hebrew word of uncertain meaning, appearing in the titles of thirteen Psalms. It is often translated as "attentive" or "learned" or "intelligent" implying that the Psalms were to be instructive (Psa. 42,44,45,52-55,74,78,88,89,142).

KORAH (ko'-rah; bald), was the leader of those who became envious that Aaron was high priest of Israel. He and three men from the tribe of Reuben believed that the spiritual burden for Israel should be their responsibility rather than the Levites (Num. 16) (S.E.M.).
1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God.

42:1 As the hart panteth after the water brooks, so panteth my soul after thee, O God. As after a long drought the poor fainting hind longs for the streams, or rather as the hunted hart instinctively seeks after the river to lave its smoking flanks and to escape the dogs, even so my weary, persecuted soul pants after the Lord my God. Debarred from public worship, David was heartsick. Ease he did not seek, honor he did not covet, but the enjoyment of communion with God was an urgent need of his soul; he viewed it not merely as the sweetest of all luxuries, but as an absolute necessity, like water to a stag. Like the parched traveler in the wilderness, whose skin bottle is empty, and who finds the wells dry, he must drink or die—he must have his God or faint. His soul, his very self, his deepest life, was insatiable for a sense of the divine presence. As the hart brays so his soul prays. Give him his God and he is as content as the poor deer which at length slakes its thirst and is perfectly happy; but deny him his Lord, and his heart heaves, his bosom palpitates, his whole frame is convulsed, like one who gasps for breath, or pants with long running. Dear reader, dost thou know what this is, by personally having felt the same? It is a sweet bitterness. The next best thing to living in the light of the Lord's love is to be unhappy till we have it, and to pant hourly after it—hourly, did I say? Thirst is a perpetual appetite, and not to be forgotten, and even thus continual is the heart's longing after God. When it is as natural for us to long for God as for an animal to thirst, it is well with our souls, however painful our feelings. We may learn from this verse that the eagerness of our desires may be pleaded with God, and the more so, because there are special promises for the importunate and fervent.

2 My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God: when shall I come and appear before God?

42:2 My soul. All my nature, my inmost self.

Thirsteth. Which is more than hungering; hunger you can palliate, but thirst is awful, insatiable, clamorous, deadly. O to have the most intense craving after the highest good! this is no questionable mark of grace.

For God. Not merely for the temple and the ordinances, but for fellowship with God himself. None but spiritual men can sympathize with this thirst.

For the living God. Because he lives, and gives to men the living water; therefore we, with greater eagerness, desire him. A dead God is a mere mockery; we loathe such a monstrous deity; but the ever living God, the perennial fountain of life and light and love, is our soul's desire. What are gold, honor, pleasure, but dead idols? May we never pant for these.

When shall I come and appear before God? He who loves the Lord loves also the assemblies wherein his name is adored. Vain are all pretences to religion where the outward means of grace have no attraction. David was never so much at home as in the house of the Lord; he was not
content with private worship; he did not forsake the place where saints assemble, as the manner of some is. See how pathetically he questions as to the prospect of his again uniting in the joyous gathering! How he repeats and reiterates his desire! After his God, his Elohim (his God to be worshipped, who had entered into covenant with him), he pined even as the drooping flowers for the dew, or the moaning turtle for her mate. It were well if all our resortings to public worship were viewed as appearances before God, it would then be a sure mark of grace to delight in them. Alas, how many appear before the minister, or their fellow men, and think that enough! "To see the face of God" is a nearer translation of the Hebrew; but the two ideas may be combined—he would see his God and be seen of him: this is worth thirsting after!

3 My tears have been my meat day and night, while they continually say unto me, Where is thy God?

42:3 My tears have been my meat day and night. Salt meats, but healthful to the soul. When a man comes to tears, constant tears, plenteous tears, tears that fill his cup and trencher, he is in earnest indeed. As the big tears stand in the stag's eyes in her distress, so did the salt drops glitter in the eyes of David. His appetite was gone, his tears not only seasoned his meat, but became his only meat, he had no mind for other diet. Perhaps it was well for him that the heart could open the safety valves; there is a dry grief far more terrible than showery sorrows. His tears, since they were shed because God was blasphemed, were "honourable dew," drops of holy water, such as Jehovah putteth into his bottle.

While they continually say unto me, Where is thy God? Cruel taunts come naturally from coward minds. Surely they might have left the mourner alone; he could weep no more than he did—it was a supererogation of malice to pump more tears from a heart which already overflowed. Note how incessant was their jeer, and how artfully they framed it! It cut the good man to the bone to have the faithfulness of his God impugned. They had better have thrust needles into his eyes than have darted insinuations against his God. Shimei may here be alluded to who after this fashion mocked David as he fled from Absalom. He roundly asserted that David was a bloody man, and that God was punishing him for supplanting Saul and his house; his wish was father to his thought. The wicked know that our worst misfortune would be to lose God's favor, hence their diabolical malice leads them to declare that such is the case. Glory be to God, they lie in their throats, for our God is in the heavens, aye, and in the furnace too, succoring his people.

4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me: for I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God, with the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.

42:4 When I remember these things, I pour out my soul in me. When he harped upon his woes his heart melted into water and was poured out upon itself. God hidden, and foes raging, a pair of evils enough to bring down the stoutest heart! Yet why let reflections so gloomy engross us, since the result is of no value: merely to turn the soul on itself, to empty it from itself into itself is
useless, how much better to pour out the heart before the Lord! The prisoner's tread wheel might sooner land him in the skies than mere inward questioning raise us nearer to consolation.

*For I had gone with the multitude, I went with them to the house of God.* Painful reflections were awakened by the memory of past joys; he had mingled in the pious throng, their numbers had helped to give him exhilaration and to awaken holy delight, their company had been a charm to him as with them he ascended the hill of Zion. Gently proceeding with holy ease, in comely procession, with frequent strains of song, he and the people of Jehovah had marched in reverent ranks up to the shrine of sacrifice, the dear abode of peace and holiness. Far away from such goodly company the holy man pictures the sacred scene and dwells upon the details of the pious march.

*With the voice of joy and praise, with a multitude that kept holyday.* The festive noise is in his ears, and the solemn dance before his eyes. Perhaps he alludes to the removal of the ark and to the glorious gatherings of the tribes on that Grand National holy day and holiday. How changed his present place! For Zion, a wilderness; for the priests in white linen, soldiers in garments of war; for the song, the sneer of blasphemy; for the festivity, lamentation; for joy in the Lord, a mournful dirge over his absence.

5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted in me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance.

42:5 *Why art thou cast down, O my soul?* As though he were two men, the psalmist talks to himself. His faith reasons with his fears, his hope argues with his sorrows. These present troubles, are they to last forever? The rejoicings of my foes, are they more than empty talk? My absence from the solemn feasts, is that a perpetual exile? Why this deep depression, this faithless fainting, this chicken hearted melancholy? As John Trapp (1611-1669) says, "David chides David out of the dumps; " and herein he is an example for all desponding ones. To search out the cause of our sorrow is often the best surgery for grief. Self ignorance is not bliss; in this case it is misery. The mist of ignorance magnifies the causes of our alarm; a clearer view will make monsters dwindle into trifles.

*Why art thou disquieted within me?* Why is my quiet gone? If I cannot keep a public Sabbath, yet wherefore do I deny my soul her indoor Sabbath? Why am I agitated like a troubled sea, and why do my thoughts make a noise like a tumultuous multitude? The causes are not enough to justify such utter yielding to despondency. Up, my heart! What aileth thee? Play the man, and thy castings down shall turn to up liftings, and thy disquietudes to calm.

*Hope thou in God.* If every evil be let loose from Pandora's box, yet is there hope at the bottom. This is the grace that swims, though the waves roar and be troubled. God is unchangeable, and therefore his grace is the ground for unshaken hope. If everything be dark, yet the day will come, and meanwhile hope carries stars in her eyes; her lamps are not dependent on oil from without, her light is fed by secret visitations of God, which sustain the spirit.
For I shall yet praise him. Yet will my sighs give place to songs, my mournful ditties shall be exchanged for triumphal paeans. A loss of the present sense of God's love is not a loss of that love itself; the jewel is there, though it gleams not on our breast; hope knows her title good when she cannot read it clear; she expects the promised boon though present providence stands before her with empty hands.

For I shall yet praise him for the help of his countenance. Salvations come from the propitious face of God, and he will yet lift up his countenance upon us. Note well that the main hope and chief desire of David rest in the smile of God. His face is what he seeks and hopes to see, and this will recover his low spirits, this will put to scorn his laughing enemies, this will restore to him all the joys of those holy and happy days around which memory lingers. This is grand cheer. This verse, like the singing of Paul and Silas, looses chains and shakes prison walls. He who can use such heroic language in his gloomy hours will surely conquer. In the garden of hope grow the laurels for future victories, the roses of coming joy, the lilies of approaching peace.

6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me: therefore will I remember thee from the land of Jordan, and of the Hermonites, from the hill Mizar.

42:6 O my God, my soul is cast down within me. Here the song begins again upon the bass. So sweet an ending deserves that for the sake of a second hopeful close the Psalm should even begin again. Perhaps the psalmist's dejection continued, the spasm of despondency returned; well, then, he will down with his harp again, and try again its power upon himself, as in his younger days, he saw its influence upon Saul when the evil spirit came upon him. With God the song begins a second time more nearly than at first. The singer was also a little more tranquil. Outward expression of desire was gone; there was no visible panting; the sorrow was not all restrained within doors. Within or upon himself he was cast down; and, verily, it may well be so, while our thoughts look more within than upward. If self were to furnish comfort, we should have but poor provender. There is no solid foundation for comfort in such fickle frames as our heart is subject to. It is well to tell the Lord how we feel, and the more plain the confession the better: David talks like a sick child to its mother, and we should learn to imitate him.

Therefore will I remember thee. It is well to fly to our God. Blessed down casting which drives us to so sure a rock of refuge as thee, O Lord!

From the hill Mizar. He recalls his seasons of choice communion by the river and among the hills, and especially that dearest hour upon the little hill, where love spake her sweetest language and revealed her nearest fellowship. It is great wisdom to store up in memory our choice occasions of converse with heaven; we may want them another day, when the Lord is slow in bringing back his banished ones, and our soul is aching with fear. "His love in times past" has been a precious cordial to many a fainting one; like soft breath it has fanned the smoking flax into a flame, and bound up the bruised reed. Oh, never to be forgotten Valley of Achor, thou art a door of hope! Fair days, now gone, ye have left a light behind you which cheers our present gloom. Or does David mean that even where he was he would bethink him of his God; does he declare that,
forgetful of time and place, he would count Jordan as sacred as Siloa, Hermon as holy as Zion, and even Mizar, that insignificant rising ground as glorious as the mountains which are round about Jerusalem! Oh! it is a heavenly heart which can sing

"To me remains nor place nor time;  
my country is in every clime;  
I can be calm and free from care  
On any shore, since God is there."

Could I be cast where thou art not,  
That were indeed a dreadful lot,  
But regions none remote I call,  
Secure of finding God in all."

42:6 HERMONITES (her'-mon-ites), refers to those who dwelt near Hermon. HERMON was a city of Ephraim located near Mt. Hermon (1 Chron. 5:23). The mountain marked the NE boundary of the land conquered by Moses and Joshua.

MIZAR (mi'-zar), refers to a hill near Mount Hermon. S.E.M.

7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts: all thy waves and thy billows are gone over me.

42:7 Deep calleth unto deep at the noise of thy waterspouts. Thy severe dealings with me seem to excite all creation to attack me; heaven, and earth, and hell, call to each other, stirring each other up in dreadful conspiracy against my peace. As in a waterspout, the deeps above and below clasp hands, so it seemed to David that heaven and earth united to create a tempest around him. His woes were incessant and overwhelming. Billow followed billow, one sea echoed the roaring of another; bodily pain aroused mental fear, Satanic suggestions chimed in with mistrustful forebodings, outward tribulation thundered in awful harmony with inward anguish: his soul seemed drowned as in a universal deluge of trouble, over whose waves the providence of the Lord moved as a watery pillar, in dreadful majesty inspiring the utmost terror. As for the afflicted one he was like a lonely bark around which the fury of a storm is bursting, or a mariner floating on a mast, almost every moment submerged.

All thy waves and thy billows are gone over me. David thought that every trouble in the world had met in him, but he exaggerated, for all the breaking waves of Jehovah have passed over none but the Lord Jesus; there are griefs to which he makes his children strangers for his love's sake. Sorrow naturally states its case forcibly; the mercy is that the Lord after all hath not dealt with us according to our fears. Yet what a plight to be in! Atlantic rollers sweeping in ceaseless succession over one's head, waterspouts coming nearer and nearer, and all the ocean in uproar around the weary swimmer; most of the heirs of heaven can realize the description, for they have experienced the like. This is a deep experience unknown to babes in grace, but common enough to such as do business on great waters of affliction: to such it is some comfort to remember that the waves and billows are the Lord's, "thy waves and thy billows," says David, they are all sent, and directed by him, and achieve his designs, and the child of God knowing this, is the more resigned.
8 Yet the LORD will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the
night his song shall be with me, and my prayer unto the God of my life.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>42:8 Yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime.</th>
<th>Come what may there shall be &quot;a certain secret something&quot; to sweeten all. Lovingkindness is a noble life belt in a rough sea. The day may darken into a strange and untimely midnight, but the love of God ordained of old to be the portion of the elect, shall be by sovereign decree meted out to them. No day shall ever dawn on an heir of grace and find him altogether forsaken of his Lord: the Lord reigneth, and as a sovereign he will with authority command mercy to be reserved for his chosen.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>And in the night.</td>
<td>Both divisions of the day shall be illuminated with special love, and no stress of trial shall prevent it. Our God is God of the nights as well as the days; none shall find his Israel unprotected, be the hour what it may.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>His song shall be with me.</td>
<td>Songs of praise for blessings received shall cheer the gloom of night. No music sweeter than this. The belief that we shall yet glorify the Lord for mercy given in extremity is a delightful stay to the soul. Affliction may put out our candle, but if it cannot silence our song we will soon light the candle again.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>And my prayer unto the God of my life.</td>
<td>Prayer is yoked with praise. He who is the living God, is the God of our life, from him we derive it, with him in prayer and praise we spend it, to him we devote it, in him we shall perfect it. To be assured that our sighs and songs shall both have free access to our glorious Lord is to have reason for hope in the most deplorable condition.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

| 42:9 I will say unto God my rock, Why hast thou forgotten me? | Faith is allowed to enquire of her God the causes of his displeasure, and she is even permitted to expostulate with him and put him in mind of his promises, and ask why apparently they are not fulfilled. If the Lord be indeed our refuge, when we find no refuge, it is time to be raising the question, "Why is this?" Yet we must not let go our hold, the Lord must be my rock still; we must keep to him as our alone confidence, and never forego our interest in him. |
| Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? | He who condescends to be pleaded with by Abraham, his friend, allows us to put to him the question that we may search out the causes of his severity towards us. Surely he can have no pleasure in seeing the faces of his servants stained and squalid with their tears; he can find no content in the harshness with which their foes assail them. He can never take pleasure in the tyranny with which Satan vexes them. Why then does he leave them to be mocked by his enemies and theirs? How can the strong God, who is as firm and abiding as a rock, be also as hard and unmoved as a rock towards those who trust in him? Such enquiries humbly pressed often afford relief to the soul. To know the reason for sorrow is in part to know how to escape it, or at least to endure it. Want of attentive consideration often makes adversity appear to be more
mysterious and hopeless than it really is. It is a pitiable thing for any man to have a limb amputated, but when we know that the operation was needful to save life, we are glad to hear that it has been successfully performed; even thus as trial unfolds, the design of the Lord sending it becomes far more easy to bear.

10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?

42:10 As with a sword in my bones, mine enemies reproach me. Cruel mockeries cut deeper than the flesh, they reach the soul as though a rapier were introduced between the ribs to prick the heart. If reproaches kill not, yet they are killing, the pain caused is excruciating. The tongue cuts to the bone, and its wounds are hard to cure.

While they say daily unto me, Where is thy God? This is the most unkind cut of all, reflecting as it does both upon the Lord's faithfulness and his servant's character. Such was the malice of David's foes, that having thought of the cruel question, they said it, said it daily, repeated it to him, and that for a length, of time; surely the continual yapping of these curs at his heel was enough to madden him, and perhaps would have done so had he not resorted to prayer and made the persecutions of his enemies a plea with his Lord.

11 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope thou in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

42:11. Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? In the rehearsal of his sorrow, he finds after all no sufficient ground for being disquieted. Looked in the face, his fears were not so overwhelming as they seemed when shrouded in obscurity.

Hope thou in God. Let the anchor still keep its hold. God is faithful, God is love, therefore there is room and reason for hope.

Who is the health of my countenance, and my God. This is the same hopeful expression as that contained in verse five, but the addition of and my God shows that the writer was growing in confidence, and was able defiantly to reply to the question, "Where is thy God?" Here, even here, he is, ready to deliver me. I am not ashamed to own him amid your sneers and taunts, for he will rescue me out of your hands. Thus faith closes the struggle, a victor in fact by anticipation, and in heart by firm reliance. The saddest countenance shall yet be made to shine, if there be a taking of God at his word and an expectation of his salvation.

"For yet I know I shall him praise
   Who graciously to me,
The health is of my countenance,
   Yea, mine own God is he."
Psalm 43

TITLE. On account of the similarity of the structure of this Psalm to that of Psalm forty-two, it has been supposed to be a fragment wrongly separated from the preceding song; but it is always dangerous to allow these theories of error in Holy Scripture, and in this instance it would be very difficult to show just cause for such an admission. Why should the Psalm have been broken? Its similarity would have secured its unity had it ever been part and parcel of the forty-second. Is it not far more likely that some in their fancied wisdom united them wrongly in the few MSS in which they are found as one? We believe the fact is that the style of the poetry was pleasant to the writer, and therefore in after life he wrote this supplemental hymn after the same manner. As an appendix it needed no title. David complains of his enemies, and asks the privilege of communion with God as his surest deliverance from them.

DIVISION. The psalmist cried to God in prayer, Ps 43:1-3. Promises praise in the anticipation of an answer, Ps 43:4, and chides himself for his despondency, Ps 43:5.

1 Judge me, O God, and plead my cause against an ungodly nation: O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man.

43:1. Judge me, O God. Others are unable to understand my motives, and unwilling to give me a just verdict. My heart is clear as to intent and therefore I bring my case before thee, content that thou wilt impartially weigh my character, and right my wrongs.

If thou wilt judge, thy acceptance of my conduct will be enough for me; I can laugh at human misrepresentation if my conscience knows that thou art on my side; thou art the only one I care for; and besides, thy verdict will not sleep, but thou wilt see practical justice done to thy slandered servant.

And plead my cause against an ungodly nation. One such advocate as the Lord will more than suffice to answer a nation of brawling accusers. When people are ungodly, no wonder that they are unjust; those who are not true to God himself cannot be expected to deal rightly with his people. Hating the King they will not love his subjects. Popular opinion weighs with many, but divine opinion is far more weighty with the gracious few. One good word from God outweighs ten thousand railing speeches of men. He bears a brazen shield before him whose reliance in all things is upon his God; the arrows of calumny fall harmlessly from such a buckler.

