The Treasury of David

Charles H. Spurgeon

Psalms 101-150

Edited by

Dr. Stanford E. Murrell
Psalm 101

A Psalm of David

TITLE. A Psalm of David. This is just such a psalm as the man after God's own heart would compose when he was about to become king in Israel. It is David all over, straight forward, resolute, devout; there is no trace of policy or vacillation, the Lord has appointed him to be king, and he knows it, therefore he purposes in all things to behave as becomes a monarch who me the Lord himself has chosen. If we call this THE PSALM or PIOUS RESOLUTIONS, we shall perhaps remember it all the more readily. After songs of praise a psalm of practice not only makes variety, but comes in most fittingly. We never praise the Lord better than when we do those things which are pleasing in his sight.

1 ¶I will sing of mercy and judgment: unto thee, O LORD, will I sing.

101:1 I will sing of mercy and judgment. He would extol both the love and the severity, the sweets and the bitters, which the Lord had mingled in Iris experience; he would admire the justice and the goodness of the Lord. Such a song would fitly lead up to godly resolutions as to his own conduct, for that which we admire in our superiors we naturally endeavor to imitate. Mercy and judgment would temper the administration of David, because he had adoringly perceived them in the dispensations of his God. Everything in God's dealings with us may fittingly become the theme of song, and we have not viewed it aright until we feel we can sing about it. We ought as much to bless the Lord for the judgment with which he chastens our sin, as for the mercy with which he forgives it; there is as much love in the blows of his hand as in the kisses of his mouth. Upon a retrospect of their lives instructed saints scarcely know which to be most grateful for—the comforts which have, or the afflictions which nave purged them.

Unto thee, O LORD, will I sing. Jehovah shall have all our praise. The secondary agents of either the mercy or the judgment must hold a very subordinate place in our memory, and the Lord alone must be hymned by our heart. Our soul's sole worship must be the lauding of the Lord. The psalmist forsakes the minor key, which was soon to rule him in the one hundred and second psalm, and resolves that, come what may, he will sing, and sing to the Lord too, whatever others might do.

2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. O when wilt thou come unto me? I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.

101:2 I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way. To be holy is to be wise; a perfect way is a wise way. David's resolve was excellent, but his practice did not fully tally with it. Alas! he was not always wise or perfect, but it was well that it was in his heart. A king had need be both sage and pure, and, if he be not so in intent, when he comes to the throne, his after conduct will be a sad example to his people. He who does not even resolve to do well is likely to do very ill. Householders, employers, and especially ministers, should pray for both wisdom and holiness, for they will need them both.
O when wilt thou come unto me?—an ejaculation, but not an interruption. He feels the need not merely of divine help, but also of the divine presence, that so he may be instructed, and sanctified, and made fit for the discharge of his high vocation. David longed for a more special and effectual visitation from the Lord before he began his reign. If God be with us we shall neither err in judgment nor transgress in character; his presence brings us both wisdom and holiness; away from God we are away from safety. Good men are so sensible of infirmity that they cry for help from God, so full of prayer that they cry at all seasons, so intense in their desires that they cry with sighs and groanings which cannot be uttered, saying,

"O when wilt thou come unto me?" I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. Piety must begin at home. Our first duties are those within our own abode. We must have a perfect heart at home, or we cannot keep a perfect way abroad. Notice that these words are a part of a song, and that there is no music like the harmony of a gracious life, no psalm so sweet as the daily practice of holiness. Reader, how fares it with your family? Do you sing in the choir and sin in the chamber Are you a saint abroad and a devil at home? For shame! What we are at home, that we are indeed. He cannot be a good king whose palace is the haunt of vice, nor he a true saint whose habitation is a scene of strife, nor he a faithful minister whose household dreads his appearance at the fireside.

3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes: I hate the work of them that turn aside; it shall not cleave to me.

101: 3 I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes. I will neither delight in it, aim at it or endure it. If I have wickedness brought before me by others I will turn away from it, I will not gaze upon it with pleasure. The psalmist is very sweeping in his resolve, he declines the least, the most reputable, the most customary form of evil—no wicked thing; not only shall it not dwell in his heart, but not even before his eyes, for what fascinates the eye is very apt to gain admission into the heart, even as Eve's apple first pleased her sight and then prevailed over her mind and hand.