O deliver me from the deceitful and unjust man. Deceit and injustice are boon companions: he who fawns will not fear to slander. From two such devils none can deliver us but God. His wisdom can outwit the craft of the vilest serpent, and his power can over match the most raging lion. Whether this was Doeg or Ahithophel is small matter, such double distilled villains are plentiful, and the only way of dealing with them is to refer the matter to the righteous Judge of all; if we try to fight them with their own weapons, we shall suffer more serious injury from ourselves than from them. O child of God, leave these thine enemies in better hands, remembering that vengeance belongeth not to thee, but to thy Lord.

Turn to him in prayer, crying, "O deliver me, "and ere long you shall publish abroad the remembrance of his salvation.
2 For thou art the God of my strength: why dost thou cast me off? Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy?

43:2 For. Here is argument, which is the very sinew of prayer. If we reasoned more with the Lord we should have more victories in supplication.

Thou art the God of my strength. All my strength belongs to thee—I will not, therefore, use it on my own behalf against my personal foes. All my strength comes from thee, I therefore seek help from thee, who art able to bestow it. All my strength is in thee, I leave therefore this task of combating my foes entirely in thy hands. Faith which leaves such things alone is wise faith. Note the assurance of David, thou art, not I hope and trust so, but I know it is so; we shall find confidence to be our consolation.

Why dost thou cast me off? Why am I treated as if thou didst loathe me? Am I become an offence unto thee? There are many reasons why the Lord might cast us off, but no reason shall prevail to make him do so. He hath not cast off his people, though he for awhile treats them as cast offs. Learn from this question that it is well to enquire into dark providences, but we must enquire of God, not of our own fears. He who is the author of a mysterious trial can best expound it to us.

"Blind unbelief is sure to err, 
And scan his work in vain; 
God is his own interpreter, 
And he will make it plain.”

Why go I mourning because of the oppression of the enemy? Why do I wander hither and thither like a restless spirit? Why wear I the weeds of sorrow on my body, and the lines of grief on my face? Oppression makes a wise man mad; why, Lord, am I called to endure so much of it for so long a time? Here again is a useful question, addressed to the right quarter. The answer will often be because we are saints, and must be made like our Head, and because such sorrow is chastening to the spirit, and yieldeth comfortable fruit. We are not to cross question the Lord in peevishness, but we may ask of him in humility; God help us to observe the distinction so as not to sin through stress of sorrow.

3 O send out thy light and thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.

43:3. O send out thy light and thy truth. The joy of thy presence and the faithfulness of thy heart; let both of these be manifest to me. Reveal my true character by thy light, and reward me according to thy truthful promise. As the sun darts forth his beams, so does the Lord send forth his favor and his faithfulness towards all his people; and as all nature rejoices in the sunshine,
even so the saints triumph in the manifestation of the love and fidelity of their God, which, like the golden sunbeam, lights up even the darkest surroundings with delightful splendor.

*Let them lead me.* Be these my star to guide me to my rest. Be these my Alpine guides to conduct me over mountains and precipices to the abodes of grace.

*Let them bring me unto thy holy hill, and to thy tabernacles.* First in thy mercy bring me to thine earthly courts, and end my weary exile, and then in due time admit me to thy celestial palace above. We seek not light to sin by, nor truth to be exalted by it, but that they may become our practical guides to the nearest communion with God: only such light and truth as are sent us from God will do this, common light is not strong enough to show the road to heaven, nor will mere moral or physical truths assist to the holy hill; but the light of the Holy Spirit, and the truth as it is in Jesus, these are elevating, sanctifying, perfecting; and hence their virtue in leading us to the glorious presence of God. It is beautiful to observe how David's longing to be away from the oppression of man always leads him to sigh more intensely for communion with God.

4 Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God.

43:4. *Then will I go unto the altar of God.* If David might but be favored with such a deliverance as would permit his return, it would not be his own house or heritage which would be his first resort, but to the altar of God his willing feet should conduct him. His whole heart would go as sacrifice to the altar, he himself counting it his greatest happiness to be permitted to lie as a burnt offering wholly dedicated to the Lord. With what exultation should believers draw near unto Christ, who is the antitype of the altar! Clearer light should give greater intensity of desire.

**Unto God my exceeding joy.** It was not the altar as such that the psalmist cared for, he was no believer in the heathenism of ritualism: his soul desired spiritual fellowship, fellowship with God himself in very deed. What are all the rites of worship unless the Lord be in them; what, indeed, but empty shells and dry husks? Note the holy rapture with which David regards his Lord! He is not his joy alone, but his exceeding joy; not the fountain of joy, the giver of joy, or the maintainer of joy, but that joy itself. The margin hath it, *"The gladness of my joy. "i.e., the soul, the essence, the very bowels of my joy.* To draw near to God, who is such a joy to us, may well be the object of our hungering and thirsting.

**Yea, upon the harp will I praise thee.** His best music for his best love. When God fills us with joy we ought ever to pour it out at his feet in praise, and all the skill and talent we have should be laid under contribution to increase the divine revenue of glory.

**O God, my God.** How he dwells upon the name which he loves so well! He already harps on it as though his harp music had begun. What sweeter sounds can music know than these four words? To have God in possession, and to know it by faith, is the heart's heaven—a fullness of bliss lies therein.
5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? And why art thou disquieted within me? Hope in God: for I shall yet praise him, who is the health of my countenance, and my God.

43:5 Why art thou cast down, O my soul? If God be thine, why this dejection? If he uplifts thee, why art thou so near the ground? The dew of love is falling, O withering heart, revive.

And why art thou disquieted within me? What cause is there to break the repose of thy heart? Wherefore indulge unreasonable sorrows, which benefit no one, fret thyself, and dishonor thy God? Why overburden thyself with forebodings?

Hope in God, or wait for God. There is need of patience, but there is ground for hope. The Lord cannot but avenge his own elect. The heavenly Father will not stand by and see his children trampled on for ever; as surely as the sun is in the heavens, light must arise for the people of God, though for awhile they may walk in darkness. Why, then, should we not be encouraged, and lift up our head with comfortable hope?

For I shall yet praise him. Times of complaint will soon end, and seasons of praise will begin. Come, my heart, look out of the window, borrow the telescopic glass, forecast a little, and sweeten thy chamber with sprigs of the sweet herb of hope.

Who is the health of my countenance, and my God. My God will clear the furrows from my brow, and the tear marks from my cheek; therefore will I lift up my head and smile in the face of the storm. The Psalm has a blessed ending, such as we would fain imitate when death puts an end to our mortal existence.
Psalm 44

To the Chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil

TITLE. To the Chief Musician for the sons of Korah, Maschil. The title is similar to the forty-second, and although this is no proof that it is by the same author it makes it highly probable. No other writer should be sought for to father any of the Psalms when David will suffice, and therefore we are loathe to ascribe this sacred song to any but the great psalmist, yet as we hardly know any period of his life which it would fairly describe, we feel compelled to look elsewhere. Some Israelish patriot fallen on evil times, sings in mingled faith and sorrow, his country's ancient glory and her present griefs, her traditions of former favor and her experience of pressing ills. By Christians it can best be understood if put into the mouth of the church when persecution is peculiarly severe. The last verses remind us of John Milton's (December 9, 1608 – November 8, 1674, an English poet) famous lines on the massacre of the Protestants among the mountains of Piedmont. The song before us is fitted for the voices of the saved by grace, the sons of Korah, and to them and to all others full of teaching, hence the title Maschil.

DIVISION. From Ps 44:1-3, the Lord's mighty works for Israel are rehearsed, and in remembrance of them faith in the Lord is expressed Ps 44:4-8. Then the notes of complaint are heard Ps 44:9-16, the fidelity of the people to their God is aroused, Ps 44:17-22, and the Lord is entreated to interpose, Ps 44:23-26.

1 We have heard with our ears, O God, our fathers have told us, what work thou didst in their days, in the times of old.

44:1 We have heard with our ears, O God. Thy mighty acts have been the subjects of common conversation; not alone in books have we read thy famous deeds, but in the ordinary talk of the people we have heard of them. Among the godly Israelites the biography of their nation was preserved by oral tradition, with great diligence and accuracy. This mode of preserving and transmitting history has its disadvantages, but it certainly produces a more vivid impression on the mind than any other; to hear with the ears affects us more sensitively than to read with the eyes; we ought to note this, and seize every possible opportunity of telling abroad the gospel of our Lord Jesus viva voce, since this is the most telling mode of communication. The expression, "heard with our ears," may denote the pleasure with which they listened, the intensity of their interest, the personality of their hearing, and the lively remembrance they had of the romantic and soul stirring narrative. Too many have ears but hear not; happy are they who, having ears, have learned to hear.

Our fathers have told us. They could not have had better informants. Schoolmasters are well enough, but godly fathers are, both by the order of nature and grace, the best instructors of their sons, nor can they delegate the sacred duty. It is to be feared that many children of professors could plead very little before God of what their fathers have told them. When fathers are tongue tied religiously with their offspring, need they wonder if their children's hearts remain sin tied? Just as in all free nations men delight to gather around the hearth, and tell the deeds of velour of their sires "in the brave days of old." so
the people of God under the old dispensation made their families cheerful around the table, be rehearsing the wondrous doings of the Lord their God. Religious conversation need not be dull, and indeed it could not be if, as in this case, it dealt more with facts and less with opinions.

What work thou didst in their days, in the times of old. They began with what their own eyes had witnessed, and then passed on to what were the traditions of their youth. Note that the main point of the history transmitted from father to son was the work of God; this is the core of history, and therefore no man can write history aright who is a stranger to the Lord's work. It is delightful to see the footprints of the Lord on the sea of changing events, to behold him riding on the whirlwind of war, pestilence, and famine, and above all to see his unchanging care for his chosen people. Those who are taught to see God in history have learned a good lesson from their fathers, and no son of believing parents should be left in ignorance of so holy an art. A nation tutored as Israel was in a history so marvelous as their own, always had an available argument in pleading with God for aid in trouble, since he who never changes gives in every deed of grace a pledge of mercy yet to come. The traditions of our past experience are powerful pleas for present help.

2 How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand, and plantedst them; how thou didst afflict the people, and cast them out.

44:2. How thou didst drive out the heathen with thy hand. The destruction of the Canaanites from the promised land is the work here brought to remembrance. A people numerous, warlike, gigantic and courageous, firmly established and strongly fortified, were driven out by a far feebler nation, because the Lord was against them in the fight. It is clear from Scripture that God sent a plague (so that the land ate up the inhabitants thereof), and also a visitation of hornets against the Canaanites, and by other means dispirited them, so that the easy victories of Joshua were but the results of God's having worked beforehand against the idolatrous nation.

And plantedst them. The tribes of Israel were planted in the places formerly occupied by the heathen. Hivites and Jebusites were chased from their cities to make room for Ephraim and Judah. The Great Wonder worker tore up by the roots the oaks of Bashan, that he might plant instead thereof his own chosen "vineyard of red wine."

How thou didst afflict the people. With judgments and plagues the condemned nations were harassed, by fire and sword they were hunted to the death, till they were all expelled, and the enemies of Israel were banished far away. And cast them out. This most probably refers to Israel and should be read, "caused them to increase." He who troubled his enemies smiled on his friends; he meted out vengeance to the ungodly nations, but he reserved of his mercy for the chosen tribes. How fair is mercy when she stands by the side of justice! Bright beams the star of grace amid the night of wrath! It is a solemn thought that the greatness of divine love has its counterpart in the greatness of his indignation. The weight of mercy bestowed on Israel is balanced by the tremendous vengeance which swept the thousands of Amorites and Hittites down to hell with the edge of the sword. Hell is as deep as heaven is high, and the flame of Tophet is as everlasting as the blaze of the celestial glory. God's might, as shown in deeds both of mercy and justice, should be called to mind in troublous times as a stay to our fainting faith.
3 For they got not the land in possession by their own sword, neither did their own arm save them: but thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance, because thou hadst a favour unto them.

44:3. For they got not the land in possession by their own sword. Behold how the Lord alone was exalted in bringing his people to the land which floweth with milk and honey! He, in his distinguishing grace, had put a difference between Canaan and Israel, and therefore, by his own effectual power, he wrought for his chosen and against their adversaries. The tribes fought for their allotments, but their success was wholly due to the Lord who wrought with them. The warriors of Israel were not inactive, but their velour was secondary to that mysterious, divine working by which Jericho's walls fell down, and the hearts of the heathen failed them for fear. The efforts of all the men at arms were employed, but as these would have been futile without divine succor, all the honor is ascribed unto the Lord. The passage may be viewed as a beautiful parable of the work of salvation; men are not saved without prayer, repentance, etc., but none of those save a man, salvation is altogether of the Lord. Canaan was not conquered without the armies of Israel, but equally true is it that is was not conquered by them; the Lord was the conqueror, and the people were but instruments in his hands.

Neither did their own arm save them. They could not ascribe their memorable victories to themselves; he who made sun and moon stand still for them was worthy of all their praise. A negative is put both upon their weapons and themselves as if to show us how ready men are to ascribe success to second causes.

But thy right hand, and thine arm, and the light of thy countenance. The divine hand actively fought for them, the divine arm powerfully sustained them with more than human energy, and the divine smile inspired them with dauntless courage. Who could not win with such triple help, though earth, death, and hell should rise in war against him? What mattered the tallness of the sons of Anak, or the terror of their chariots of iron, they were as nothing when Jehovah arose for the avenging of Israel.

Because thou hadst a favor unto them. Here is the fountain from whence every stream of mercy flows. The Lord's delight in his people, his peculiar affection, his distinguishing regards—this is the mainspring which moves every wheel of a gracious providence. Israel was a chosen nation, hence their victories and the scattering of their foes; believers are an elect people, hence their spiritual blessings and conquests. There was nothing in the people themselves to secure them success, the Lord's favour alone did it, and it is ever so in our case, our hope of final glory must not rest on anything in ourselves, but on the free and sovereign favor of the Lord of Hosts.

4 Thou art my King, O God: command deliverances for Jacob.

44:4. Thou art my King, O God. Knowing right well thy power and grace my heart is glad to own thee for her sovereign prince. Who among the mighty are so illustrious as thou art? To whom, then, should I yield my homage or turn for aid? God of my fathers in the olden time, thou art my soul's monarch and liege Lord.
Command deliverances for Jacob. To whom should a people look but to their king? he it is who, by virtue of his office, fights their battles for them. In the case of our King, how easy it is for him to scatter all our foes! O Lord, the King of kings, with what ease canst thou rescue thy people; a word of thine can do it, give but the command and thy persecuted people shall be free. Jacob's long life was crowded with trials and deliverances, and his descendants are here called by his name, as if to typify the similarity of their experience to that of their great forefather. He who would win the blessings of Israel must share the sorrows of Jacob. This verse contains a personal declaration and an intercessory prayer; those can pray best who make most sure of their personal interest in God, and those who have the fullest assurance that the Lord is their God should be the foremost to plead for the rest of the tried family of the faithful.

5 Through thee will we push down our enemies: through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us.

44:5. Through thee will we push down our enemies. The fight was very close, bows were of no avail, and swords failed to be of service, it came to daggers drawing, and hand to hand wrestling, pushing and tugging. Jacob's God was renewing in the seed of Jacob their father's wrestling. And how fared it with faith then? Could she stand foot to foot with her foe and hold her own? Yea, verily, she came forth victorious from the encounter, for she is great at a close push, and overthrows all her adversaries, the Lord being her helper.

Through thy name will we tread them under that rise up against us. The Lord's name served instead of weapons, and enabled those who used it to leap on their foes and crush them with jubilant velour. In union and communion with God, saints work wonders; if God be for us, who can be against us? Mark well that all the conquests of these believers are said to be "through thee, "through thy name:" never let us forget this, lest going a warfare at our own charges, we fail most ignominiously. Let us not, however, fall into the equally dangerous sin of distrust, for the Lord can make the weakest of us equal to any emergency. Though today we are timid and defenseless as sheep, he can by his power make us strong as the firstling of his bullock, and cause us to push as with the horns of unicorns, until those who rose up against us shall be so crushed and battered as never to rise again. Those who of themselves can scarcely keep their feet, but like little babes totter and fall, are by divine assistance made to overthrow their foes, and set their feet upon their necks. Read Christian's fight with Apollyon, and see how

"The man so bravely played the man
He made the fiend to fly."

6 For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me.

44:6. For I will not trust in my bow, neither shall my sword save me. Thy people Israel, under thy guidance, shouldered out the heathen, and gained their land, not by skill of weapons or prowess of arms, but by thy power alone; therefore will we renounce for ever all reliance upon outward confidences, of which other men make such boast, and we will cast ourselves upon the omnipotence of our God. Bows having been newly introduced by King Saul, were regarded as
very formidable weapons in the early history of Israel, but they are here laid aside together with the all conquering sword, in order that there may be room for faith in the living God. This verse, in the first person singular, may serve as the confession of faith of every believer renouncing his own righteousness and strength, and looking alone to the Lord Jesus. O for grace to stand to this self renunciation, for alas! Our proud nature is all too apt to fix its trust on the puffed up and supposititious power of the creature. Arm of flesh, how dare I trust thee? How dare I bring upon myself the curse of those who rely upon man?

7 But thou hast saved us from our enemies, and hast put them to shame that hated us.

44:7. But thou hast saved us from our enemies. In ages past all our rescues have been due to thee, O God. Never hast thou failed us. Out of every danger thou has brought us.

And hast put them to shame that hated us. With the back of thy saving hand thou hast given them a cuff which has made them hide their faces; thou hast defeated them in such a manner as to make them ashamed of themselves to be overthrown by such puny adversaries as they thought the Israelites to be. The double action of God in blessing his people and confounding his enemies is evermore to be observed; Pharaoh is drowned, while Israel passes through the sea; Amalek is smitten, while the tribes rejoice; the heathen are chased from their abodes, while the sons of Jacob rest beneath their vine and fig tree.

8 In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever. Selah.

44:8 In God we boast all the day long. We have abundant reason for doing so while we recount his mighty acts. What blessed boasting is this! it is the only sort of boasting that is bearable. All other manna bred worms and stank except that which was laid up before the Lord, and all other boasting is loathsome save this glorying in the Lord, which is laudable and pleasing.

And praise thy name for ever. Praise should be perpetual. If there were no new acts of love, yet ought the Lord to be praised for what he has done for his people. High let the song be lifted up as we bring to remembrance the eternal love which chose us, predestinated us to be sons, redeemed us with a price, and then enriched us with all the fullness of God.

Selah. A pause comes in fitly here, when we are about to descend from the highest to the lowest key. No longer are we to hear Miriam's timbrel, but rather Rachel's weeping.

9 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame; and goest not forth with our armies.

44: 9 But thou hast cast off, and put us to shame. Here the patriot bard begins to contrast the past glories of the nation's history with its present sadness and distress; which he does not ascribe to the death of some human champion, or to the accidents of war, but solely and alone to the withdrawal of Israel's God. It seemed to the mourner that Jehovah had grown weary of his people and put them away in abhorrence, as men lay aside leprous garments, loathing the sight of them.
To show his displeasure he had made his people to be ridiculed by the heathen, whose easy victories over their largest armies covered Israel with disgrace. Alas! For a church and people when the Lord in the active energy of his Spirit withdraws from them, they want no greater shame or sorrow. He will not cast away his people finally and totally, but many a church has been left to defeat and disgrace on account of sin, and therefore all churches should be exceedingly watchful lest the like should happen to themselves. Poverty and distress bring no shame on a people, but the Lord’s absence takes from a church everything which can exalt and ennoble.

*And goest not forth with our armies.* If the Lord be not the leader, of what avail are strong battalions? Vain are the combined efforts of the most zealous workers if God’s arm be not revealed. May none of us in our churches have to mourn over the ministry, the Sabbath school, the missionary work, the visiting, the street preaching, left to be carried out without the divine aid. If our great ally will not go with us our defeat is inevitable.

10 Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy: and they which hate us spoil for themselves.

**44: 10 Thou makest us to turn back from the enemy.** The humiliating consciousness that the Lord has left them soon makes men cowards. Flight closes the fight of those who have not the Lord in the van.

**And they which hate us spoil for themselves.** After defeat and retreat, comes spoliation. The poor, vanquished nation paid a terrible penalty for being overcome; plunder and murder desolated the conquered land, and the invaders loaded themselves with every precious thing which they could carry away. In spiritual experience we know what it is to be despoiled by our enemies; doubts and fears rob us of our comforts, and terrible forebodings spoil us of our hopes; and all because the Lord, for wise purposes, sees fit to leave us to ourselves. Alas! For the deserted soul; no calamity can equal the sorrow of being left of God, though it be but for a small moment.

11 Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat; and hast scattered us among the heathen.

**44: 11 Thou hast given us like sheep appointed for meat.** As sheep are slaughtered for food, so were the people slain in flocks, with ease, and frequency. Not with dignity of sacrifice, but with the cruelty of the shambles, were they put to death. God appeared to give them up like sheep allotted to the butcher, to abandon them as the hireling abandons the flock to wolves. The complaint is bitterly eloquent.

**And hast scattered us among the heathen.** Many were carried into captivity, far off from the public worship of the temple of God, to pine as exiles among idolaters. All this is ascribed to the Lord, as being allowed by him, and even appointed by his decree. It is well to trace the hand of God in our sorrows, for it is surely there.
12 Thou sellest thy people for nought, and dost not increase thy wealth by their price.

44: 12 Thou sellest thy people for nought. As men sell merchandise to any one who cares to have it, so the Lord seemed to hand over his people to any nation who might choose to make war upon them. Meanwhile no good result was perceptible from all the miseries of Israel; so far as the psalmist could discover, the Lord's name received no honour from the sorrows of his people; they were given away to their foes as if they were so little valued as not to be worth the ordinary price of slaves, and the Lord did not care to gain by them so long as they did but suffer. The woe expressed in this line is as vinegar mingled with gall: the expression is worthy of the weeping prophet.

And dost not increase thy wealth by their price. If Jehovah had been glorified by all this wretchedness it could have been borne patiently, but it was the reverse; the Lord's name had, through the nation's calamities, been despised by the insulting heathen, who counted the overthrow of Israel to be the defeat of Jehovah himself. It always lightens a believer's trouble when he can see that God's great name will be honored thereby, but it is a grievous aggravation of misery when we appear to be tortured in vain. For our comfort let us rest satisfied that in reality the Lord is glorified, and when no revenue of glory is manifestly rendered to him, he none the less accomplishes his own secret purposes, of which the grand result will be revealed in due time. We do not suffer for nought, nor are our griefs without result.

13 Thou makest us a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and a derision to them that are round about us.

44: 13 Thou makes us a reproach to our neighbours. Scorn is always an intensely bitter ingredient in the cup of the oppressed. The taunts and jeers of the victors pain the vanquished almost as much as their swords and spears. It was a mystery indeed that God should suffer his royal nation, his peculiar people, to be taunted by all who dwelt near them.

A scorn and a derision to them that are round about us. The down trodden people had become a common jest; "as base as Israel" cried the cruel tongue of the tyrant: so ordinary had the scorn become that the neighboring nations, though perhaps equally oppressed, borrowed the language of the conquerors, and joined in the common mockery. To be a derision to both strong and weak, superiors, equals, and inferiors, is hard to bear. The tooth of scoffing bites to the bone. The psalmist sets forth the brutality of the enemy in many words, in order to move the pity of the Lord, to whose just anger he traced all the sorrows of his people: he used the very best of arguments, for the sufferings of his chosen touch the heart of God far more readily than any other reasonings. Blessed be his name, our great Advocate above knows how to avail himself of this powerful plea, and if we are at this hour enduring reproach for truth's sake, he will urge it before the eternal throne; and shall not God avenge his own elect? A father will not long endure to see
his children despitefully entreated; he may put up with it for a little, but his love will speedily arouse his anger, and then it will fare ill with the persecutor and reviler.

14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people.

44: 14 Thou makest us a byword among the heathen, a shaking of the head among the people. The lamentation is here repeated. They had sunk so low that none did them reverence, but universally and publicly they were treated as infamous and despicable. Those who reviled others dragged in Israel's name by the way as a garnish to their insults, and if perchance they saw one of the seed of Jacob in the street they used lewd gestures to annoy him. Those whose heads were emptiest wagged them at the separated people. They were the common butts of every fool's arrow. Such has been the lot of the righteous in ages past, such is their portion in a measure now, such may be yet again their heritage in the worst sense. The world knows not its nobility, it has no eye for true excellence: it found a cross for the Master, and cannot be expected to award crowns to his disciples.

15 My confusion is continually before me, and the shame of my face hath covered me,

44: 15 My confusion is continually before me. The poet makes himself the representative of his nation, and declares his own constant distress of soul. He is a man of ill blood who is unconcerned for the sorrows of the church of which he is a member, or the nation of which he is a citizen; the better the heart the greater its sympathy.

And the shame of my face hath covered me. One constant blush, like a crimson mantle, covered him both before God and man; he felt before God that the divine desertion was well deserved, and before man, that he and his people were despicable indeed now that heavenly help was gone. It is well for a nation when there still exist in it men who lay to heart its sin and shame. God will have pity on his chastened ones, and it is a pledge thereof when he sends us choice ministers, men of tenderness, who make the people's case their own.

16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth; by reason of the enemy and avenger.

44: 16 For the voice of him that reproacheth and blasphemeth. It seems that from mocking the people of God, the adversaries advanced to reviling God himself, they proceeded from persecution to the sin which is next of kin, namely blasphemy.

By reason of the enemy and avenger. The enemy boasted of avenging the defeats of their forefathers; they took revenge for the ancient victories of Israel, by insulting over the now fallen people. Here was a sad plight for a nation to be placed in, but it was by no means a hopeless
case, for the Lord who brought all this evil upon them could with equal ease release them from it. So long as Israel looked alone to her God, and not to her own arm, no foe could retain her beneath his foot; she must arise, for God was on her side.

17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee, neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant.

44: 17 All this is come upon us; yet have we not forgotten thee. Here the psalmist urges that Israel had not turned away from her allegiance to Jehovah. When in the midst of many griefs we can still cling to God in loving obedience, it must be well with us. True fidelity can endure rough usage. Those who follow God for what they get, will leave him when persecution is stirred up, but not so the sincere believer; he will not forget his God, even though the worst come to the worst.

Neither have we dealt falsely in thy covenant. No idol was set up, the ordained worship was not relinquished, God was still nationally acknowledged, and therefore the psalmist is more earnest that the Lord should interpose. This and the succeeding verses are suitable for the lips of martyrs, indeed the entire psalm might be called the martyr's complaint. Not for sin but for righteousness did the saints suffer, not for falsehood but for truth, not for forsaking the Lord, but for following hard after him. Sufferings of such a sort may be very terrible, but they are exceedingly honourable, and the comforts of the Lord shall sustain those who are accounted worthy to suffer for Christ's sake.

18 Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way;

44: 18 Our heart is not turned back, neither have our steps declined from thy way. Heart and life were agreed, and both were true to the Lord's way. Neither within nor without had the godly sufferers offended; they were not absolutely perfect, but they were sincerely free from all willful transgression. It was a healthy sign for the nation that her prophet poet could testify to her uprightness before God, both in heart and act; far oftener the case would have worn quite another color, for the tribes were all too apt to set up other gods and forsake the rock of their salvation.

19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons, and covered us with the shadow of death.

44: 19 Though thou hast sore broken us in the place of dragons. Though utterly crushed and rendered desolate and driven as it were to associate with creatures such as jackals, owls, serpents, which haunt deserted ruins, yet Israel remained faithful. To be true to a smiting God, even when the blows lay our joys in ruinous heaps, is to be such as the Lord delighteth in. Better to be broken by God than from God. Better to be in the place of dragons than of deceivers.
And covered us with the shadow of death. The language is very strong. The nation is described as completely enveloped in the dense darkness of despair and death, covered up as though confined in hopelessness. Yet the claim is made that they still remained mindful of their God, and a glorious plea it is. Better death than false of faith. Those who are true to God shall never find him false to them.

20 If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god;

44: 20 An appeal is now made to the omniscience of God; he is himself called in to bear witness that Israel had not set up another God.

If we have forgotten the name of our God. This would be the first step in apostasy; men first forget the true, and then adore the false.

Or stretched out our hands to a strange god. Stretching out the hands was the symbol of adoration or of entreaty in prayer; this they had not offered to any of the idols of the heathens.

21 Shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart.

44: 21 Shall not God search this out? Could such idolatry be concealed from him? Would he not with holy indignation have detected unfaithfulness to itself, even had it been hidden in the heart and unrevealed in the life?

For he knoweth the secrets of the heart. He is acquainted with the inner workings of the mind, and therefore this could not have escaped him. Not the heart only which is secret, but the secrets of the heart, which are secrets of the most secret thing, are as open to God as a book to a reader. The reasoning is that the Lord himself knew the people to be sincerely his followers, and therefore was not visiting them for sin; hence, then, affliction evidently came from quite another cause.

22 Yea, for thy sake are we killed all the day long; we are counted as sheep for the slaughter.

44: 22 Yea, i.e., assuredly, certainly,

for thy sake, not for our offences, but for obeying thee; the trials of these suppliants came upon them because they were loyal to their God.

Are we killed all the day long. Persecution never ceased to hound them to the death, they had no respite and found no door of escape; and all in God's behalf, because they would not forsake their covenant God and King.
We are counted as sheep for the slaughter; as if we were only meant to be killed, and made on purpose to be victims; as if it were as easy and as innocent a thing to slay us as to slaughter sheep. In this and following verses we clearly hear the martyr's cry. From Piedmont and Smithfield, from St. Bartholomew's massacre and the dragoonades of Claverhouse, this appeal goes up to heaven, while the souls under the altar continue their solemn cry for vengeance. Not long shall the church plead in this fashion, her shame shall be recompensed, her triumph shall dawn.

23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord? Arise, cast us not off for ever.

44: 23 Awake, why sleepest thou, O Lord. God sleepeth not, but the psalmist puts it so, as if on no other theory he could explain the divine inaction. He would fain see the great Judge ending oppression and giving peace to the holy, therefore does he cry "Awake:" he cannot understand why the reign of tyranny and the oppression of virtue are permitted, and therefore he enquires

Why sleepest thou? Arise. This is all thou needest to do, one move of thine will save us.

Cast us not off for ever. Long enough hast thou deserted us; the terrible effects of thine absence are destroying us; end thou our calamities, and let thine anger be appeased. In persecuting times men are apt to cry, Where is the God of Israel? At the thought of what the saints have endured from their haughty enemies, we join our voices in the great martyr cry and sing with the bard of Paradise:

"Avenge, O Lord,
thy slaughtered saints, whose bones
Lie scattered on the
Alpine mountains cold;
Even those who kept thy truth
so pure of old,
When all our fathers
worshipped stocks and stones,
Forget not:
in thy book record their groans
Who were thy sheep."

24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression?

44: 24 Wherefore hidest thou thy face, and forgettest our affliction and our oppression? Not petulantly, but piteously and inquiringly, we may question the Lord when his dealings are mysterious. We are permitted to order our case with arguments, and plead the right before the face of the august Majesty. Why, Lord, dost thou become oblivious of thy children's woes? This question is far more easily asked than answered; it is hard, indeed, in the midst of persecution to see the reason why we are left to suffer so severely.
25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust: our belly cleaveth unto the earth.

44: 25 For our soul is bowed down to the dust. Our heart is low as low can be, as low as the dust beneath the soles of men's feet. When the heart sinks, the man is down indeed. Heart sorrow is the very heart of sorrow.

Our belly cleaveth unto the earth. The man is prone upon the earth, and he is not only down, but fastened down on the earth and glued to it. It is misery, indeed, when the heart cannot escape from itself, is shut up in its own dejection, and bound with the cords of despondency. God's saints may be thus abject, they may be not only in the dust, but on the dunghill with Job and Lazarus, but their day cometh, and their tide will turn, and they shall have a brave summer after their bitter winter.

26 Arise for our help, and redeem us for thy mercies' sake.

44: 26 Arise for our help. A short, but sweet and comprehensive prayer, much to the point, clear, simple, urgent, as all prayers should be.

And redeem us for thy mercies' sake. Here is the final plea. The favor is redemption, the plea is mercy; and this, too, in the case of faithful sufferers who had not forgotten their God. Mercy is always a safe plea, and never will any man find a better.

"Were I a martyr at the stake,  
I would plead my Savior’s name,  
Entreat a pardon for his sake,  
And urge no other claim."

Here ends this memorable Psalm, but in heaven its power ends not, but brings down deliverance for the tried people of God.
Psalm 45

TITLE. The many titles of this Psalm mark its royalty, its deep and solemn import, and the delight the writer had in it. To the Chief Musician upon Shoshannim. The most probable translation of this word is upon the lilies, and it is either a poetical title given to this noblest of songs after the Oriental manner, or it may relate to the tune to which it was set, or to the instrument which was meant to accompany it. We incline to the first theory, and if it be the true one, it is easy to see the fitness of borrowing a name for so beautiful, so pure, so choice, so matchless a poem from the golden lilies, whose bright array outshone the glory of Solomon. For the sons of Korah. Special singers are appointed for so divine a hymn. King Jesus deserves to be praised not with random, ranting ravings, but with the sweetest and most skilful music of the best trained choristers. The purest hearts in the spiritual temple are the most harmonious songsters in the ears of God; acceptable song is not a matter so much of tuneful voices as of sanctified affections, but in no case should we sing of Jesus with unprepared hearts. Maschil, an instructive ode, not an idle lay, or a romancing ballad, but a Psalm of holy teaching, didactic and doctrinal. This proves that it is to be spiritually understood. Blessed are the people who know the meaning of its joyful sound. A Song of loves. Not a carnal sentimental love song, but a celestial canticle of everlasting love fit for the tongues and ears of angels.

SUBJECT. Some here see Solomon and Pharaoh's daughter only—they are short sighted; others see both Solomon and Christ—they are cross eyed; well focused spiritual eyes see here Jesus only, or if Solomon be present at all, it must be like those hazy shadows of by passers which cross the face of the camera, and therefore are dimly traceable upon a photographic landscape. "The King, "the God whose throne is for ever and ever, is no mere mortal and his everlasting dominion is not bounded by Lebanon and Egypt's river. This is no wedding song of earthly nuptials, but an Epitalamium for the Heavenly Bridegroom and his elect spouse.

DIVISION. Ps 45:1 is an announcement of intention, a preface to the song; Ps 45:3 adores the matchless beauty of Messiah; and from Ps 45:3-9, he is addressed in admiring ascriptions of praise. Ps 45:10-12 are spoken to the bride. The church is further spoken of in Ps 45:13-15, and the Psalm closes with another address to the King, foretelling his eternal fame, Ps 45:16-17.

1 My heart is inditing a good matter: I speak of the things which I have made touching the king: my tongue is the pen of a ready writer.

45: 1 My heart. There is no writing like that dictated by the heart. Heartless hymns are insults to heaven.

Is inditing a good matter. A good heart will only be content with good thoughts. Where the fountain is good good streams
will flow forth. The learned tell us that the word may be read overflows, or as others, boils or bubbles up, denoting the warmth of the writer's love, the fullness of his heart, and the consequent richness and glow of his utterance, as though it were the ebullition of his inmost soul, when most full of affection. We have here no single cold expression; the writer is not one who frigidly studies the elegancies and proprieties of poetry, his stanzas are the natural outburst of his soul, comparable to the boiling jets of the Iceland geysers of Hecla. As the corn offered in sacrifice was parched in the pan, so is this tribute of love hot with sincere devotion. It is a sad thing when the heart is cold with a good matter, and worse when it is warm with a bad matter, but incomparably well when a warm heart and a good matter meet together. O that we may often offer to God an acceptable minchah, a sweet oblation fresh from the pan of hearts warmed with gratitude and admiration.

**I speak of the things which I have made touching the King.** This song has "the King" for its only subject, and for the King's honour alone was it composed, well might its writer call it a good matter. The psalmist did not write carelessly; he calls his poem his works, or things which he had made. We are not to offer to the Lord that which costs us nothing. Good material deserves good workmanship. We should well digest in our heart's affections and our mind's meditations any discourse or poem in which we speak of one so great and glorious as our Royal Lord. As our version reads it, the psalmist wrote experimentally things which he had made his own, and personally tasted and handled concerning the King.

**My tongue is the pen of a ready writer,** not so much for rapidity, for there the tongue always has the preference, but for exactness, elaboration, deliberation, and skillfulness of expression. Seldom are the excited utterances of the mouth equal in real weight and accuracy to the verba scripta [word of composition] of a thoughtful accomplished penman; but here the writer, though filled with enthusiasm, speaks as correctly as a practiced writer; his utterances therefore are no ephemeral sentences, but such as fall from men who sit down calmly to write for eternity. It is not always that the best of men are in such a key, and when they are they should not restrain the gush of their hallowed feelings. Such a condition of heart in a gifted mind creates that auspicious hour in which poetry pours forth her tuneful numbers to enrich the service of song in the house of the Lord.

2 Thou art fairer than the children of men: grace is poured into thy lips: therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.

**45: 2 Thou.** As though the King himself had suddenly appeared before him, the psalmist lost in admiration of his person, turns from his preface to address his Lord. A loving heart has the power to realize its object. The eyes of a true heart see more than the eyes of the head. Moreover, Jesus reveals himself when we are pouring forth our affections towards him. It is usually the case that when we are ready Christ appears. If our
heart is warm it is an index that the sun is shining, and when we enjoy his heat we shall soon behold his light.

**Thou art fairer than the children of men.** In person, but especially in mind and character, the King of saints is peerless in beauty. The Hebrew word is doubled, "Beautiful, beautiful art thou." Jesus is so emphatically lovely that words must be doubled, strained, yea, exhausted before he can be described. Among the children of men many have through grace been lovely in character, yet they have each had a flaw; but in Jesus we behold every feature of a perfect character in harmonious proportion. He is lovely everywhere, and from every point of view, but never more so than when we view him in conjugal union with his church; then love gives a ravishing flush of glory to his loveliness.