I hate the work of them that turn aside. He was warmly against it; he did not view it with indifference, but with utter scorn and abhorrence. Hatred of sin is a good sentinel for the door of virtue. There are persons in courts who walk in a very crooked way, leaving the high road of integrity; and these, by short cuts, and twists, and turns, are often supposed to accomplish work for their masters which simple honest hearts are not competent to undertake; but David would not employ such, he would pay no secret service money, he loathed the practices of men who deviate from righteousness. He was of the same mind as the dying statesman who said, "Corruption wins not more than honesty." It is greatly to be deplored that in after years he did not keep himself clear in this matter in every case, though, in the main he did; but what would he have been if he had not commenced with this resolve, but had followed the usual crooked Policy of Oriental princes? How much do we all need divine keeping! We are no more perfect than David, nay, we fall far short of him in many things; and, like him, we shall find need to write a psalm of penitence very soon after our psalm of good resolution.
It shall not cleave to me. I will disown their ways, I will not imitate their policy: like dirt it may fall upon me, but I will wash it off, and never rest till I am rid of it. Sin, like pitch, is very apt to stick. In the course of our family history crooked things will turn up, for we are all imperfect, and some of those around us are far from being what they should be; it must, therefore, be one great object of our care to disentangle ourselves, to keep clear of transgression, and of all that comes of it: this cannot be done unless the Lord both comes to us, and abides with us evermore.

4 A froward heart shall depart from me: I will not know a wicked person.

101: 4 A froward heart shall depart from me. He refers both to himself and to those round about him; he would neither be crooked in heart himself, nor employ persons of evil character in his house; if he found such in his court he would chase them away. He who begins with his own heart begins at the fountain head, and is not likely to tolerate evil companions. We cannot turn out of our family all whose hearts are evil, but we can keep them out of our confidence, and let them see that we do not approve of their ways.

I will not know a wicked person. He shall not be my intimate, my bosom friend. I must know him as a man or I could not discern his character, but if I know him to be wicked, I will not know him any further, and with his evil I will have no communion. "To know" in Scripture means more than mere perception, it includes fellowship, and in that sense it is here used. Princes must disown those who disown righteousness; if they know the wicked they will soon be known as wicked themselves.

5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbour, him will I cut off: him that hath an high look and a proud heart will not I suffer.

101: 5 Whoso privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off. He had known so bitterly the miseries caused by slanderers that he intended to deal severely with such vipers when he came into power, not to revenge his own ills, but to prevent others from suffering as he had done. To give one's neighbour a stab in the dark is one of the most atrocious of crimes, and cannot be too heartily reprobated, yet such as are guilty of it often find patronage in high places, and are considered to be men of penetration, trusty ones who have a keen eye, and take care to keep their lords well posted up. King David would lop the goodly tree of his state of all such superfluous boughs,

Him that hath an high look and a proud heart him will not I suffer. Proud, domineering, supercilious gentlemen, who look down upon the poor as though they were so many worms crawling in the earth beneath their feet, the psalmist could not bear. The sight of them made him suffer, and therefore he would not suffer them. Great men often affect aristocratic airs and haughty manners, David therefore resolved that none should be great in his palace but those who had more grace and more sense than to indulge in such abominable vanity, Proud men are generally hard, and therefore very unfit for office; persons of high looks provoke enmity and discontent, and the fewer of such people about a court the better for the stability of a throne. If all slanderers were now cut off, and all the proud banished, it is to be feared that the next census would declare a very sensible diminution of the population.
6 Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me: he that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me.

101: Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me. He would seek them out, engage their services, take care of them, and promote them to honour: this is a noble occupation for a king, and one which will repay him infinitely better than listening to the soft nothings of flatterers. It would be greatly for the profit of us all if we chose our servants rather by their piety than by their cleverness; he who gets a faithful servant gets a treasure, and he ought to do anything sooner than part with him. Those who are not faithful to God will not be likely to be faithful to men; if we are faithful ourselves, we shall not care to have those about us who cannot speak the truth or fulfill their promises; we shall not be satisfied until all the members of our family are upright in character.

He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. What I wish myself to be, that I desire my servant to be. Employers are to a great degree responsible for their servants, and it is customary to blame a master if he retains in his service persons of notorious character; therefore, lest we become partakers of other men's sins, we shall do well to decline the services of bad characters. A good master does well to choose a good servant; he may take a prodigal into his house for the sinner's good, but if he consults his own he will look in another quarter. Wicked nurses have great influence for evil over the minds of little children, and ungodly servants often injure the morals of the older members of the family, and therefore great care should be exercised that godly servants should be employed as far as possible. Even irreligious men have the sense to perceive the value of Christian servants, and surely their own Christian brethren ought not to have a lower appreciation of them.