**Grace is poured into thy lips.** Beauty and eloquence make a man majestic when they are united; they both dwell in perfection in the all fair, all eloquent Lord Jesus. Grace of person and grace of speech reach their highest point in him. Grace has in the most copious manner been poured upon Christ, for it pleased the Father that in him should all fullness dwell, and now grace is in superabundance, poured forth from his lips to cheer and enrich his people. The testimony, the promises, the invitations, the consolations of our King pour forth from him in such volumes of meaning that we cannot but contrast those cataracts of grace with the speech of Moses which did but drop as the rain, and distil as the dew. Whoever in personal communion with the Wellbeloved has listened to his voice will feel that "never man spake like this man." Well did the bride say of him, "his lips are like lilies dropping sweet smelling myrrh." One word from himself dissolved the heart of Saul of Tarsus, and turned him into an apostle, another word raised up John the Divine when fainting in the Isle of Patmos. Oftentimes a sentence from his lips has turned our own midnight into morning, our winter into spring.

**Therefore God hath blessed thee for ever.** John Calvin reads it, Because God hath blessed thee for ever. Christ is blessed of God, blessed for ever, and this is to us one great reason for his beauty, and the source of the gracious words which proceed out of his lips. The rare endowments of the man Christ Jesus are given him of the Father, that by them his people may be blessed with all spiritual blessings in union with himself. But if we take our own translation, we read that the Father has blessed the Mediator as a reward for all his gracious labors; and right well does he deserve the recompense. Whom God blesses we should bless, and the more so because all his blessedness is communicated to us.

3 Gird thy sword upon thy thigh, O most mighty, with thy glory and thy majesty.
ready for use. Christ is the true champion of the church, others are but underlings who must borrow strength from him; the single arm of Immanuel is the sole hope of the faithful. Our prayer should be that of this verse. There is at this moment an apparent suspension of our Lord's former power, we must by importunate prayer call him to the conflict, for like the Greeks without Achilles we are soon overcome by our enemies, and we are but dead men if Jesus be not in our midst.

**O most mighty.** A title well deserved, and not given from empty courtesy like the serenities, excellencies and highnesses of our fellow mortals—titles, which are but sops for vain glory. Jesus is the truest of heroes. Hero worship in his case alone is commendable. He is mighty to save, mighty in love.

**With thy glory and thy majesty.** Let thy sword both win thee renown and dominion, or as it may mean, gird on with thy sword thy robes which indicate thy royal splendor. Love delights to see the Beloved arrayed as beseemeth his excellency; she weeps as she sees him in the garments of humiliation, she rejoices to behold him in the vestments of his exaltation. Our precious Christ can never be made too much of. Heaven itself is but just good enough for him. All the pomp that angels and archangels, and thrones, and dominions, and principalities, and powers can pour at his feet is too little for him. Only his own essential glory is such as fully answers to the desire of his people, who can never enough extol him.

4 And in thy majesty ride prosperously because of truth and meekness and righteousness; and thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.

**And in thy majesty ride prosperously.** The hero monarch armed and appareled is now entreated to ascend his triumphal car. Would to God that our Immanuel would come forth in the chariot of love to conquer our spiritual foes and seize by power the souls whom he has bought with blood.

**Because of truth and meekness and righteousness.** These words may be rendered, *ride forth upon truth and meekness and righteousness.*—Three noble chargers to draw the war chariot of the gospel. In the sense of our translation it is a most potent argument to urge with our Lord that the cause of the true, the humble, and the good, calls for his advocacy. Truth will be ridiculed, meekness will be oppressed, and righteousness slain, unless the God, the Man in whom these precious things are incarnated, shall arise for their vindication. Our earnest petition ought ever to be that Jesus would lay his almighty arm to the work of grace lest the good cause languish and wickedness prevail.

**And thy right hand shall teach thee terrible things.** Foreseeing the result of divine working, the psalmist prophesies that the uplifted arm of Messiah will reveal to the King's own eyes the terrible overthrow of his foes. Jesus needs no guide but his own right hand, no teacher but his
own might; may he instruct us all in what he can perform, by achieving it speedily before our gladdened eyes.

5 Thine arrows are sharp in the heart of the king's enemies; whereby the people fall under thee.

45:5 Thine arrows. Our King is master of all weapons: he can strike those who are near and those afar off with equal force.

Are sharp. Nothing that Jesus does is ill done, he uses no blunted shafts, no pointless darts.

In the heart of the King's enemies. Our Captain aims at men's hearts rather than their heads, and he hits them too; point blank are his shots, and they enter deep into the vital part of man's nature. Whether for love or vengeance, Christ never misses aim, and when his arrows stick, they cause a smart not soon forgotten, a wound which only he can heal. Jesus' arrows of conviction are sharp in the quiver of his word, and sharp when on the bow of his ministers, but they are most known to be so when they find a way into careless hearts. They are his arrows, he made them, he shoots them. He makes them sharp, and he makes them enter the heart. May none of us ever fall under the darts of his judgment, for none kill so surely as they.

Whereby the people fall under thee. On either side the slain of the Lord are many when Jesus leads on the war. Nations tremble and turn to him when he shoots abroad his truth. Under his power and presence, men are stricken down as though pricked in the heart. There is no standing against the Son of God when his bow of might is in his hands. Terrible will be that hour when his bow shall be made quite naked, and bolts of devouring fire shall be hurled upon his adversaries: then shall princes fall and nations perish.

6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever: the sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre.

45:6 Thy throne, O God, is for ever and ever. To whom can this be spoken but our Lord? The psalmist cannot restrain his adoration. His enlightened eye sees in the royal Husband of the church, God, God to be adored, God reigning, God reigning everlastingly. Blessed sight! Blind are the eyes that cannot see God in Christ Jesus! We never appreciate the tender condescension of our King in becoming one flesh with his church, and placing her at his right hand, until we have fully rejoiced in his essential glory and deity. What a mercy for us that our Saviour is God, for who but a God could execute the work of salvation? What a glad thing it is that he reigns on a throne which will never pass away, for we need both sovereign grace and eternal love to secure our happiness. Could Jesus cease to reign we should cease to be blessed, and were he not God, and therefore eternal, this must be the case. No throne can endure for ever, but that on which God himself sitteth.
The sceptre of thy kingdom is a right sceptre. He is the lawful monarch of all things that be. His rule is founded in right, its law is right, its result is right. Our King is no usurper and no oppressor. Even when he shall break his enemies with a rod of iron, he will do no man wrong; his vengeance and his grace are both in conformity with justice. Hence we trust him without suspicion; he cannot err; no affliction is too severe, for he sends it; no judgment too harsh, for he ordains it. O blessed hands of Jesus! the reigning power is safe with you. All the just rejoice in the government of the King who reigns in righteousness.

7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness: therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows.

45:7 Thou lovest righteousness, and hatest wickedness. Christ Jesus is not neutral in the great contest between right and wrong: as warmly as he loves the one he abhors the other. What qualifications for a sovereign! what grounds of confidence for a people! The whole of our Lord's life on earth proved the truth of these words; his death to put away sin and bring in the reign of righteousness, sealed the fact beyond all question; his providence by which he rules from his mediatorial throne, when rightly understood, reveals the same; and his final assize will proclaim it before all worlds. We should imitate him both in his love and hate; they are both needful to complete a righteous character.

Therefore God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness above thy fellows. Jesus as Mediator owned God as his God, to whom, being found in fashion as a man, he became obedient. On account of our Lord's perfect life he is now rewarded with superior joy. Others there are to whom grace has given a sacred fellowship with him, but by their universal consent and his own merit, he is prince among them, the gladdest of all because the cause of all their gladness. At Oriental feasts oil was poured on the heads of distinguished and very welcome guests; God himself anoints the man Christ Jesus, as he sits at the heavenly feasts, anoints him as a reward for his work, with higher and fuller joy than any else can know; thus is the Son of man honored and rewarded for all his pains. Observe the indisputable testimony to Messiah's Deity in verse six, and to his manhood in the present verse. Of whom could this be written but of Jesus of Nazareth? Our Christ is our Elohim. Jesus is God with us.

8 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia, out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.

45:8 All thy garments smell of myrrh, and aloes, and cassia. The divine anointing causes fragrance to distil from the robes of the Mighty Hero. He is delightful to every sense, to the eyes most fair, to the ear most gracious, to the spiritual nostril most sweet. The excellences of Jesus are all most precious, comparable to the rarest spices; they are most varied, and to be likened not to myrrh alone, but to all the perfumes blended in due proportion. The Father always finds a pleasure in him, in him he is well pleased; and all regenerated spirits rejoice in him, for he is made of God unto us, "wisdom, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption." Note that not
only is Jesus most sweet, but even his garments are so; everything that he has to do with is perfumed by his person. All his garments are thus fragrant; not some of them, but all; we delight as much in his purple of dominion as in the white of his priesthood, his mantle as our prophet is as dear to us as his seamless coat as our friend. All his dress is fragrant with all sweetness. To attempt to spiritualize each spice here mentioned would be unprofitable, the evident sense is that all sweetness meet in Jesus, and are poured forth wherever he is present.

*Out of the ivory palaces, whereby they have made thee glad.* The abode of Jesus now is imperial in splendor, ivory and gold but faintly image his royal seat; there is he made glad in the presence of the Father, and in the company of his saints. Oh, to behold him with his perfumed garments on! The very smell of him from afar ravishes our spirit, what must it be to be on the other side of the pearl gate, within the palace of ivory, amid those halls of Zion, "*conjubilant with song,* where is the throne of David, and the abiding presence of the Prince! To think of his gladness, to know that he is full of joy, gives gladness at this moment to our souls. We poor exiles can sing in our banishment since our King, our Wellbeloved, has come to his throne.

9 Kings' daughters were among thy honourable women: upon thy right hand did stand the queen in gold of Ophir.

45:9 *King's daughters were among thy honourable women.* Our Lord's courts lack not for courtiers, and those the fairest and noblest. Virgin souls are maids of honour to the court, the true lilies of heaven. The lowly and pure in heart are esteemed by the Lord Jesus as his most familiar friends, their place in his palace is not among the menials but near the throne. The day will come when those who are "*king's daughters*" literally will count it their greatest honour to serve the church, and, meanwhile every believing sister is spiritually a King's daughter, a member of the royal family of heaven.

*Upon thy right hand,* in the place of love, honour, and power,

*did stand the queen in gold of Ophir:* the church shares her Lord's honour and happiness, he sets her in the place of dignity, he clothes her with the best of the best. Gold is the richest of metals, and Ophir gold the purest known. Jesus bestows nothing inferior or of secondary value upon his beloved church. In imparted and imputed righteousness the church is divinely arrayed. Happy those who are members of a church so honored, so beloved; unhappy those who persecute the beloved people, for as a husband will not endure that his wife should be insulted or maltreated, so neither will the heavenly Husband; he will speedily avenge his own elect. Mark, then, the solemn pomp of the verses we have read. The King is seen with rapture, he girds himself as a warrior, robes himself as a monarch, mounts his chariot, darts his arrows, and conquers his foes. Then he ascends his throne with his sceptre in his hand, fills the palace hall with perfume brought from his secret chambers, his retinue stand around him, and, fairest of all, his bride is at his right hand, with daughters of subject princes as her attendants. Faith is no stranger to this sight, and every time she looks she adores, she loves, she rejoices, she expects.
10 Hearken, O daughter, and consider, and incline thine ear; forget also thine own people, and thy father's house;

45:10 **Hearken, O daughter, and consider.** Ever is this the great duty of the church. Faith cometh by hearing, and confirmation by consideration. No precept can be more worthy of the attention of those who are honored to be espoused to Christ that that which follows.

**And incline thine ear.** Lean forward so that no syllable may be unheard. The whole faculties of the mind should be bent upon receiving holy teaching.

**Forget also thine own people, and thy father's house.** To renounce the world is not easy, but it must be done by all who are affianced to the Great King, for a divided heart he cannot endure; it would be misery to the beloved one as well as dishonor to her Lord. Evil acquaintances, and even those who are but neutral, must be forsaken, they can confer no benefits, they must inflict injury. The house of our nativity is the house of sin—we were shapen in iniquity; the carnal mind is enmity against God, we must come forth of the house of fallen nature, for it is built in the City of Destruction. Not that natural ties are broken by grace, but ties of the sinful nature, bonds of graceless affinity. We have much to forget as well as to learn, and the unlearning is so difficult that only diligent hearing, and considering, and bending of the whole soul to it, can accomplish the work; and even these would be too feeble did not divine grace assist. Yet why should we remember the Egypt from which we cam out? Are the leeks and the garlic, and the onions anything, when the iron bondage, and the slavish tasks, and the death dealing Pharaoh of hell are remembered? We part with folly for wisdom; with bubbles for eternal joys; with deceit for truth; with misery for bliss; with idols for the living God. O that Christians were more mindful of the divine precept here recorded; but, alas! Worldliness abounds; the church is defiled; and the glory of the Great King is veiled. Only when the whole church leads the separated life will the full splendor and power of Christianity shine forth upon the world.

11 So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty: for he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.

45:11 **So shall the king greatly desire thy beauty.** Wholehearted love is the duty and bliss of the marriage state in every case, but especially so in this lofty mystic marriage. The church must forsake all others and cleave to Jesus only, or she will not please him nor enjoy the full manifestation of his love. What less can he ask, what less may she dare propose than to be wholly his? Jesus sees a beauty in his church, a beauty which he delights in most when it is not marred by worldliness. He has always been most near and precious to his saints when they have cheerfully taken up his cross and followed him without the camp. His Spirit is grieved when they mingle themselves among the people and learn their ways. No great and lasting revival of
religion can be granted us till the professed lovers of Jesus prove their affection by coming out from an ungodly world, being separated, and touching not the unclean thing.

*For he is thy Lord; and worship thou him.* He has royal rights still; his condescending grace does not lessen but rather enforce his authority. Our Saviour is also our Ruler. The husband is the head of the wife; the love he bears her does not lessen but strengthen her obligation to obey. The church must reverence Jesus, and bow before him in prostrate adoration; his tender union with her gives her liberty, but not license; it frees her from all other burdens, but places his easy yoke upon her neck. Who would wish it to be otherwise? The service of God is heaven in heaven, and perfectly carried out it is heaven upon earth. Jesus, thou art he whom thy church praises in her unceasing songs, and adores in her perpetual service. Teach us to be wholly thine. Bear with us, and work by thy Spirit in us till thy will is done by us on earth as it is in heaven.

12 And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift; even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.

**45:12 And the daughter of Tyre shall be there with a gift.** When the church abounds in holiness, she shall know no lack of homage from the surrounding people. Her glory shall then impress and attract the heathen around, till they also unite in doing honour to her Lord. The power of missions abroad lies at home: a holy church will be a powerful church. Nor shall there be lack of treasure in her coffers when grace is in her heart; the free gifts of a willing people shall enable the workers for God to carry on their sacred enterprise without stint. Commerce shall send in its revenue to endow, not with forced levies and imperial taxes, but with willing gifts the church of the Great King.

*Even the rich among the people shall entreat thy favour.* Not by pandering to their follies, but by testifying against their sins, shall the wealthy be one to the faith of Jesus. They shall come not to favour the church but to beg for her favour. She shall not be the hireling of the great, but as a queen shall she dispense her favors to the suppliant throng of the rich among the people. We go about to beg for Christ like beggars for alms, and many who should know better will make compromises and become reticent of unpopular truth to please the great ones of the earth; not so will the true bride of Christ degrade herself, when her sanctification is more deep and more visible; then will the hearts of men grow liberal, and offerings from afar, abundant and continual, shall be presented at the throne of the Pacific Prince.

13 The king's daughter is all glorious within: her clothing is of wrought gold.

**45:13 The king's daughter is all glorious within.** Within her secret chambers her glory is great. Though unseen of men her Lord sees her, and commends her. "It doth not yet appear what we shall be." Or the passage may be understood as meaning within herself—her beauty is not outward only or mainly; the choicest of her charms are to be found in her heart, her secret
character, her inward desires. Truth and wisdom in the hidden parts are what the Lord regards; mere skin deep beauty is nothing in his eyes. The church is of royal extraction, of imperial dignity, for she is a king's daughter; and she has been purified and renewed in nature; for she is glorious within. Note the word all. The Bridegroom was said to have all his garments perfumed, and now the bride in all glorious within—entireness and completeness are great points. There is no mixture of ill savor in Jesus, nor shall there be alloy of unholiness in his people, his church shall be presented without spot or wrinkle, or any such thing.

*Her clothing is of wrought gold.* Best material and best workmanship. How laboriously did our Lord work out the precious material of his righteousness into a vesture for his people! no embroidery of golden threads can equal that masterpiece of holy art. Such clothing becomes on so honored by relationship to the Great King. The Lord looks to it that nothing shall be wanting to the glory and beauty of his bride.

14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework: the virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.

### 45:14 She shall be brought unto the king in raiment of needlework.

The day comes when the celestial marriage shall be openly celebrated, and these words describe the nuptial procession wherein the queen is brought to her royal Husband attended by her handmaidens. In the latter-day glory, and in the consummation of all things, the glory of the bride, the Lamb's wife, shall be seen by all the universe with admiration. While she was within doors, and her saints hidden ones, the church was glorious; what will be her splendor when she shall appear in the likeness of her Lord in the day of his manifestation? The finest embroidery is but a faint image of the perfection of the church when sanctified by the Spirit. This verse tells us of the ultimate rest of the church—the King's own bosom; of the way she comes to it, she is brought by the power of sovereign grace; of the time when this is done—in the future, she shall be, it does not yet appear; of the state in which she shall come—clad in richest array, and attended by brightest spirits.

*The virgins her companions that follow her shall be brought unto thee.* Those who love and serve the church for her Lord's sake shall share in her bliss "in that day." In one sense they are a part of the church, but for the sake of the imagery they are represented as maids of honour; and, though the figure may seem incongruous, they are represented as brought to the King with the same loving familiarity as the bride, because the true servants of the church are of the church, and partake in all her happiness. Note that those who are admitted to everlasting communion with Christ, are pure in heart—virgins, pure in company—her companions, pure in walk—that follow her. Let none hope to be brought into heaven at last who are not purified now.

15 With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought: they shall enter into the king's palace.
With gladness and rejoicing shall they be brought. Joy becomes a marriage feast. What joy will that be which will be seen at the feasts of paradise when all the redeemed shall be brought home! Gladness in the saints themselves, and rejoicing from the angels shall make the halls of the New Jerusalem ring again with shoutings.

They shall enter into the King's palace. Their peaceful abodes shall be where Jesus the King reigns in state for ever. They shall not be shut out but shut in. Rights of free entrance into the holiest of all shall be accorded them. Brought by grace, they shall enter into glory. If there was joy in the bringing, what in the entering? What in the abiding? The glorified are not field laborers in the plains of heaven, but sons who dwell at home, princes of the blood, resident in the royal palace. Happy hour when we shall enjoy all this and forget the sorrows of time in the triumph of eternity.