7 He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house: he that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight.

101: He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house. He had power to choose his courtiers, and he meant to exercise it. Deceit among most Orientals is reckoned to be a virtue, and is only censured when it is not sufficiently cunning, and therefore comes to be found out; it was therefore all the more remarkable that David should have so determinedly set his face against it. He could not tell what a deceitful man might be doing, what plots he might be contriving, what mischief he might be brewing, and therefore he resolved that he would at any rate keep him out of his house, that his palace might not become a den of villainy. Cheats in the market are bad enough, but deceivers at our own table we cannot bear.

He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. He would not have a liar within sight or hearing; lie loathed the mention of him. Grace makes men truthful, and creates in them an utter horror of everything approaching to falsehood. If David would not have a liar in his sight, much less will the Lord; neither he that loves nor he who makes a lie shall be admitted into heaven. Liars are obnoxious enough on earth; the saints shall not be worried with them in another world.
8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land; that I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.

**101:8 I will early destroy all the wicked of the land.** At the very outset of his government he would promptly deal out justice to the worthless, he would leave them no rest, but make them leave their wickedness or feel the lash of the law. The righteous magistrate "beareth not the sword in vain." To favour sin is to discourage virtue; undue leniency to the bad is unkindness to the good. When our Lord comes in judgment, this verse will be fulfilled on a large scale; till then he sinks the judge in the Saviour, and bids men leave their sins and find pardon. Under the gospel we also are bidden to suffer long, and to be kind, even to the unthankful and the evil; but the office of the magistrate is of another kind, and he must have a sterner eye to justice than would be proper in private persons. Is he not to be a terror to evil doers? That I may cut off all the wicked doers from the city of the Lord. Jerusalem was to be a holy city, and the psalmist meant to be doubly careful in purging it from ungodly men. Judgment must begin at the house of God. Jesus reserves his scourge of small cords for sinners inside the temple. How pure ought the church to be, and how diligently should all those who hold office therein labour to keep out and chase out men of unclean lives. Honourable offices involve serious responsibilities; to trifle with them will bring our own souls into guilt, and injure beyond calculation the souls of others. Lord, come to us, that we, in our several positions in life, may walk before thee with perfect hearts.

101: 8 That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD. As the kingdom of David was only a faint image of the kingdom of Christ, we ought to set Christ before our view; who, although he may bear with many hypocrites, yet as he will be the judge of the world, will at length call them all to account, and separate the sheep from the goats. And if it seems to us that he tarries too long, we should think of that morning which will suddenly dawn, that all filthiness being purged away, true purity may shine forth.—John Calvin.

101: 8 Early. From some incidental notices of Scripture (2Sa 15:2 Ps 101:8 Je 21:12), it has been inferred that judges ordinarily held their sessions in the morning. In a climate like that of Palestine, such a custom would be natural and convenient. It is doubtful, however, whether this passage expresses anything more than the promptness and zeal which a righteous judge exercises in the discharge of his duty.—E.P. Barrows, in "Biblical Geography and Antiquities".

101: 8 The holy vow "to destroy all the wicked of the lands": and to "cut off all wicked doers from the city of the Lord, "must begin at our own hearts as his sanctuary, the temple of the Holy Ghost.—Alfred Edersheim.
Psalm 102

A Prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the LORD

TITLE. A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord. This Psalm is a prayer far more in spirit than in words. The formal petitions are few, but a strong stream of supplication runs from beginning to end, and like an under-current, finds its way heavenward through the moanings of grief and confessions of faith which make up the major part of the Psalm. It is a prayer of the afflicted, or of "a sufferer," and it bears the marks of its parent age; as it is recorded of Jabez that "his mother bore him with sorrow," "so may we say of this Psalm; yet as Rachel's Benoni, or child of sorrow, was also her Benjamin, or son of her right hand, so is this Psalm as eminently expressive of consolation as of desolation. It is scarcely correct to call it a penitential Psalm, for the sorrow of it is rather of one suffering than sinning. It has its own bitterness, and it is not the same as that of the Fifty-first.

The sufferer is afflicted more for others than for himself, more for Zion and the house of the Lord, than for his own house. When he is overwhelmed, or sorely troubled, and depressed. The best of men are not always able to stem the torrent of sorrow. Even when Jesus is on board, the vessel may fill with water and begin to sink. And poureth out his complaint before the LORD. When a cup is overwhelmed or turned bottom over, all that is in it is naturally poured out; great trouble removes the heart from all reserve and causes the soul to flow out without restraint; it is well when that which is in the soul is such as may be poured out in the presence of God, and this is only the case where the heart has been renewed by divine grace. The word rendered "complaint" has in it none of the idea of fault-finding or repining, but should rather be rendered "moaning," —the expression of pain, not of rebellion. To help the memory we will call this Psalm THE PATRIOT'S PLAINT.