16 Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children, whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth.

Instead of thy fathers shall be thy children. The ancient saints who stood as fathers in the service of the Great King have all passed away; but a spiritual seed is found to fill their places. The veterans depart, but volunteers fill up the vacant places. The line of grace never becomes extinct. As long as time shall last, the true apostolical succession will be maintained.

Whom thou mayest make princes in all the earth. Servants of Christ are kings. Where a man has preached successfully, and evangelized a tribe or nation, he gets to himself more than regal honors, and his name is like the name of the great men that be upon the earth. Jesus is the king maker. Ambition of the noblest kind shall win her desire in the army of Christ; immortal crowns are distributed to his faithful soldiers. The whole earth shall yet be subdued for Christ, and honored are they, who shall, through grace, have a share in the conquest—these shall reign with Christ at his coming.

I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations: therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever.

I will make thy name to be remembered in all generations. Jehovah by the prophet's mouth promises to the Prince of Peace eternal fame as well as a continuous progeny. His name is his fame, his character, his person; these are dear to his people now—they never can forget them; and it shall be so as long as men exist. Names renowned in one generation have been unknown to the next era, but the laurels of Jesus shall ever be fresh, his renown ever new. God will see to this; his providence and his grace shall make it so. The fame of Messiah is not left to human guardianship; the Eternal guarantees it, and his promise never fails. All down the ages the memories of Gethsemane and Calvary shall glow with inextinguishable light; nor shall the lapse of time, the smoke of error, or the malice of hell be able to dim the glory of the Redeemer's fame.
Therefore shall the people praise thee for ever and ever. They shall confess thee to be what thou art, and shall render to thee in perpetuity the homage due. Praise is due from every heart to him who loved us, and redeemed us by his blood; this praise will never be fully paid, but will be ever a standing and growing debt. His daily benefits enlarge our obligations, let them increase the number of our songs. Age to age reveals more of his love, let every year swell the volume of the music of earth and heaven, and let thunders of song roll up in full diapason to the throne of him that liveth, and was dead, and is alive for evermore, and hath the keys of hell and of death.

"Let him be crowned with majesty
Who bowed his head to death,
And be his honours sounded high
By all things that have breath."
Psalm 46

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

A Song upon Alamoth. Which may denote that the music was to be pitched high for the treble or soprano voices of the Hebrew virgins. They went forth in their dances to sing the praises of David when he smote the Philistine, it was meet that they should make merry and be glad when the victories of Jehovah became their theme. We need to praise God upon virgin hearts, with souls chaste towards his fear, with lively and exalted expressions, and happy strains. Or the word Alamoth may refer to shrill sounding instruments, as in 1Ch 15:20, where we read that Zechariah, and Eliab, and Benaiah were to praise the Lord "with psalteries on Alamoth." We are not always, in a slovenly manner, to fall into one key, but with intelligence are to modulate our praises and make them fittingly expressive of the occasion and the joy it creates in our souls. These old musical terms cannot be interpreted with certainty, but they are still useful because they show that care and skill should be used in our sacred music.

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

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

1 God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble.

46:1 God is our refuge and strength. Not our armies or our fortresses. Israel's boast is in Jehovah, the only living and true God. Others vaunt their impregnable castles, placed on inaccessible rocks, and secured with gates of iron, but God is a far better refuge from distress than all these: and when the time comes to carry the war into the enemy's territories, the Lord stands his people in better stead than all the valor of legions or the boasted strength of chariot and horse. Soldiers of the cross, remember this, and count yourselves safe, and make yourselves strong in God. Forget not the personal possessive word our; make sure each one of your portion in God, that you may say, "He is my refuge and strength." Neither forget the fact that God is our refuge just now, in the immediate present, as truly as when David penned the word. God alone is our all in all. All other refuges are refuges of lies, all other strength is weakness, for power belongeth unto God: but as God is all sufficient, our defense and might are equal to all emergencies.
A very present help in trouble, or in distress he has so been found, he has been tried and proved by his people. He never withdraws himself from his afflicted. He is their help, truly, effectually, constantly; he is present or near them, close at their side and ready for their succour, and this is emphasized by the word very in our version, he is more present than friend or relative can be, yea, more nearly present than even the trouble itself. To all this comfortable truth is added the consideration that his assistance comes at the needed time. He is not as the swallows that leave us in the winter; he is a friend in need and a friend indeed. When it is very dark with us, let brave spirits say, "Come, let us sing the forty-sixth Psalm."

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

2 Therefore will not we fear, though the earth be removed, and though the mountains be carried into the midst of the sea;

46:2 Therefore. How fond the psalmist is of therefore! his poetry is no poetic rapture without reason, it is as logical as a mathematical demonstration. The next words are a necessary inference from these.

Will not we fear. With God on our side, how irrational would fear be! Where he is all power is, and all love, why therefore should we quail?

Though the earth be removed, though the basis of all visible things should be so convulsed as to be entirely changed.

And though the mountains be carried into the middle of the sea; though the firmest of created objects should fall to headlong ruin, and be submerged in utter destruction. The two phrases set forth the most terrible commotions within the range of imagination, and include the overthrow of dynasties, the destruction of nations, the ruin of families, the persecutions of the church, the reign of heresy, and whatever else may at any time try the faith of believers. Let the worst come to the worst, the child of God should never give way to mistrust; since God remaineth faithful there can be no danger to his cause or people. When the elements shall melt with fervent heat, and the heavens and the earth shall pass away in the last general conflagration, we shall serenely behold "the wreck of matter, and the crash of worlds, "for even then our refuge shall preserve us from all evil, our strength shall prepare us for all good.

3 Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled, though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof. Selah.
46:3 **Though the waters thereof roar and be troubled.** When all things are excited to fury, and reveal their utmost power to disturb, faith smiles serenely. She is not afraid of noise, nor even of real force, she knows that the Lord stilleth the raging of the sea, and holdeth the waves in the hollow of his hand.

*Though the mountains shake with the swelling thereof.* Alps and Andes may tremble, but faith rests on a firmer basis, and is not to be moved by swelling seas. Evil may ferment, wrath may boil, and pride may foam, but the brave heart of holy confidence trembles not. Great men who are like mountains may quake for fear in times of great calamity, but the man whose trust is in God needs never to be dismayed. Selah. In the midst of such a hurly burly the music may well come to a pause, both to give the singers breath, and ourselves time for meditation. We are in no hurry, but can sit us down and wait while earth dissolves, and mountains rock, and oceans roar. Ours is not the headlong rashness which passes for courage, we can calmly confront the danger, and meditate upon terror, dwelling on its separate items and united forces. The pause is not an exclamation of dismay, but merely a rest in music; we do not suspend our song in alarm, but tune our harps again with deliberation amidst the tumult of the storm. It were well if all of us could say,

**Selah,** under tempestuous trials, but alas! too often we speak in our haste, lay our trembling hands bewildered among the strings, strike the lyre with a rude crash, and mar the melody of our life song.

4 There is a river, the streams whereof shall make glad the city of God, the holy place of the tabernacles of the most High.

46:4 **There is a river.** Divine grace like a smoothly flowing, fertilizing, full, and never failing river, yields refreshment and consolation to believers. This is the river of the water of life, of which the church above as well as the church below partakes evermore. It is no boisterous ocean, but a placid stream, it is not stayed in its course by earthquakes or crumbling mountains, it follows its serene course without disturbance. Happy are they who know from their own experience that there is such a river of God.

**The streams whereof** in their various influences, for they are many,

**shall make glad the city of God,** by assuring the citizens that Zion's Lord will unfailingly supply all their needs. The streams are not transient like Cherith, nor muddy like the Nile, nor furious like Kishon, nor treacherous like Job's deceitful brooks, neither are their waters "naught" like those of Jericho, they are clear, cool, fresh, abundant, and gladdening. The great fear of an Eastern city in time of war was lest the water supply should be cut off during a siege; if that were secured the city could hold out against attacks for an indefinite period. In this verse, Jerusalem, which represents the church of God, is described as well supplied with water, to set forth the fact that in seasons of trial all sufficient grace will be given to enable us to endure unto the end. The church is like a well ordered city,
surrounded with mighty walls of truth and justice, garrisoned by omnipotence, fairly built and adorned by infinite wisdom: its burgesses the saints enjoy high privileges; they trade with far off lands, they live in the smile of the King; and as a great river is the very making and mainstay of a town, so is the broad river of everlasting love, and grace their joy and bliss. The church is peculiarly the City of God, of his designing, building, election, purchasing and indwelling. It is dedicated to his praise, and glorified by his presence.

The holy place of the tabernacle of the Most High. This was the peculiar glory of Jerusalem, that the Lord within her walls had a place where he peculiarly revealed himself, and this is the choice privilege of the saints, concerning which we may cry with wonder, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" To be a temple for the Holy Ghost is the delightful portion of each saint, to be the living temple for the Lord our God is also the high honour of the church in her corporate capacity. Our God is here called by a worthy title, indicating his power, majesty, sublimity, and excellency; and it is worthy of note that under this character he dwells in the church. We have not a great God in nature, and a little God in grace; no, the church contains as clear and convincing a revelation of God as the works of nature, and even more amazing in the excellent glory which shines between the cherubim overshadowing that mercy seat which is the centre and gathering place of the people of the living God. To have the Most High dwelling within her members, is to make the church on earth like the church in heaven.

5 God is in the midst of her; she shall not be moved: God shall help her, and that right early.

46:5 God is in the midst of her. His help is therefore sure and near. Is she besieged, then he is himself besieged within her, and we may be certain that he will break forth upon his adversaries. How near is the Lord to the distresses of his saints, since he sojourns in their midst! Let us take heed that we do not grieve him; let us have such respect to him as Moses had when he felt the sand of Horeb's desert to be holy, and put off his shoes from off his feet when the Lord spake from the burning bush.

She shall not be moved. How can she be moved unless her enemies move her Lord also? His presence renders all hope of capturing and demolishing the city utterly ridiculous. The Lord is in the vessel, and she cannot, therefore, be wrecked.

God shall help her. Within her he will furnish rich supplies, and outside her walls he will lay her foes in heaps like the armies of Sennacherib, when the angel went forth and smote them.

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

6 The heathen raged, the kingdoms were moved: he uttered his voice, the earth melted.

46:6 The heathen raged. The nations were in a furious uproar, they gathered against the city of the Lord like wolves ravenous for their prey; they foamed, and roared, and swelled like a tempestuous sea.

The kingdoms were moved. A general confusion seized upon society; the fierce invaders convulsed their own dominions by draining the population to urge on the war, and they desolated other territories by their devastating march to Jerusalem. Crowns fell from royal heads, ancient thrones rocked like trees driven of the tempest, powerful empires fell like pines uprooted by the blast: everything was in disorder, and dismay seized on all who knew not the Lord.

He uttered his voice, the earth melted. With no other instrumentality than a word the Lord ruled the storm. He gave forth a voice and stout hearts were dissolved, proud armies were annihilated, conquering powers were enfeebled. At first the confusion appeared to be worse confounded, when the element of divine power came into view; the very earth seemed turned to wax, the most solid and substantial of human things melted like the fat of rams upon the altar; but anon peace followed, the rage of man subsided, hearts capable of repentance relented, and the implacable were silenced. How mighty is a word from God! How mighty the Incarnate Word. O that such a word would come from the excellent glory even now to melt all hearts in love to Jesus, and to end for ever all the persecutions, wars, and rebellions of men!

7 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

46:7 The Lord of hosts is with us. This is the reason for all Zion's security, and for the overthrow of her foes. The Lord rules the angels, the stars, the elements, and all the hosts of heaven; and the heaven of heavens are under his sway. The armies of men though they know it not are made to subserve his will. This Generalissimo of the forces of the land, and the Lord High Admiral of the seas, is on our side—our august ally; woe unto those who fight against him, for they shall fly like smoke before the wind when he gives the word to scatter them.

The God of Jacob is our refuge. Immanuel is Jehovah of Hosts, and Jacob's God is our high place of defense
When this glad verse is sung to music worthy of such a jubilate, well may the singers pause and the players wait awhile to tune their instruments again; here, therefore, fitly stands that solemn, stately, peaceful note of rest,

**SELAH.**

8 Come, behold the works of the LORD, what desolations he hath made in the earth.

**46: 8 Come, behold the works of the Lord.** The joyful citizens of Jerusalem are invited to go forth and view the remains of their enemies, that they may mark the prowess of Jehovah and the spoil which his right hand hath won for his people. It were well if we also carefully noted the providential dealings of our covenant God, and were quick to perceive his hand in the battles of his church. Whenever we read history is should be with this verse sounding in our ears. We should read the newspaper in the same spirit, to see how the Head of the Church rules the nations for his people's good, as Joseph governed Egypt for the sake of Israel.

What desolations he hath made in the earth. The destroyers he destroys, the desolators he desolates. How forcible is the verse at this date! The ruined cities of Assyria, Babylon, Petra, Bashan, Canaan, are our instructors, and in tables of stone record the doings of the Lord. In every place where his cause and crown have been disregarded ruin has surely followed: sin has been a blight on nations, and left their palaces to lie in heaps. In the days of the writer of this Psalm, there had probably occurred some memorable interpositions of God against his Israel's foes; and as he saw their overthrow, he called on his fellow citizens to come forth and attentively consider the terrible things in righteousness which had been wrought on their behalf. Dismantled castles and ruined abbeys in our own land stand as memorials of the Lord's victories over oppression and superstition. May there soon be more of such desolations.

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

9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth; he breaketh the bow, and cutteth the spear in sunder; he burneth the chariot in the fire.

**46: 9 He maketh wars to cease unto the end of the earth.** His voice quiets the tumult of war, and calls for the silence of peace. However remote and barbarous the tribe, he awes the people into rest. He crushes the great powers till they cannot provoke strife again; he gives his people profound repose.
He breaketh the bow, the sender of swift winged death he renders useless.

And cutteth the spear in sunder—the lance of the mighty man he shivers.

He burneth the chariot in the fire—the proud war chariot with its death dealing scythes he commits to the flames. All sorts of weapons he piles heaps on heaps, and utterly destroys them. So was it in Judea in the days of yore, so shall it be in all lands in eras yet to come. Blessed deed of the Prince of Peace! when shall it be literally performed? Already the spiritual foes of his people are despoiled of their power to destroy; but when shall the universal victory of peace be celebrated, and instruments of wholesale murder be consigned to ignominious destruction? How glorious will the ultimate victory of Jesus be in the day of his appearing, when every enemy shall lick the dust!

10 Be still, and know that I am God: I will be exalted among the heathen, I will be exalted in the earth.

46:10 Be still, and know that I am God. Hold off your hands, ye enemies! Sit down and wait in patience, ye believers! Acknowledge that Jehovah is God, ye who feel the terrors of his wrath! Adore him, and him only, ye who partake in the protection of his grace. Since none can worthily proclaim his nature, let "expressive silence muse his praise." The boasts of the ungodly and the timorous forebodings of the saints should certainly be hushed by a sight of what the Lord has done in past ages.

I will be exalted among the heathen. They forget God, they worship idols, but Jehovah will yet be honored by them Reader, the prospects of missions are bright, bright as the promises of God. Let no man's heart fail him; the solemn declarations of this verse must be fulfilled.

I will be exalted in the earth, among all people, whatever may have been their wickedness or their degradation. Either by terror or love God will subdue all hearts to himself. The whole round earth shall yet reflect the light of his majesty. All the more because of the sin, and obstinacy, and pride of man shall God be glorified when grace reigns unto eternal life in all corners of the world.

11 The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. Selah.

46:11 The Lord of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our refuge. It was meet to sing this twice over. It is a truth of which no believer wearies, it is a fact too often forgotten, it is a precious privilege which cannot be too often considered. Reader, is the Lord on thy side? Is Emmanuel, God with us, thy Redeemer? Is there a covenant between thee and God as between God and Jacob? If so, thrice happy art thou. Show thy joy in holy song, and in times of trouble play the man by still making music for thy God.
SELAH. Here as before, lift up the heart. Rest in contemplation after praise. Still keep the soul in tune. It is easier to sing a hymn of praise than to continue in the spirit of praise, but let it be our aim to maintain the uprising devotion of our grateful hearts, and so end our song as if we intended it to be continued.

SELAH bids the music rest.

Pause in silence soft and blest;

SELAH bids uplift the strain,

Harps and voices tune again;

SELAH ends the vocal praise,

Still your hearts to God upraise.

Psalm 47

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

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

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

1 O clap your hands, all ye people; shout unto God with the voice of triumph.

---

**47:1 O clap your hands.** The most natural and most enthusiastic tokens of exultation are to be used in view of the victories of the Lord, and his universal reign. Our joy in God may be demonstrative, and yet he will not censure it.

*All ye people.* The joy is to extend to all nations; Israel may lead the van, but all the Gentiles are to follow in the march of triumph, for they have an equal share in that kingdom where there is neither Greek nor Jew, but Christ is all and in all. Even now if they did but know it, it is the best hope of all nations that Jehovah ruleth over them. If they cannot all speak the same tongue, the symbolic language of the hands they can all use. All people will be ruled by the Lord in the latter days, and all will exult in that rule; were they wise they would submit to it now, and rejoice to do so; yea, they would clap their hands in rapture at the thought.

*Shout,* let your voices keep tune with your hands.

*Unto God,* let him have all the honours of the day, and let them be loud, joyous, universal, and undivided.

*With the voice of triumph,* with happy sounds, consonant with such splendid victories, so great a King, so excellent a rule, and such happy subjects. Many are human languages, and yet the nations may triumph as with one voice. Faith's view of God's government is full of transport. The prospect of the universal reign of the Prince of Peace is enough to make the tongue of the dumb sing; what will the reality be? Well might the poet of the seasons bid mountains and valleys raise their joyous hymn—

"For the GREAT SHEPHERD reigns,  
And his unsuffering kingdom yet will come."
2 For the LORD most high is terrible; he is a great King over all the earth.

47:2 For the Lord, or JEHOVAH, the self existent and only God; Most high, most great in power, lofty in dominion, eminent in wisdom, elevated in glory.

Is terrible, none can resist his power or stand before his vengeance; yet as these terrors are wielded on the behalf of his subjects, they are fit reasons for rejoicing. Omnipotence, which is terrible to crush, is almighty to protect. At a grand review of the troops of a great prince, all his loyal subjects are filled with triumph, because their liege lord is so able to defend his own, and so much dreaded by his foes.

He is a great King over all the earth. Not over Judea only, but even to the utmost isles his reign extends. Our God is no local deity, no petty ruler of a tribe; in infinite majesty he rules the mightiest realm as absolute arbiter of destiny, sole monarch of all lands, King of kings, and Lord of lords. Not a hamlet or an islet is excluded from his dominion. How glorious will that era be when this is seen and known of all; when in the person of Jesus all flesh shall behold the glory of the Lord!