SUBJECT. This is a patriot's lament over his country's distress. He arrays himself in the griefs of his nation as in a garment of sackcloth, and casts her dust and ashes upon his head as the ensigns and causes of his sorrow. He has his own private woes and personal enemies, he is moreover sore afflicted in body by sickness, but the miseries of his people cause him a far more bitter anguish, and this he pours out in an earnest, pathetic lamentation. Not, however, without hope does the patriot mourn; he has faith in God, and looks for the resurrection of the nation through the omnipotent favour of the Lord; this causes him to walk among the ruins of Jerusalem, and to say with hopeful spirit, "No, Zion, thou shalt never perish. Thy sun is not set for ever; brighter days are in store for thee." It is in vain to enquire into the precise point of Israel's history which thus stirred a patriot's soul, for many a time was the land oppressed, and at any of her sad seasons this song and prayer would have been a most natural and appropriate utterance.

DIVISION. In the first part of the Psalm, Psalm 102:1-11, the moaning monopolizes every verse, the lamentation is unceasing, sorrow rules the hour. The second portion, from Psalm 102:12-28, has a vision of better things, a view of the gracious Lord, and his eternal existence, and care for his people, and therefore it is interspersed with sunlight as well as shaded by the cloud, and it ends up right gloriously with calm confidence for the future, and sweet restfulness in the Lord.
The whole composition may be compared to a day which, opening with wind and rain, clears up at noon and is warm with the sun, continues fine, with intervening showers, and finally closes with a brilliant sunset.

1 ¶ Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.

102: 1 Hear my prayer, O LORD. Or O JEHOVAH. Sincere suppliants are not content with praying for praying's sake, they desire really to reach the ear and heart of the great God. It is a great relief in time of distress to acquaint others with our trouble, we are eased by their hearing our lamentation, but it is the sweetest solace of all to have God himself as a sympathizing listener to our plaint. That he is such is no dream or fiction, but an assured fact. It would be the direst of all our woes if we could be indisputably convinced that with God there is neither hearing nor answering; he who could argue us into so dreary a belief would do us no better service than if he had read us our death-warrants. Better die than be denied the mercy-seat. As well be atheists at once as believe in an unhearing, unfeeling God.

And let my cry come unto thee. When sorrow rises to such a height that words become too weak a medium of expression, and prayer is intensified into a cry, then the heart is even more urgent to have audience with the Lord. If our cries do not enter within the veil, and reach to the living God, we may as well cease from prayer at once, for it is idle to cry to the winds; but, blessed be God, the philosophy which suggests such a hideous idea is disproved by the facts of every day experience, since thousands of the saints can declare, "Verily, God hath heard us."

2 Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble; incline thine ear unto me: in the day when I call answer me speedily.

102: 2 Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble. Do not seem as if thou didst not see me, or wouldst not own me. Smile now at any rate. Reserve thy frowns for other times when I can bear them better, if, indeed, I can ever bear them; but now in my heavy distress, favour me with looks of compassion.

Incline thine ear unto me. Bow thy greatness to my weakness. If because of sin thy face is turned away, at least let me have a side view of thee, lend me thine ear if I may not see thine eye. Turn thyself to me again if, my sin has turned thee away, give to thine ear an inclination to my prayers.

In the day when I call answer me speedily. Because the case is urgent, and my soul little able to wait. We may ask to have answers to prayer as soon as possible, but we may not complain of the Lord if he should think it more wise to delay. We have permission to request and to use importunity, but no right to dictate or to be petulant. If it be important that the deliverance should arrive at once, we are quite right in making an early time a point of our entreaty, for God is as willing to grant us a favour now as to-morrow, and he is not slack concerning his promise. It is a proverb concerning favors from human hands, that "he gives twice who gives quickly, "because a gift is enhanced in value by arriving in a time of urgent necessity; and we may be sure that our heavenly Patron will grant us the best gifts in the best manner, granting us grace to help in time of need. When answers come upon the heels of our prayers they are all the more striking,
more consoling, and more encouraging. In these two verses the psalmist has gathered up a variety of expressions all to the same effect; in them all he entreats an audience and answer of the Lord, and the whole may be regarded as a sort of preface to the prayer which follows.

3 For my days are consumed like smoke, and my bones are burned as an hearth.

102: 3 _For my days are consumed like smoke._ My grief has made life unsubstantial to me, I seem to be but a puff of vapor which has nothing in it, and is soon dissipated. The metaphor is very admirably chosen, for, to the unhappy, life seems not merely to be frail, but to be surrounded by so much that is darkening, defiling, blinding, and depressing, that, sitting down in despair, they compare themselves to men wandering in a dense fog, and themselves so dried up thereby that they are little better than pillars of smoke. When our days have neither light of joy nor fire of energy in them, but become as a smoking flax which dies out ignobly in darkness, then have we cause enough to appeal to the Lord that he would not utterly quench us.

_And my bones are burned as an hearth._ He became as dry as the hearth on which a wood fire has burned out, or as spent ashes in which scarcely a trace of fire can be found. His soul was ready to be blown away as smoke, and his body seemed likely to remain as the bare hearth when the last comforting ember is quenched. How often has our piety appeared to us to be in this condition! We have had to question its reality, and fear that it never was anything more than a smoke; we have had the most convincing evidence of its weakness, for we could not derive even the smallest comfort from it, any more than a chilled traveler can derive from the cold hearth on which a fire had burned long ago. Soul-trouble experienced in our own heart will help us to interpret the language here employed; and church-troubles may help us also, if unhappily we have been called to endure them. The psalmist was moved to grief by a view of national calamities, and these so wrought upon his patriotic soul that he was wasted with anxiety, his spirits were dried up, and his very life was ready to expire. There is hope for any country which owns such a son; no nation can die while true hearts are ready to die for it.

4 My heart is smitten, and withered like grass; so that I forget to eat my bread.

102: 4. _My heart is smitten._ like a plant parched by the fierce heat of a tropical sun,

_and withered like grass_, which dries up when once the scythe has laid it low. The psalmist's heart was as a wilted, withered flower, a burned up mass of what once was verdure. His energy, beauty, freshness, and joy, were utterly gone, through the wasting influence of his anguish. So that I forget to eat my bread, or because

_I forget to eat my bread._ Grief often destroys the appetite, and the neglect of food tends further to injure the constitution and create a yet deeper sinking of spirit.
As the smitten flower no longer drinks in the dew, or draws up nutriment from the soil, so a
heart parched with intense grief often refuses consolation for itself and nourishment for the
bodily frame, and descends at a doubly rapid rate into weakness, despondency, and dismay. The
case here described is by no means rare, we have frequently met with individuals so disordered
by sorrow that their memory has failed them even upon such pressing matters as their meals, and
we must confess that we have passed through the same condition ourselves. One sharp pang has
filled the soul, monopolized the mind, and driven everything else into the background, so that
such common matters as eating and drinking have been utterly despised, and the appointed hours
of refreshment have gone by unheeded, leaving no manifest faintness of body, but an increased
weariness of heart.

5 By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.

102: 5 *By reason of the voice of my groaning my bones cleave to my skin.* He became
emaciated with sorrow. He had groaned himself down to a living skeleton, and so in his bodily
appearance was the more like the smoke-dried, withered, burnt-up things to which he had
previously compared himself. It will be a very long time before the distresses of the church of
God make some Christians shrivel into anatomies, but this good man was so moved with
sympathy for Zion's ills that he was wasted down to skin and bone.

6 I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of the desert.

102: 6 *I am like a pelican of the wilderness,* a mournful and even hideous object, the very image
of desolation.

*I am like an owl of the desert:* loving solitude, moping among ruins, hooting discordantly. The
Psalmist likens himself to two birds which were commonly used as emblems of gloom and
wretchedness; on other occasions he had been as the eagle, but the griefs of his people had pulled
him down, the brightness was gone from his eye, and the beauty from his person; he seemed to
himself to be as a melancholy bird sitting among the fallen palaces and prostrate temples of his
native land. Should not we also lament when the ways of Zion mourn and her strength
languishes? Were there more of this holy sorrow we should soon see the Lord returning to build
up his church. It is ill for men to be playing the peacock with worldly pride when the ills of the
times should make them as mournful as the pelican; and it is a terrible thing to see men flocking
like vultures to devour the prey of a decaying church, when they ought rather to be lamenting
among her ruins like the owl.