3 He shall subdue the people under us, and the nations under our feet.

47:3 He, with whom is infinite power, shall subdue the people under us. The battle is not ours but the Lord's. He will take his own time, but he will certainly achieve victory for his church. Truth and righteousness shall through grace climb to the ascendant. We wage no doubtful warfare. Hearts the most rebellious, and wills the most stubborn, shall submit to all conquering grace. All the Lord's people, whether Jews or Gentiles, may clap their hands at this, for God's victory will be theirs; but surely apostles, prophets, ministers, and those who suffer and labor the most, may take the largest share in the joy. Idolatry, infidelity, superstition, we shall yet tread upon, as men tread down the stones of the street.

And the nations under our feet. The church of God shall be the greatest of monarchies, her victory shall be signal and decisive. Christ shall take to himself his great power and reign, and all the tribes of men shall own at once his glory and the glory of his people in him. How changed will be the position of affairs in coming ages! The people of God have been under the feet of men in long and cruel persecutions, and in daily contempt; but God will reverse the position, and the best in character shall be first in honour.

4 He shall choose our inheritance for us, the excellency of Jacob whom he loved. Selah.

47: 4 While as yet we see not all things put under him, we are glad to put ourselves and our fortunes at his disposal.
He shall choose our inheritance for us. We feel his reign to be so gracious that we even now ask to be in the fullest degree the subjects of it. We submit our will, our choice, our desire, wholly to him. Our heritage here and hereafter we leave to him, let him do with us as seemeth him good.

The excellency of Jacob whom he loved. He gave his ancient people their portion, he will give us ours, and we ask nothing better; this is the most spiritual and real manner of clapping our hands because of his sovereignty, namely, to leave all our affairs in his hands, for then our hands are empty of all care for self, and free to be used in his honour. He was the boast and glory of Israel, he is and shall be ours. He loved his people and became their greatest glory; he loves us, and he shall be our exceeding joy. As for the latter days, we ask nothing better than to stand in our appointed lot, for if we have but a portion in our Lord Jesus, it is enough for our largest desires. Our beauty, our boast, our best treasure, lies in having such a God to trust in, such a God to love us.

Selah. Yes, pause, ye faithful songsters. Here is abundant room for holy meditation—

"Muse awhile, obedient thought,
Lo, the theme's with rapture fraught;
See thy King, whose realm extends
Even to earth's remotest ends.
Gladly shall the nations own
Him their God and Lord alone;
Clap their hands with holy mirth,
Hail him MONARCH OF THE EARTH.

Come, my soul, before him bow,
Gladdest of his subjects thou;
Leave thy portion to his choice,
In his sovereign will rejoice,
This thy purest, deepest bliss,
He is thine and thou art his."

5 God is gone up with a shout, the LORD with the sound of a trumpet.

47:5 God is gone up with a shout. Faith hears the people already shouting. The command of the first verse is here regarded as a fact. The fight is over, the conqueror ascends to his triumphant chariot, and rides up to the gates of the city which is made resplendent with the joy of his return. The words are fully applicable to the ascension of the Redeemer. We doubt not that angels and glorified spirits welcomed him with acclamations. He came not without song, shall we imagine that he returned in silence?
The joyous trumpet of Jesus betokens the glories of his triumph. It was meet to welcome one returning from the wars with martial music. Fresh from Bozrah, with his garments all red from the winepress, he ascended, leading captivity captive, and well might the clarion ring out the tidings of Immanuel's victorious return.

6 Sing praises to God, sing praises: sing praises unto our King, sing praises.

47:6 Sing praises. What jubilation is here, when five times over the whole earth is called upon to sing to God! He is worthy, he is Creator, he is goodness itself.

Sing praises. keep on with the glad work. Never let the music pause. He never ceases to be good, let us never cease to be grateful. Strange that we should need so much urging to attend to so heavenly an exercise.

Sing praises unto our King. Let him have all our praise; no one ought to have even a particle of it. Jesus shall have it all. Let his sovereignty be the fount of gladness. It is a sublime attribute, but full of bliss to the faithful. Let our homage be paid not in groans but songs. He asks not slaves to grace his throne; he is no despot; singing is fit homage for a monarch so blessed and gracious. Let all hearts that own his sceptre sing and sing on for ever, for there is everlasting reason for thanksgiving while we dwell under the shadow of such a throne.

7 For God is the King of all the earth: sing ye praises with understanding.

47: 7 For God is the King of all the earth. The Jews of our Savior's time resented this truth, but had their hearts been right they would have rejoiced in it. They would have kept their God to themselves, and not even have allowed the Gentile dogs to eat the crumbs from under his table. Alas! how selfishness turns honey into wormwood. Jehovah is not the God of the Jews only, all the nations of the earth are, through the Messiah, yet to own him Lord. Meanwhile his providential throne governs all events beneath the sky.

Sing praises with understanding. Sing a didactic Psalm. Sound doctrine praises God. Even under the economy of types and ceremonies, it is clear that the Lord had regard to the spirituality of worship, and would be praised thoughtfully, intelligently, and with deep appreciation of the reason for song. It is to be feared from the slovenly way in which some make a noise in singing, that they fancy any sound will do. On the other hand, from the great attention paid by some to the mere music, we feel sadly sure that the sense has no effect upon them. Is it not a sin to be tickling men's ears with sounds when we profess to be adoring the Lord? What has a sensuous delight in organs, anthems, etc., to do with devotion? Do not men mistake physical
effects for spiritual impulses? Do they not often offer to God strains far more calculated for
human amusement than for divine acceptance? An understanding enlightened of the Holy Spirit
is then
and then only fully capable of offering worthy praise.

8 God reigneth over the heathen: God sitteth upon the throne of his holiness.

47:8 Now at this moment, over the most debased idolaters, God holds a secret rule; here is work
for faith. How we ought to long for the day when this truth shall be changed in its aspect, and the
rule now unrecognized shall be delighted in! The great truth that

God reigneth in providence is the guarantee that in a gracious gospel sense his promises shall be
fulfilled, and his kingdom shall come.

He sitteth upon the throne of his holiness. Unmoved he occupies an undisputed throne, whose
decrees, acts, and commands are holiness itself. What other throne is like this? Never was it
stained with injustice, or defiled with sin. Neither is he who sits upon it dismayed, or in a
dilemma. He sits in serenity, for he knows his own power, and sees that his purposes will not
miscarry. Here is reason enough for holy song.

9 The princes of the people are gathered together, even the people of the God of
Abraham: for the shields of the earth belong unto God: he is greatly exalted.

47: 9 The princes of the people are gathered together. The prophetic eye of the psalmist sees
the willing subjects of the great King assembled to celebrate his glory. Not only the poor and the
men of low estate are there, but nobles bow their willing necks to his sway. "All kings shall bow
down before him." No people shall be unrepresented; their great men shall be good men, their
royal ones regenerate ones. How august will be the parliament where the Lord Jesus shall open
the court, and princes shall rise up to do him honour!

Even the people of the God of Abraham. That same God, who was known only to here and there
a patriarch like the father of the faithful, shall be adored by a seed as many as the stars of heaven.
The covenant promise shall be fulfilled, "In thee and in thy seed shall all the nations of the earth
be blessed." Shiloh shall come, and "to him shall the gathering of the people be." Babel's
dispersion shall be obliterated by the gathering arm of the Great Shepherd King. For the shields
of the earth belong unto God. The insignia of pomp, the emblems of rank, the weapons of war,
all must pay loyal homage to the King of all. Right honourables must honour Jesus, and
majesties must own him to be far more majestic. Those who are earth's protectors, the shields of
the commonwealth, derive their might from him, and are his. All principalities and powers must
be subject unto Jehovah and his Christ, for

He is greatly exalted. In nature, in power, in character, in glory, there is none to compare with
him. Oh, glorious vision of a coming era! Make haste, ye wheels of time! Meanwhile, ye saints,

"Be ye steadfast, unmovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as ye know
that your labour is not in vain in the Lord."
Psalm 48

TITLE. A Song and Psalm for the Sons of Korah. A song for joyfulness and a Psalm for reverence. Alas! every song is not a Psalm, for poets are not all heaven born, and every Psalm is not a song, for in coming before God we have to utter mournful confessions as well as exulting
praises. The Sons of Korah were happy in having so large a selection of song; the worship where such a variety of music was used could not become monotonous, but must have given widest scope for all the sacred passions of gracious souls.

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

1 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised in the city of our God, in the mountain of his holiness.

Great is the Lord. How great Jehovah is essentially none can conceive; but we can all see that he is great in the deliverance of his people, great in their esteem who are delivered, and great in the hearts of those enemies whom he scatters by their own fears. Instead of the mad cry of Ephesus, "Great is Diana," we bear the reasonable, demonstrable, self evident testimony, "Great is Jehovah." There is none great in the church but the Lord. Jesus is "the great Shepherd," "he is "a Saviour, and a great one," "our great God and Saviour, our great High Priest; his Father has divided him a portion with the great, and his name shall be great unto the ends of the earth.

And greatly to be praised. According to his nature should his worship be; it cannot be too constant, too laudatory, too earnest, too reverential, too sublime.

In the city of our God. He is great there, and should be greatly praised there. If all the world beside renounced Jehovah's worship, the chosen people in his favored city should continue to adore him, for in their midst and on their behalf his glorious power has been so manifestly revealed. In the church the Lord is to be extolled though all the nations rage against him. Jerusalem was the peculiar abode of the God of Israel, the seat of the theocratic government, and the center of prescribed worship, and even thus is the church the place of divine manifestation.

In the mountain of his holiness. Where his holy temple, his holy priests, and his holy sacrifices might continually be seen. Zion was a mount, and as it was the most renowned part of the city, it is mentioned as a synonym for the city itself. The church of God is a mount for elevation and for conspicuousness, and it should be adorned with holiness, her sons being partakers of the holiness of God. Only by holy men can the Lord be fittingly praised, and they should be incessantly occupied with his worship.

2 Beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth, is mount Zion, on the sides of the north, the city of the great King.
48:2 **Beautiful for situation.** Jerusalem was so naturally, she was styled the Queen of the East; the church is so spiritually, being placed near God's heart, within the mountain of his power, upon the hills of his faithfulness, in the centre of providential operations. The elevation of the church is her beauty. The more she is above the world the fairer she is.

*The joy of the whole earth is Mount Zion.* Jerusalem was the world's star; whatever light lingered on earth was borrowed from the oracles preserved by Israel. An ardent Israelite would esteem the holy city as the eye of the nations, the most precious pearl of all lands. Certainly the church of God, though despised of men, is the true joy and hope of the world.

*On the sides of the north, the city of the great King.* Either meaning that Jerusalem was in the northern extremity of Judah, or it may denote that part of the city that lay to the north of Mount Zion. It was the glory of Jerusalem to be God's city, the place of his regal dwelling, and it is the joy of the church that God is in her midst. The great God is the great King of the church, and for her sake he rules all the nations. The people among whom the Lord deigns to dwell are privileged above all others; the lines have fallen unto them in pleasant places, and they have a goodly heritage. We who dwell in Great Britain in the sides of the north, have this for our chief glory, that the Lord is known in our land, and the abode of his love is among us.

3 God is known in her palaces for a refuge.

48:3 **God is known in her palaces for a refuge.** We worship no unknown God. We know him as our refuge in distress, we delight in him as such, and run to him in every time of need. We know nothing else as our refuge. Though we are made kings, and our houses are palaces, yet we have no confidence in ourselves, but trust in the Lord Protector, whose well known power is our bulwark.

4 For, lo, the kings were assembled, they passed by together.

48: 4. **The kings were assembled, they passed by together.** They came and they went. No sooner together than scattered. They came one way and fled twenty ways. Boastful the gathering hosts with their royal leaders, despairing the fugitive bands with their astonished captains. They came like foam on the angry sea, like foam they melted away. This was so remarkable that the psalmist puts in a note of exclamation,

*Lo! What! have they so suddenly fled! Even thus shall the haters of the church vanish from the field. Papists, Ritualists, Arians, Sceptics, they shall each have their day, and shall pass on to the limbo of forgetfulness.*

5 They saw it, and so they marvelled; they were troubled, and hasted away.
48: 5. **They saw it, and so they marvelled.** They came, they saw, but they did not conquer. There was no *veni, vidi, vici [I came, I saw, I conquered]* for them. No sooner did they perceive that the Lord was in the Holy City, than they took to their heels. Before the Lord came to blows with them, they were faint hearted, and beat a retreat.

**They were troubled and hasted away.** The troublers were troubled. Their haste in coming was nothing to their hurry in going. Panic seized them, horses were not fleet enough; they would have borrowed the wings of the wind. They fled ignominiously, like children in a fright. Glory be to God, it shall be even thus with the foes of his church; when the Lord cometh to our help, our enemies shall be as nothing. Could they foresee their ignominious defeat, they would not advance to the attack.

6 Fear took hold upon them there, and pain, as of a woman in travail.

48: 6 **Fear took hold upon them there.** They were in Giant Despair’s grip. Where they hoped to triumph, there they quivered with dismay. They did not take the city, but fear took hold on them.

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

7 Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.

48: 7 **Thou breakest the ships of Tarshish with an east wind.** As easily as vessels are driven to shipwreck, dost thou overturn the most powerful adversaries; or it may mean the strength of some nations lies in their ships, whose wooden walls are soon broken; but our strength is in our God, and therefore, it fails not; or there may be another meaning, though thou art our defense, yet thou takest vengeance on our inventions, and while thou dost preserve us, yet our ships, our comforts, our earthly ambitions, are taken from us that we may look alone to thee. God is seen at sea, but he is equally present on land. Speculative heresies, pretending to bring us wealth from afar, are constantly assailing the church, but the breath of the Lord soon drives them to destruction. The church too often relies on the wisdom of men, and these human helps are soon shipwrecked; yet the church itself is safe beneath the care of her God and King.

8 As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the LORD of hosts, in the city of our God: God will establish it for ever. Selah.

48: 8 **As we have heard, so have we seen in the city of the Lord of hosts, in the city of our God.** Our father’s stories are reproduced before our very eyes. We heard the promise, and we have seen the fulfillment. The records of Zion, wonderful as they are, are proved to be truthful, because present facts are in perfect harmony therewith.
Note how the Lord is first spoken of as Lord of hosts, a name of power and sovereignty, and then as our God, a name of covenant relation and condescension. No wonder that since the Lord bears both titles, we find him dealing with us after the precedents of his lovingkindness, and the faithfulness of his promises.

**God will establish it for ever.** The true church can never be disestablished. That which kings establish can last for time only, that which God establishes endures to all eternity.

**Selah.** Here is a fit place to pause, viewing the past with admiration, and the future with confidence.

9 We have thought of thy lovingkindness, O God, in the midst of thy temple.

**48: 9 We have thought.** Holy men are thoughtful men; they do not suffer God's wonders to pass before their eyes and melt into forgetfulness, but they meditate deeply upon them.

**Of thy lovingkindness, O God.** What a delightful subject! Devout minds never tire of so divine a theme. It is well to think of past lovingkindness in times of trial, and equally profitable to remember it in seasons of prosperity. Grateful memories sweeten sorrows and sober joys.

**In the midst of thy temple.** Fit place for so devout a meditation. Where God is most seen he is best loved. The assembled saints constitute a living temple, and our deepest musings when so gathered together should have regard to the lovingkindness of the Lord, exhibited in the varied experiences of each of the living stones. Memories of mercy should be associated with continuance of praise. Hard by the table of show bread commemorating his bounty, should stand the altar of incense denoting our praise.

10 According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth: thy right hand is full of righteousness.

**48: 10 According to thy name, O God, so is thy praise unto the ends of the earth.** Great fame is due to his great name. The glory of Jehovah's exploits overlaps the boundaries of earth; angels behold with wonder, and from every star delighted intelligences proclaim his fame beyond the ends of the earth. What if men are silent, yet the woods, and seas, and mountains, with all their countless tribes, and all the unseen spirits that walk them, are full of the divine praise. As in a shell we listen to the murmurs of the sea, so in the convolutions of creation we hear the praises of God.

**Thy right hand is full of righteousness.** Thy sceptre and thy sword, thy government and thy vengeance, are altogether just. Thy hand is never empty, but full of energy, of bounty, and of equity. Neither saint nor sinner shall find the Lord to be an empty handed God; he will in both
cases deal out righteousness to the full: to the one, through Jesus, he will be just to forgive, to the other just to condemn.

11 Let mount Zion rejoice, let the daughters of Judah be glad, because of thy judgments.

48: 11 Let mount Zion rejoice. As the first of the cities of Judah, and the main object of the enemies' attack, let her lead the song.

Let the daughters of Judah be glad, let the smaller towns join the chorus, for they join in the common victory. Let the women, who fare worst in the havoc of war, be among the gladdest of the glad, now that the spoilers have fled. All the church, and each individual member, should rejoice in the Lord, and magnify his name.

Because of thy judgments. The righteous acts of the Lord are legitimate subjects for joyful praise. However it may appear on earth, yet in heaven the eternal ruin of the wicked will be the theme of adoring song. Re 19:1,3: "Alleluia; salvation, and glory, and honour, and power, unto the Lord our God. For true and righteous are his judgments; for he hath judged the great whore which did corrupt the earth with her fornication, and hath avenged the blood of his servants at her hand. And again they said, Alleluia, and her smoke rose up for ever and ever." Justice which to our poor optics now seems severe, will then be perceived to be perfectly consistent with God's name of love, and to be one of the brightest jewels of his crown.

12 Walk about Zion, and go round about her: tell the towers thereof.

48: 12 Walk about Zion: often beat her bounds, even as Israel marched around Jericho. With leisurely and careful inspection survey her.

And go round about her. Encircle her again and again with loving perambulations. We cannot too frequently or too deeply consider the origin, privileges, history, security, and glory of the church. Some subjects deserve but a passing thought; this is worthy of the most patient consideration.

Tell the towers thereof. See if any of them have crumbled, or have been demolished. Is the church of God what she was in doctrine, in strength and in beauty? Her foes counted her towers in envy first, and then in terror, let us count them with sacred exultation. The city of Lucerne, encircled by its ancient walls, adorned with a succession of towers, is a visible illustration of this figure; and as we have gone around it, and paused at each picturesque tower, we have realized the loving lingering inspection which the metaphor implies.
13 Mark ye well her bulwarks, consider her palaces; that ye may tell it to the generation following.

48: 13 Mark ye well her bulwarks. Consider most attentively how strong are her ramparts, how safely her inhabitants are entrenched behind successive lines of defense. The security of the people of God is not a doctrine to be kept in the background, it may be safely taught, and frequently pondered; only to base hearts will that glorious truth prove harmful; the sons of perdition make a stumbling stone even of the Lord Jesus himself, it is little wonder that they pervert the truth of God concerning the final perseverance of the saints. We are not to turn away from inspecting Zion's ramparts, because idlers skulk behind them.

Consider her palaces. Examine with care the fair dwellings of the city. Let the royal promises which afford quiet resting places for believers be attentively inspected. See how sound are the defenses, and how fair are the pleasances of "that ancient cities, "of which you are citizens. A man should be best acquainted with his own home; and the church is our dear and blest abode. Would to God professors were more considerate of the condition of the church; so far from telling the towers, some of them scarcely know what or where they are; they are too busy counting their money, and considering their ledgers. Freehold and copyhold, and leasehold, men measure to an inch, but heaven hold and grace hold are too often taken at peradventure, and neglected in sheer heedlessness.