7 I watch, and am as a sparrow alone upon the house top.

102: *I watch, and am like a sparrow alone upon the house top:* I keep a solitary vigil as the
lone sentry of my nation; my fellows are too selfish, too careless to care for the beloved land, and
so like a bird which sits alone on the housetop, I keep up a sad watch over my country. The
Psalmist compared himself to a bird,—a bird when it has lost its mate or its young, or is for some
other reason made to mope alone in a solitary place.
Probably he did not refer to the cheerful sparrow of our own land, but if he did, the illustration would not be out of place, for the sparrow is happy in company, and if it were alone, the sole one of its species in the neighborhood, there can be little doubt that it would become very miserable, and sit and pine away. He who has felt himself to be so weak and inconsiderable as to have no more power over his times than a sparrow over a city, has also, when bowed down with despondency concerning the evils of the age, sat himself down in utter wretchedness to lament the ills which he could not heal. Christians of an earnest, watchful kind often find themselves among those who have no sympathy with them; even in the church they look in vain for kindred spirits; then do they persevere in their prayers and labours, but feel themselves to be as lonely as the poor bird which looks from the ridge of the roof, and meets with no friendly greeting from any of its kind.

8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day; and they that are mad against me are sworn against me.

102: 8 Mine enemies reproach me all the day. Their rage was unrelenting and unceasing, and vented itself in taunts and insults, the Psalmist's patriotism and his griefs were both made the subjects of their sport. Pointing to the sad estate of his people they would ask him, "Where is your God?" and exult over him because their false gods were in the ascendant. Reproach cuts like a razor, and when it is continued from hour to hour, and repeated all the day and every day, it makes life itself undesirable.

And they that are mad against me are sworn against me. They were so furious that they bound themselves by oath to destroy him, and used his name as their usual execration, a word to curse by, the synonym of abhorrence and contempt. What with inward sorrows and outward persecutions he was in as ill a plight as may well be conceived.

9 For I have eaten ashes like bread, and mingled my drink with weeping,

102: 9 For I have eaten ashes like bread. He had so frequently cast ashes upon his head in token of mourning, that they had mixed with his ordinary food, and grated between his teeth when he ate his daily bread. One while he forgot to eat, and then the fit changed, and he ate with such a hunger that even ashes were devoured. Grief has strange moods and tenses.

And mingled my drink with weeping. His drink became as nauseous as his meat, for copious showers of tears had made it brackish. This is a telling description of all-saturating, all-embittering sadness,—and this was the portion of one of the best of men, and that for no fault of his own, but because of his love to the Lord's people. If we, too, are called to mourn, let us not be amazed by the fiery trial as though some strange thing had happened unto us. Both in meat and drink we have sinned; it is not therefore wonderful if in both we are made to mourn.

10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.
102:10 Because of thine indignation and thy wrath: for thou hast lifted me up and cast me down. A sense of the divine wrath which had been manifested in the overthrow of the chosen nation and their sad captivity led the Psalmist into the greatest distress. He felt like a sere leaf caught up by a hurricane and carried right away, or the spray of the sea which is dashed upwards that it may be scattered and dissolved. Our translation gives the idea of a vessel uplifted in order that it may be dashed to the earth with all the greater violence and the more completely broken in pieces; or to change the figure, it reminds us of a wrestler whom his opponent catches up that he may give him a more desperate fall. The first interpretation which we have given is, however, more fully in accordance with the original, and sets forth the utter helplessness which the writer felt, and the sense of overpowering terror which bore him along in a rush of tumultuous grief which he could not withstand.

11 My days are like a shadow that declineth; and I am withered like grass.

102:11 My days are like a shadow that declineth. His days were but a shadow at best, but now they seem to be like a shadow which was passing away. A shadow is unsubstantial enough, how feeble a thing must a declining shadow be? No expression could more forcibly set forth his extreme feebleness.

And I am withered like grass. He was like grass, blasted by a parching wind, or cut down with a scythe, and then left to be dried up by the burning heat of the sun. There are times when through depression of spirit a man feels as if all life were gone from him, and existence had become merely a breathing death. Heart-break has a marvelously withering influence over our entire system; our flesh at its best is but as grass, and when it is wounded with sharp sorrows, its beauty fades, and it becomes a shriveled, dried, uncomely thing.

12 ¶ But thou, O LORD, shalt endure for ever; and thy remembrance unto all generations.

102:12 Now the writer's mind is turned away from his personal and relative troubles to the true source of all consolation, namely, the Lord himself, and his gracious purposes towards his own people.

But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever. I perish, but thou wilt not, my nation has become almost extinct, but thou art altogether unchanged. The original has the word "sit,"—"thou, Jehovah, to eternity shalt sit:" that is to say, thou reignest on, thy throne is still secure even when thy chosen city lies in ruins, and thy peculiar people are carried into captivity. The sovereignty of God in all things is an unfailing ground for consolation; he rules and reigns whatever happens, and therefore all is well.

Firm as his throne his promise stands,
And he can well secure,
What I have committed to his hands.
Till the decisive hour.
And thy remembrance unto all generations. Men will forget me, but as for thee, O God, the constant tokens of thy presence will keep the race of man in mind of thee from age to age. What God is now he always will be, that which our forefathers told us of the Lord we find to be true at this present time, and what our experience enables us to record will be confirmed by our children and their children's children. All things else are vanishing like smoke, and withering like grass, but over all the one eternal, immutable light shines on, and will shine on when all these shadows have declined into nothingness.

13 Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion: for the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come.

102: 13 Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion. He firmly believed and boldly prophesied that apparent inaction on God's part would turn to effective working. Others might remain sluggish in the matter, but the Lord would most surely bestir himself. Zion had been chosen of old, highly favored, gloriously inhabited, and wondrously preserved, and therefore by the memory of her past mercies it was certain that mercy would again be showed to her. God will not always leave his church in a low condition; he may for a while hide himself from her in chastisement, to make her see her nakedness and poverty apart from himself, but in love he must return to her, and stand up in her defense, to work her welfare.

For the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. Divine decree has appointed a season for blessing the church, and when that period has arrived, blessed she shall be. There was an appointed time for the Jews in Babylon, and when the weeks were fulfilled, no bolts nor bars could longer imprison the ransomed of the Lord. When the time came for the walls to rise stone by stone, no Tobiah or Sanballat could stay the work, for the Lord himself had arisen, and who can restrain the hand of the Almighty? When God's own time is come, neither Rome, nor the devil, nor persecutors, nor atheists, can prevent the kingdom of Christ from extending its bounds. It is God's work to do it;—he must "arise"; he will do it, but he has his own appointed season; and meanwhile we must, with holy anxiety and believing expectation, wait upon him.

14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.

102:14 For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof. They delight in her so greatly that even her rubbish is dear to them. It was a good omen for Jerusalem when the captives began to feel a home-sickness, and began to sigh after her. We may expect the modern Jews to be restored to their own land when the love of their country begins to sway them, and casts out the love of gain. To the church of God no token can be more full of hope than to see the members thereof deeply interested in all that concerns her; no prosperity is likely to rest upon a church when carelessness about ordinances, enterprises, and services is manifest; but when even the least and lowest matter connected with the Lord's work is carefully attended to, we may be sure that the set time to favour Zion is come. The poorest church member, the most grievous backslider, the most ignorant convert, should be precious in our sight, because forming a part, although possibly a very feeble part, of the New Jerusalem. If we do not care about the prosperity of the church to which we belong, need we wonder if the blessing of the Lord is withheld?
15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD, and all the kings of the earth thy glory.

102:15 So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD. Mercy within the church is soon perceived by those without. When a candle is lit in the house, it shines through the window. When Zion rejoices in her God, the heathen been to reverence his name, for they hear of the wonders of his power, and are impressed thereby.

And all the kings of the earth thy glory. The restoration of Jerusalem was a marvel among the princes who heard of it, and its ultimate resurrection in days yet to come will be one of the prodigies of history. A church quickened by divine power is so striking an object in current history that it cannot escape notice, rulers cannot ignore it, it affects the Legislature, and forces from the great ones of the earth a recognition of the divine working. Oh that we might see in our days such a revival of religion that our senators and princes might be compelled to pay homage to the Lord, and own his glorious grace. This cannot be till the saints are better edified, and more fully builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Internal prosperity is the true source of the church's external influence.

16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory.

102:16 When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory. As kings display their skill and power and wealth in the erection of their capitals, so would the Lord reveal the splendor of his attributes in the restoration of Zion, and so will he now glorify himself in the edification of his church. Never is the Lord more honourable in the eyes of his saints than when he prospers the church to add converts to her, to train these for holy service, to instruct, illuminate, and sanctify the brotherhood, to bind all together in the bonds of Christian love, and to fill the whole body with the energy of the Holy Spirit—this is to build up Zion. Other builders do but puff her up, and their wood, hay, and stubble come to an end almost as rapidly as it was heaped together; but what the Lord builds is surely and well done, and redounds to his glory. Truly, when we see the church in a low state, and mark the folly, helplessness, and indifference of those who profess to be her builders; and, on the other hand, the energy, craft, and influence of those opposed to her, we are fully prepared to own that it will be a glorious work of omnipotent grace should she ever rise to her pristine grandeur and purity.