That ye may tell it to the generation following. An excellent reason for studious observation. We have received and we must transmit. We must be students that we may be teachers. The debt we owe to the past we must endeavor to repay by handing down the truth to the future.

14 For this God is our God for ever and ever: he will be our guide even unto death.

48: 14 For this God is our God for ever and ever. A good reason for preserving a record of all that he has wrought. Israel will not change her God so as to wish to forget, nor will the Lord change so as to make the past mere history. He will be the covenant God of his people world without end. There is no other God, we wish for no other, we would have no other even if there were. There are some who are so ready to comfort the wicked, that for the sake of ending their punishment they weaken the force of language, and make for ever and ever mean but a time; nevertheless, despite their interpretations we exult in the hope of an eternity of bliss, and to us "everlasting, " and "for ever and ever" mean what they say.

He will be our guide even unto death. Throughout life, and to our dying couch, he will graciously conduct us, and even after death he will lead us to the living fountains of waters. We look to him for resurrection and eternal life. This consolation is clearly derivable from what has gone before; hitherto our foes have been scattered, and our bulwarks have defied attack, for God has been in our midst, therefore all possible assaults in the future shall be equally futile.

"The church has all her foes defied
And laughed to scorn their rage;
Even thus for aye she shall abide"
Secure from age to age.”
Farewell, fear. Come hither, gratitude and faith, and sing right joyously.

Psalm 49

To the chief Musician,
A Psalm for the sons of Ko'-rah

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

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

1 Hear this, all ye people; give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world:

49: 1-4

In these four verses the poet prophet calls universal humanity to listen to his didactic hymn.

49: 1 Hear this, all ye people. All men are concerned in the subject, it is of them, and therefore to them that the psalmist would speak. It is not a topic which men delight to consider, and therefore he who would instruct them must press them to give ear. Where, as in this case, the theme claims to be wisdom and understanding, attention is very properly demanded; and when the style combines the sententiousness of the proverb with the sweetness of poesy, interest is readily excited.

Give ear, all ye inhabitants of the world. "He that hath ears to hear let him hear." Men dwelling in all climes are equally concerned in the subject, for the laws of providence are the same in all lands. It is wise for each one to feel I am a man, and therefore everything which concerns mortals has a personal interest to me. We must all appear before the judgment seat, and therefore we all should give earnest heed to holy admonition which may help us to prepare for that dread event. He who refuses to receive instruction by the ear, will not be able to escape receiving destruction by it when the Judge shall say, "Depart, ye cursed."
2 Both low and high, rich and poor, together.

49: 2 Both low and high, rich and poor, together. Sons of great men, and children of mean men, men of large estate, and ye who pine in poverty, ye are all bidden to hear the inspired minstrel as he touches his harp to a mournful but instructive lay. The low will be encouraged, the high will be warned, the rich will be sobered, the poor consoled, there will be a useful lesson for each if they are willing to learn it. Our preaching ought to have a voice for all classes, and all should have an ear for it. To suit our word to the rich alone is wicked sycophancy, and to aim only at pleasing the poor is to act the part of a demagogue. Truth may be so spoken as to command the ear of all, and wise men seek to learn that acceptable style. Rich and poor must soon meet together in the grave, they may well be content to meet together now. In the congregation of the dead all differences of rank will be obliterated, they ought not now to be obstructions to united instructions.

3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom; and the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding.

49: 3 My mouth shall speak of wisdom. Inspired and therefore lifted beyond himself, the prophet is not praising his own attainments, but extolling the divine Spirit which spoke in him. He knew that the Spirit of truth and wisdom spoke through him. He who is not sure that his matter is good has no right to ask a hearing.

And the meditation of my heart shall be of understanding. The same Spirit who made the ancient seers eloquent, also made them thoughtful. The help of the Holy Ghost was never meant to superease the use of our own mental powers. The Holy Spirit does not make us speak as Balaam's ass, which merely uttered sounds, but never meditated; but he first leads us to consider and reflect, and then he gives us the tongue of fire to speak with power.

4 I will incline mine ear to a parable: I will open my dark saying upon the harp.

49: 4 I will incline mine ear to a parable. He who would have others hear, begins by hearing himself. As the minstrel leans his ear to his harp, so must the preacher give his whole soul to his ministry. The truth came to the psalmist as a parable, and he endeavored to unriddle it for popular use; he would not leave the truth in obscurity, but he listened to its voice till he so well understood it as to be able to interpret and translate it into the common language of the multitude. Still of necessity it would remain a problem, and a dark saying to the unenlightened many, but this would not be the songster's fault, for, saith he,

I will open my dark saying upon the harp. The writer was no mystic, delighting in deep and cloudy things, yet he was not afraid of the most profound topics; he tried to open the treasures of darkness, and to uplift pearls from the deep. To win attention he cast his proverbial philosophy into the form of song, and tuned his harp to the solemn tone of his subject. Let us gather round
the minstrel of the King of kings, and hear the Psalm which first was led by the chief musician, as the chorus of the sons of Korah lifted up their voices in the temple.

5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about?

49: 5 Wherefore should I fear in the days of evil, when the iniquity of my heels shall compass me about? The man of God looks calmly forward to dark times when those evils which have dogged his heels shall gain a temporary advantage over him. Iniquitous men, here called in the abstract iniquity, lie in wait for the righteous, as serpents that aim at the heels of travelers: the iniquity of our heels is that evil which aims to trip us up or impede us. It was an old prophecy that the serpent should wound the heel of the woman's seed, and the enemy of our souls is diligent to fulfill that premonition. In some dreary part of our road it may be that evil will wax stronger and bolder, and gaining upon us will openly assail us; those who followed at our heels like a pack of wolves, may perhaps overtake us, and compass us about. What then? Shall we yield to cowardice? Shall we be a prey to their teeth? God forbid. Nay, we will not even fear, for what are these foes? What indeed, but mortal men who shall perish and pass away? There can be no real ground of alarm to the faithful. Their enemies are too insignificant to be worthy of one thrill of fear. Doth not the Lord say to us, "I, even I, am he that comforteth thee; who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass?" Scholars have given other renderings of this verse, but we prefer to keep to the Authorized Version when we can, and in this case we find in it precisely the same meaning which those would give to it who translate my heels, by the words "my supplanters."

6 They that trust in their wealth, and boast themselves in the multitude of their riches;

49: 6 What if the good man's foes be among the great ones of the earth! yet he need not fear them.

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

7 None of them can by any means redeem his brother, nor give to God a ransom for him:
None of them can by any means redeem his brother. With all their riches, the whole of them put together could not rescue a comrade from the chill grasp of death. They boast of what they will do with us, let them see to themselves. Let them weigh their gold in the scales of death, and see how much they can buy therewith from the worm and the grave. The poor are their equals in this respect; let them love their friend ever so dearly, they cannot give to God a ransom for him.

A king's ransom would be of no avail, a Monte Rosa of rubies, an America of silver, a world of gold, a sun of diamonds, would all be utterly contemned. O ye boasters, think not to terrify us with your worthless wealth, go ye and intimidate death before ye threaten men in whom is immortality and life.

For the redemption of their soul is precious, and it ceaseth for ever:

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

That he should still live for ever, and not see corruption.

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

For he seeth that wise men die, likewise the fool and the brutish person perish, and leave their wealth to others.

For he seeth that wise men die. Every one sees this. The proud persecuting rich man cannot help seeing it. He cannot shut his eyes to the fact that wiser men than he are dying, and that he also, with all his craft, must die.

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

11 Their inward thought is, that their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations; they call their lands after their own names.

49: 11. Their inward thought is, their houses shall continue for ever, and their dwelling places to all generations. He is very foolish who is more a fool in his inmost thought than he dare to be in his speech. Such rotten fruit, rotten at the core, are worldlings. Down deep in their hearts, though they dare not say so, they fancy that earthly goods are real and enduring. Foolish dreamers! The frequent dilapidation of their castles and manor houses should teach them better, but still they cherish the delusion. They cannot tell the mirage from the true streams of water; they fancy rainbows to be stable, and clouds to be the everlasting hills.

They call their lands after their own names. Common enough is this practice. His grounds are made to bear the groundling's name, he might as well write it on the water. Men have even called countries by their own names, but what are they the better for the idle compliment, even if men perpetuate their nomenclature?

12 Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not: he is like the beasts that perish.

49:12 Nevertheless man being in honour abideth not. He is but a lodger for the hour, and does not stay a night: even when he dwells in marble halls his notice to quit is written out. Eminence is evermore in imminence of peril. The hero of the hour lasts but for an hour. Scepters fall from the paralyzed hands which once grasped them, and coronets slip away from skulls when the life is departed.

He is like the beasts that perish. He is not like the sheep which are preserved of the Great Shepherd, but like the hunted beast which is doomed to die. He lives a brutish life and dies a brutish death. Wallowing in riches, surfeited with pleasure, he is fatted for the slaughter, and dies like the ox in the shambles. Alas! that so noble a creature should use his life so unworthily, and end it so disgracefully. So far as this world is concerned, wherein does the death of many men differ from the death of a dog? They go down—

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

13 This their way is their folly: yet their posterity approve their sayings. Selah.

49: 13 This their way is their folly. Their vain confidences are not casual aberrations from the path of wisdom, but their way, their usual and regular course; their whole life is regulated by such principles. Their life path is essential folly. They are fools ingrain. From first to last brutishness is their characteristic, groveling stupidity the leading trait of their conduct.

Yet their posterity approve their sayings. Those who follow them in descent follow them in folly, quote their worldly maxims, and accept their mad career as the most prudent mode of life. Why do they not see by their father's failure their father's folly? No, the race transmits its weakness. Grace is not hereditary, but sordid worldliness goes from generation to generation. The race of fools never dies out. No need of missionaries to teach men to be earthworms, they crawl naturally to the dust.

Selah. Well may the minstrel pause, and bid us muse upon the deep seated madness of the sons of Adam. Take occasion, reader, to reflect upon thine own.

14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave; death shall feed on them; and the upright shall have dominion over them in the morning; and their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling.

49: 14 Like sheep they are laid in the grave. As dumb driven cattle, they are hurried to their doom, and are penned in within the gates of destruction. As sheep that go whither they are driven, and follow their leader without thought, so these men who have chosen to make this world their all, are urged on by their passions, till they find themselves at their journey's end, that end the depths of Hades. Or if we keep to our own translation, we have the idea of their dying peaceably, and being buried in quiet, only that they may wake up to be ashamed at the last great day.

Death shall feed on them. Death like a grim shepherd leads them on, and conducts them to the place of their eternal pasturage, where all is barrenness and misery. The righteous are led by the Good Shepherd, but the ungodly have death for their shepherd, and he drives them onward to hell. As the power of death rules them in this world, for they have not passed from death unto life, so the terrors of death shall devour them in the world to come. As grim giants, in old stories, are said to feed on men whom they entice to their caves, so death, the monster, feeds on the flesh and blood of the mighty.

The upright shall have dominion over them in the morning. The poor saints were once the tail, but at the day break they shall be the head. Sinners rule till night fall; their honours wither in the evening, and in the morning they find their position utterly reversed. The sweetest reflection to the upright is that "the morning" here intended begins an endless, changeless, day. What a
vexation of spirit to the proud worldling, when the Judge of all the earth holds his morning session, to see the man whom he despised, exalted high in heaven, while he himself is cast away!

And their beauty shall consume in the grave from their dwelling. Whatever of glory the ungodly had shall disappear in the tomb. Form and comeliness shall vanish from them, the worm shall make sad havoc of all their beauty. Even their last dwelling place, the grave, shall not be able to protect the relics committed to it; their bodies shall dissolve, no trace shall remain of all their strong limbs and lofty heads, no vestige of remaining beauty shall be discoverable. The beauty of the righteous is not yet revealed, it waits its manifestations; but all the beauty the wicked will ever have is in full bloom in this life; it will wither, fade, decay, rot, and utterly pass away.

Who, then, would envy or fear the proud sinner?

15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave: for he shall receive me. Selah.

49: 15 But God will redeem my soul from the power of the grave. Forth from that temporary resting place we shall come in due time, quickened by divine energy. Like our risen Head we cannot be holden by the bands of the grave; redemption has emancipated us from the slavery of death. No redemption could man find in riches, but God has found it in the blood of his dear Son. Our Elder Brother has given to God a ransom, and we are the redeemed of the Lord: because of this redemption by price we shall assuredly be redeemed by power out of the hand of the last enemy.

For he shall receive me. He shall take me out of the tomb, take me up to heaven. If it is not said of me as of Enoch, "He was not, for God took him," yet shall I reach the same glorious state. My spirit God will receive, and my body shall sleep in Jesus till, being raised in his image, it shall also be received into glory. How infinitely superior is such a hope to anything which our oppressors can boast! Here is something which will bear meditation, and therefore again let us pause, at the bidding of the musician, who inserts a

Selah.

16 Be not thou afraid when one is made rich, when the glory of his house is increased;

49: 16 In these last verses the psalmist becomes a preacher, and gives admonitory lessons which he has himself gathered from experience.

Be not thou afraid when one is made rich. Let it not give thee any concern to see the godless prosper. Raise no questions as to divine justice; suffer no foreboding to cloud thy mind. Temporal prosperity is too small a matter to be worth fretting about; let the dogs have their bones, and the swine their draff.

When the glory of his house is increased. Though the sinner and his family are in great esteem, and stand exceedingly high, never mind; all things will be righted in due time. Only those whose
judgment is worthless will esteem men the more because their lands are broader; those who are
highly estimated for such unreasonable reasons will find their level ere long, when truth and
righteousness come to the fore.

17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away: his glory shall not descend after him.

49: 17 For when he dieth he shall carry nothing away. He has but a leasehold of his acres, and
death ends his tenure. Through the river of death man must pass naked. Not a rag of all his
raiment, not a coin of all his treasure, not a joy of all his honour, can the dying worldling carry
with him. Why then fret ourselves about so fleeting a prosperity?

His glory shall not descend after him. As he goes down, down, down for ever, none of his
honours or possessions will follow him. Patents of nobility are invalid in the sepulchre. His
worship, his
honour, his lordship, and his grace, will alike find their titles ridiculous in the tomb. Hell knows
no aristocracy. Your dainty and delicate sinners shall find that
eternal burnings have no respect for their affectations and refinements.

18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul: and men will praise thee, when
thou doest well to thyself.

49: 18 Though while he lived he blessed his soul. He pronounced himself happy. He had his
good things in this life. His chief end and aim were to bless himself. He was charmed with the
adulation of flatterers.

Men will praise thee, when thou doest well to thyself. The generality of men worship success,
however it may be gained. The color of the winning horse is no matter; it is the winner, and that
is enough. "Take care of Number One," is the world's proverbial philosophy, and he who gives
good heed to it is "a clever fellow," "a fine man of business, ""a shrewd common sense
tradesman, ""a man with his head put on the right way." Get money, and you will be
"respectable, ""a substantial man, "and your house will be "an eminent firm in the city. "or "one
of the best county families." To do good wins fame in heaven, but to do good to yourself is the
prudent thing among men of the world. Yet not a whisper of worldly congratulation can follow
the departing millionaire; they say he died worth a mint of money, but what charm has that fact
to the dull cold ear of death? The banker rots as fast as the shoeblack, and the peer becomes as
putrid as the pauper. Alas! poor wealth, thou art but the
rainbow coloring of the bubble, the tint which yellows the morning mist, but adds not substance
to it.

19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers; they shall never see light.

49: 19 He shall go to the generation of his fathers. Where the former generations lie, the
present shall also slumber. The sires beckon to their sons to come to the same land of
forgetfulness. Mortal fathers beget not immortal children. As our ancestors have departed, so also must we.

They shall never see light. To this upper region the dead worldling shall never return again to possess his estates, and enjoy his dignities. Among the dead he must lie in the thick darkness, where no joy or hope can come to him. Of all his treasures there remains not enough to furnish him one poor candle; the blaze of his glory is out for ever, and not a spark remains to cheer him. How then can we look with fear or envy upon a wretch doomed to such unhappiness?

20 Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish.

49: 20 The song ends with the refrain, Man that is in honour, and understandeth not, is like the beasts that perish. Understanding differences men from animals, but if they will not follow the highest wisdom, and like beasts find their all in this life, then their end shall be as mean and dishonorable as that of beasts slain in the chase, or killed in the shambles. From the loftiest elevation of worldly honour to the uttermost depths of death is but a step. Saddest of all is the reflection, that though men are like beasts in all the degradation of perishing, yet not in the rest which animal perishing secures, for, alas! it is written, "These shall go away into everlasting punishment." So ends the minstrel's lay. Comforting as the theme is to the righteous, it is full of warning to the worldly. Hear ye it, O ye rich and poor. Give ear to it, ye nations of the earth.

Psalm 50

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

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

1 The mighty God, even the LORD, hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun unto the going down thereof.

**50: 1 The mighty God, even the Lord.** El, Elohim, Jehovah, three glorious names for the God of Israel. To render the address the more impressive, these august titles are mentioned, just as in royal decrees the names and dignities of monarchs are placed in the forefront. Here the true God is described as Almighty, as the only and perfect object of adoration and as the self existent One.

Hath spoken, and called the earth from the rising of the sun until the going down thereof. The dominion of Jehovah extends over the whole earth, and therefore to all mankind is his decree directed. The east and the west are bidden to hear the God who makes his sun to rise on every quarter of the globe. Shall the summons of the great King be despised? Will we dare provoke him to anger by slighting his call?

2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.

**50: 2 Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God hath shined.** The Lord is represented not only as speaking to the earth, but as coming forth to reveal the glory of his presence to an assembled universe. God of old dwelt in Zion among his chosen people, but here the beams of his splendor are described as shining forth upon all nations. The sun was spoken of in the first verse, but here is a far brighter sun. The majesty of God is most conspicuous among his own elect, but is not confined to them; the church is not a dark lantern, but a candlestick. God shines not only in Zion, but out of her.

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

3 Our God shall come, and shall not keep silence: a fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.
50: 3 **Our God shall come.** The psalmist speaks of himself and his brethren as standing in immediate anticipation of the appearing of the Lord upon the scene. "He comes," they say, "our covenant God is coming;" they can hear his voice from afar, and perceive the splendor of his attending train. Even thus should we await the long promised appearing of the Lord from heaven.

*And shall not keep silence.* He comes to speak, to plead with his people, to accuse and judge the ungodly. He has been silent long in patience, but soon he will speak with power. What a moment of awe when the Omnipotent is expected to reveal himself! What will be the reverent joy and solemn expectation when the poetic scene of this Psalm becomes in the last great day an actual reality!

*A fire shall devour before him, and it shall be very tempestuous round about him.* Flame and hurricane are frequently described as the attendants of the divine appearance. *"Our God is a consuming fire." "At the brightness that was before him his thick clouds passed, hailstones and coals of fire." Ps 18:12. "He rode upon a cherub, and did fly; yea, he did fly upon the wings of the wind." "The Lord Jesus shall be revealed from heaven with his mighty angels, in flaming fire taking vengeance on them that know not God." 2 Thess. 1:7-8.* Fire is the emblem of justice in action, and the tempest is a token of his overwhelming power. Who will not listen in solemn silence when such is the tribunal from which the judge pleads with heaven and earth?

4 He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth, that he may judge his people.

50: 4. **He shall call to the heavens from above, and to the earth.** Angels and men, the upper and the lower worlds, are called to witness the solemn scene. The whole creation shall stand in court to testify to the solemnity and the truth of the divine pleading. Both earth beneath and heaven above shall unite in condemning sin; the guilty shall have no appeal, though all are summoned that they may appeal if they dare. Both angels and men have seen the guilt of mankind and the goodness of the Lord, they shall therefore confess the justice of the divine utterance, and say *"Amen"* to the sentence of the supreme Judge. Alas, ye despisers! What will ye do and to whom will ye fly?

*That he may judge his people.* Judgment begins at the house of God. The trial of the visible people of God will be a most awful ceremonial. He will thoroughly purge his floor. He will discern between his nominal and his real people, and that in open court, the whole universe looking on. My soul, when this actually takes place, how will it fare with thee? Canst thou endure the day of his coming?

5 Gather my saints together unto me; those that have made a covenant with me by sacrifice.

50: 5 **Gather my saints together unto me.** Go, ye swift winged messengers, and separate the precious from the vile. Gather out the wheat of the heavenly garner. Let the long scattered, but
elect people, known by my separating grace to be my sanctified ones, be now assembled in one place. All are not saints who seem to be so—a severance must be made; therefore let all who profess to be saints be gathered before my throne of judgment, and let them hear the word which will search and try the whole, that the false may be convicted and the true revealed.

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

6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness: for God is judge himself. Selah.

**50: 6 And the heavens shall declare his righteousness.** Celestial intelligences and the spirits of just men made perfect, shall magnify the infallible judgment of the divine tribunal. Now they doubtless wonder at the hypocrisy of men; then they shall equally marvel at the exactness of the severance between the true and the false.

**For God is judge himself:** This is the reason for the correctness of the judgment. Priests of old, and churches of later times, were readily deceived, but not so the all discerning Lord. No deputy judge sits on the great white throne; the injured Lord of all himself weighs the evidence and allots the vengeance or reward. The scene in the Psalm is a grand poetical conception, but it is also an inspired prophecy of that day which shall burn as an oven, when the Lord shall discern between him that feareth and him that feareth him not.

**Selah.** Here we may well pause in reverent prostration, in deep searching of heart, in humble prayer, and in awe struck expectation.

7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak; O Israel, and I will testify against thee: I am God, even thy God.

**50: 7-15**

The address which follows is directed to the professed people of God. It is clearly, in the first place, meant for Israel; but is equally applicable to the visible church of God in every age. It declares the futility of external worship when spiritual faith is absent, and the mere outward ceremonial is rested in.
Hear, O my people, and I will speak. Because Jehovah speaks and they are avowedly his own people, they are bound to give earnest heed. "Let me speak, "saith the great I AM. The heavens and earth are but listeners, the Lord is about both to testify and to judge.

O Israel, and I will testify against thee. Their covenant name is mentioned to give point to the address; it was a double evil that the chosen nation should become so carnal, so unspiritual, so false, so heartless to their God. God himself, whose eyes sleep not, who is not misled by rumours, but sees for himself, enters on the scene as witness against his favored nation. Alas! for us when God, even our fathers' God, testifies to the hypocrisy of the visible church.

I am God, even thy God. He had taken them to be his peculiar people above all other nations, and they had in the most solemn manner avowed that he was their God. Hence the special reason for calling them to account. The law began with, "I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt," and now the session of their judgment opens with the same reminder of their singular position, privilege, and responsibility. It is not only that Jehovah is God, but thy God, O Israel; this is that makes thee so amenable to his searching reproofs.

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

I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds.

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

9 I will take no bullock out of thy house, nor he goats out of thy folds.

50: 7 Hear, O my people, and I will speak. Because Jehovah speaks and they are avowedly his own people, they are bound to give earnest heed. "Let me speak, "saith the great I AM. The heavens and earth are but listeners, the Lord is about both to testify and to judge.

50: 8 I will not reprove thee for thy sacrifices or thy burnt offerings, to have been ever before me. Though they had not failed in maintaining his outward worship, or even if they had, he was not about to call them to account for this: a more weighty matter was now under consideration. They thought the daily sacrifices and the abounding burnt offerings to be everything; he counted them nothing if the inner sacrifice of heart devotion had been neglected. What was greatest with them was least with God. It is even so today. Sacraments (so called) and sacred rites are them main concern with unconverted but religious men, but with the Most High the spiritual worship which they forget is the sole matter. Let the external be maintained by all means, according to the divine command, but if the secret and spiritual be not in them, they are a vain oblation, a dead ritual, and even an abomination before the Lord.

50: 9 I will take no bullock out of thy house. Foolishly they dreamed that bullocks with horns and hoofs could please the Lord, when indeed he sought for hearts and souls. Impiously they fancied that Jehovah needed these supplies, and that if they fed his altar with their fat beasts, he would be content. What he intended for their instruction, they made their confidence. They remembered not that "to obey is better than sacrifice, and to hearken than the fat of rams."
Nor he goats out of thy folds. He mentions these lesser victims as if to rouse their common sense to see that the great Creator could find not satisfaction in mere animal offerings. If he needed these, he would not appeal to their scanty stalls and folds; in fact, he here refuses to take so much as one, if they brought them under the false and dishonoring view, that they were in themselves pleasing to him. This shows that the sacrifices of the law were symbolical of higher and spiritual things, and were not pleasing to God except under their typical aspect. The believing worshipper looking beyond the outward was accepted, the unspiritual who had no respect to their meaning was wasting his substance, and blaspheming the God of heaven.

10 For every beast of the forest is mine, and the cattle upon a thousand hills. 

50: 10 For every beast of the forest is mine. How could they imagine that the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth, had need of beasts, when all the countless hordes that find shelter in a thousand forests and wildernesses belong to him?

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

11 I know all the fowls of the mountains: and the wild beasts of the field are mine.

50: 11 I know all the fowls of the mountain. All the winged creatures are under my inspection and near my hand; what then can be the value of your pairs of turtledoves, and your two young pigeons? The great Lord not only feeds all his creatures, but is well acquainted with each one; how wondrous is this knowledge!

And the wild beasts of the fields are mine. The whole population moving over the plain belongs to me; why then should I seek you beeves and rams? In me all things live and move; how mad are you to suppose that I desire your living things! A spiritual God demands other life than that which is seen in animals; he looks for spiritual sacrifice; for the love, the trust, the praise, the life of your hearts.
12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee: for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof.

50: 12 If I were hungry, I would not tell thee. Strange conception, a hungry God! Yet if such an absurd ideal could be truth, and if the Lord hungered for meat, he would not ask it of men. He could provide for himself out of his own possessions; he would not turn suppliant to his own creatures. Even under the grossest ideal of God, faith in outward ceremonies is ridiculous. Do men fancy that the Lord needs banners, and music, and incense, and fine linen? If he did, the stars would emblazon his standard, the winds and the waves become his orchestra, ten thousand times ten thousand flowers would breathe forth perfume, the snow should be his alb, the rainbow his girdle, the clouds of light his mantle. O fools and slow of heart, ye worship ye know not what! For the world is mine, and the fullness thereof. What can he need who is owner of all things and able to create as he wills? Thus overwhelmingly does the Lord pour forth his arguments upon formalists.

13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats?

50: 13 Will I eat the flesh of bulls, or drink the blood of goats? Are you so infatuated as to think this? Is the great I AM subject to corporeal wants, and are they to be thus grossly satisfied? Heathens thought thus of their idols, but dare ye think thus of the God who made the heavens and the earth? Can ye have fallen so low as to think thus of me, O Israel? What vivid reasoning is here! How the fire flashes dart into the idiot faces of trusters in outward forms! Ye dupes of Rome, can ye read this and be unmoved? The expostulation is indignant; the questions utterly confound; the conclusion is inevitable; heart worship only can be acceptable with the true God. It is inconceivable that outward things can gratify him, except so far as through them our faith and love express themselves.

14 Offer unto God thanksgiving; and pay thy vows unto the most High:

50: 14 Offer unto God thanksgiving. No longer look at your sacrifices as in themselves gifts pleasing to me, but present them as the tributes of your gratitude; it is then that I will accept them, but not while your poor souls have no love and no thankfulness to offer me. The sacrifices, as considered in themselves, are contemned, but the internal emotions of love consequent upon a remembrance of divine goodness, are commended as the substance, meaning, and soul of sacrifice. Even when the legal ceremonials were not abolished, this was true, and when they came to an end, this truth was more than ever made manifest. Not for want of bullocks on the altar was Israel blamed, but for want of thankful adoration before the Lord. She excelled in the visible, but in the inward grace, which is the one thing needful, she sadly failed. Too many in these days are in the same condemnation.

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

15 And call upon me in the day of trouble: I will deliver thee, and thou shalt glorify me.

50: 15 And call upon me in the day of trouble. Oh blessed verse! Is this then true sacrifice? Is it an offering to ask an alms of heaven? It is even so. The King himself so regards it. For herein is faith manifested, herein is love proved, for in the hour of peril we fly to those we love. It seems a small think to pray to God when we are distressed, yet is it a more acceptable worship than the mere heartless presentation of bullocks and he goats. This is a voice from the throne, and how full of mercy it is! It is very tempestuous round about Jehovah, and yet what soft drops of mercy's rain drop from the bosom of the storm! Who would not offer such sacrifices? Troubled one, haste to present it now! Who shall say that Old Testament saints did not know the gospel? Its very spirit and essence breathes like frankincense all around this holy Psalm.

I will deliver thee. The reality of thy sacrifice of prayer shall be seen in its answer. Whether the smoke of burning bulls be sweet to me or no, certainly thy humble prayer shall be, and I will prove it so by my gracious reply to thy supplication. This promise is very large, and may refer both to temporal and eternal deliverances; faith can turn it every way, like the sword of the cherubim.

And thou shalt glorify me. Thy prayer will honour me, and thy grateful perception of my answering mercy will also glorify me. The goats and bullocks would prove a failure, but the true sacrifice never could. The calves of the stall might be a vain oblation, but not the calves of sincere lips. Thus we see what is true ritual. Here we read inspired rubrics. Spiritual worship is the great, the essential matter; all else without it is rather provoking than pleasing to God. As helps to the soul, outward offerings were precious, but when men went not beyond them, even their hallowed things were profaned in the view of heaven.

16 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?

50: 16-21

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

50: 16 But unto the wicked God saith. To the breakers of the second table he now addresses himself; he had previously spoken to the neglectors of the first.

What hast thou to do to declare my statutes? You violate openly my moral law, and yet are great sticklers for my ceremonial commands! What have you to do with them? What interest can you have in them? Do you dare to teach my law to others, and profane it yourselves? What impudence, what blasphemy is this! Even if you claim to be sons of Levi, what of that? Your wickedness disqualifies you, disinherits you, puts you out of the succession. It should silence you, and would if my people were as spiritual as I would have them, for they would refuse to hear you, and to pay you the portion of temporal things which is due to my true servants. You count up your holy days, you contend for rituals, you fight for externals, and yet the weightier matters of the law ye despise! Ye blind guides, ye strain out gnats and swallow camels; your hypocrisy is written on your foreheads and manifest to all.

Or that thou shouldest take my covenant in thy mouth. Ye talk of being in covenant with me, and yet trample my holiness beneath you feet as swine trample upon pearls; think ye that I can brook this? Your mouths are full of lying and slander, and yet ye mouth my words as if they were fit morsels for such as you! How horrible and evil it is, that to this day we see men explaining doctrines who despise precepts! They make grace a coverlet for sin, and even judge themselves to be sound in the faith, while they are rotten in life. We need the grace of the doctrines as much as the doctrines of grace, and without it an apostle is but a Judas, and a fair spoken professor is an arrant enemy of the cross of Christ.

17 Seeing thou hatest instruction, and castest my words behind thee.

50: 17 Seeing thou hatest instruction. Profane professors are often too wise to learn, too besotted with conceit to be taught of God. What a monstrosity that men should declare those statutes which with their hearts they do not know, and which in their lives they openly disavow! Woe unto the men who hate the instruction which they take upon themselves to give.

And castest my words behind thee. Despising them, throwing them away as worthless, putting them out of sight as obnoxious. Many boasters of the law did this practically; and in these last days there are pickers and choosers of God’s words who cannot endure the practical part of Scripture; they are disgusted at duty, they abhor responsibility, they disembowel texts of their plain meanings, they wrest the Scriptures to their own destruction.

It is an ill sign when a man dares not look a Scripture in the face, and an evidence of brazen impudence when he tries to make it mean something less condemnatory of his sins, and endeavors to prove it to be less sweeping in its demands. How powerful is the argument that such men have no right to take the covenant of God into their mouths, seeing that its spirit does not regulate their lives!
18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him, and hast been partaker with adulterers.

50: 18 When thou sawest a thief, then thou consentedst with him. Moral honesty cannot be absent where true grace is present. Those who excuse others in trickery are guilty themselves; those who use others to do unjust actions for them are doubly so. If a man be ever so religious, if his own actions do not rebuke dishonesty, he is an accomplice with thieves. If we can acquiesce in anything which is not upright, we are not upright ourselves, and our religion is a lie.

And hast been partaker with adulterers. One by one the moral precepts are thus broken by the sinners in Zion. Under the cloak of piety, unclean livers conceal themselves. We may do this by smiling at unchaste jests, listening to indelicate expressions, and conniving at licentious behaviour in our presence; and if we thus act, how dare we preach, or lead public prayer, or wear the Christian name? See how the Lord lays righteousness to the plummet. How plainly all this declares that without holiness no man shall see the Lord! No amount of ceremonial or theological accuracy can cover dishonesty and fornication: these filthy things must be either purged from us by the blood of Jesus, or they will kindle a fire in God's anger which will burn even to the lowest hell.

19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil, and thy tongue frameth deceit.

50: 19 Thou givest thy mouth to evil. Sins against the ninth commandment are here mentioned. The man who surrenders himself to the habit of slander is a vile hypocrite if he associates himself with the people of God. A man's health is readily judged by his tongue. A foul mouth, a foul heart. Some slander almost as often as they breathe, and yet are great upholders of the church, and great sticklers for holiness. To what depths will not they go in evil, who delight in spreading it with their tongues?

And thy tongue frameth deceit. This is a more deliberate sort of slander, where the man dexterously elaborates false witness, and concocts methods of defamation. There is an ingenuity of calumny in some men, and, alas! Even in some who are thought to be followers of the Lord Jesus. They manufacture falsehoods, weave them in their loom, hammer them on their anvil, and then retail their wares in every company. Are these accepted with God? Though they bring their wealth to the altar, and speak eloquently of truth and of salvation, have they any favour with God? We should blaspheme the holy God if we were to think so. They are corrupt in his sight, a stench in his nostrils. He will cast all liars into hell. Let them preach, and pray, and sacrifice as they will; till they become truthful, the God of truth loathes them utterly.

20 Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother; thou slanderest thine own mother's son.
50: 20 Thou sittest and speakest against thy brother. He sits down to it, makes it his meat, studies it, resolves upon it, becomes a master of defamation, occupies the chair of calumny. His nearest friend is not safe, his dearest relative escapes not.

Thou slanderest thine own mother's son. He ought to love him best, but he has an ill word for him. The son of one's own mother was to the Oriental a very tender relation; but the wretched slanderer knows no claims of kindred. He stabs his brother in the dark, and aims a blow at him who came forth of the same womb; yet he wraps himself in the robe of hypocrisy, and dreams that he is a favorite of heaven, an accepted worshipper of the Lord. Are such monsters to be met with nowadays? Alas! they pollute our churches still, and are roots of bitterness, spots on our solemn feasts, wandering stars for whom is reserved the blackness of darkness for ever. Perhaps some such may read these lines, but they will probably read them in vain; their eyes are too dim to see their own condition, their hearts are waxen gross, their ears are dull of hearing; they are given up to a strong delusion to believe a lie, that they may be damned.

21 These things hast thou done, and I kept silence; thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself: but I will reprove thee, and set them in order before thine eyes.

50: 21 These things hast thou done, and I kept silence. No swift judgment overthrew the sinner—longsuffering reigned; no thunder was heard in threatening, and no bolt of fire was hurled in execution.

Thou thoughtest that I was altogether such an one as thyself. The inference drawn from the Lord's patience was infamous; the respited culprit thought his judge to be one of the same order as himself. He offered sacrifice, and deemed it accepted; he continued in sin, and remained unpunished, and therefore he rudely said, "Why need believe these crazy prophets? God cares not how we live so long as we pay our tithes. Little does he consider how we get the plunder, so long as we bring a bullock to his altar." What will not men imagine of the Lord? At one time they liken the glory of Israel to a calf, and anon unto their brutish selves.

But I will reprove thee. At last I will break silence and let them know my mind.

And set them in order before thine eyes. I will marshal thy sins in battle array. I will make thee see them, I will put them down item by item, classified and arranged. Thou shalt know that if silent awhile, I was never blind or deaf. I will make thee perceive what thou hast tried to deny. I will leave the seat of mercy for the throne of judgment, and there I will let thee see how great the difference between thee and me.

22 Now consider this, ye that forget God, lest I tear you in pieces, and there be none to deliver.
50: 22 *Now* or *oh!* it is a word of entreaty, for the Lord is loath even to let the most ungodly run on to destruction.

*Consider this:* take these truths to heart, ye who trust in ceremonies and ye who live in vice, for both of you sin in that

*ye forget God.* Betheink you how unaccepted you are, and turn unto the Lord. See how you have mocked the eternal, and repent of your iniquities.

*Lest I tear you in pieces,* as the lion rends his prey,

*and there be none to deliver,* no Saviour, no refuge, no hope. Ye reject the Mediator: beware, for ye will sorely need one in the day of wrath, and none will be near to plead for you. How terrible, how complete, how painful, how humiliating, will be the destruction of the wicked! God uses no soft words, or velvet metaphors, nor may his servants do so when they speak of the wrath to come. O reader, consider this.

23 Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me: and to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.

50: 23 *Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me.* Praise is the best sacrifice; true, hearty, gracious thanksgiving from a renewed mind. Not the lowing of bullocks bound to the altar, but the songs of redeemed men are the music which the ear of Jehovah delights in. Sacrifice your loving gratitude, and God is honored thereby.

*And to him that ordereth his conversation aright will I shew the salvation of God.* Holy living is a choice evidence of salvation. He who submits his whole way to divine guidance, and is careful to honour God in his life, brings an offering which the Lord accepts through his dear Son; and such a one shall be more and more instructed, and made experimentally to know the Lord's salvation. He needs salvation, for the best ordering of the life cannot save us, but *that salvation* he shall have. Not to ceremonies, not to unpurified lips, is the blessing promised, but to grateful hearts and holy lives. O Lord, give us to stand in the judgment with those who have worshipped thee aright and have seen thy salvation.