17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute, and not despise their prayer.

102: 17 He will regard the prayer of the destitute. Only the poorest of the people were left to sigh and cry among the ruins of the beloved city; as for the rest, they were strangers in a strange land, and far away from the holy place, yet the prayers of the captives and the forlorn off-scourings of the land would be heard of the Lord, who does not hear men because of the amount of money they possess, or the breadth of the acres which they call their own, but in mercy listens most readily to the cry of the greatest need. And not despise their prayer. When great kings are building their palaces it is not reasonable to expect them to turn aside and listen to every beggar
who pleads with them, yet when the Lord builds up Zion, and appears in his robes of glory, he makes a point of listening to every petition of the poor and needy. He will not treat their pleas with contempt; he will incline his ear to hear, his heart to consider, and his hand to help. What comfort is here for those who account themselves to be utterly destitute; their abject want is here met with a most condescending promise. It is worth while to be destitute to be thus assured of the divine regard.

18 This shall be written for the generation to come: and the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD.

102:18 This shall be written for the generation to come. A note shall be made of it, for there will be destitute ones in future generations,—"the poor shall never cease out of the land,"—and it will make glad their eyes to read the story of the Lord's mercy to the needy in former times. Registers of divine kindness ought to be made and preserved; we write down in history the calamities of nations,—wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes are recorded; how much rather then should we set up memorials of the Lord's loving-kindness! Those who have in their own souls endured spiritual destitution, and have been delivered out of it, cannot forget it; they are bound to tell others of it, and especially to instruct their children in the goodness of the Lord.

And the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD. The Psalmist here intends to say that the rebuilding of Jerusalem would be a fact in history for which the Lord would be praised from age to age. Revivals of religion not only cause great joy to those who are immediately concerned in them, but they give encouragement and delight to the people of God long after, and are indeed perpetual incentives to adoration throughout the church of God. This verse teaches us that we ought to have an eye to posterity, and especially should we endeavor to perpetuate the memory of God's love to his church and to his poor people, so that young people as they grow up may know that the Lord God of their fathers is good and full of compassion. Sad as the Psalmist was when he wrote the dreary portions of this complaint, he was not so absorbed in his own sorrow, or so distracted by the national calamity, as to forget the claims of coming generations; this, indeed, is a clear proof that he was not without hope for his people, for he who is making arrangements for the good of a future generation has not yet despaired of his nation. The praise of God should be the great object of all that we do, and to secure him a revenue of glory both from the present and the future is the noblest aim of intelligent beings.

19 For he hath looked down from the height of his sanctuary; from heaven did the LORD behold the earth;

20 To hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death;

102: 19-20 For he hath looked down from the heights of his sanctuary, or "leaned from the high place of his holiness,"

from heaven did the LORD behold the earth, looking out like a watcher from his tower. What was the object of this leaning from the battlements of heaven?
Why this intent gaze upon the race of men? The answer is full of astounding mercy; the Lord does not look upon mankind to note their grandees, and observe the doings of their nobles, but to 

hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are appointed to death. Now the groans of those in prison so far from being musical are very horrible to hear, yet God bends to hear them: those who are bound for death are usually ill company, yet Jehovah deigns to stoop from his greatness to relieve their extreme distress and break their chains. This he does by providential rescues, by restoring health to the dying, and by finding food for the famishing: and spiritually this deed of grace is accomplished by sovereign grace, which delivers us by pardon from the sentence of sin, and by the sweetness of the promise from the deadly despair which a sense of sin had created within us. Well may those of us praise the Lord who were once the children of death, but are now brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The Jews in captivity were in Haman's time appointed to death, but their God found a way of escape for them, and they joyfuly kept the feast of Purim in memorial thereof; let filled souls that have been set free from the crafty malice of the old dragon with even greater gratitude magnify the Lord of infinite compassion.

21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem;

102:21 To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem. Great mercy displayed to those greatly in need of it, is the plainest method of revealing the attributes of the Most High. Actions speak more loudly than words; deeds of grace are a revelation even more impressive than the most tender promises. Jerusalem restored, the church re-edified, desponding souls encouraged, and all other manifestations of Jehovah's power to bless, are so many manifestoes and proclamations put up upon the walls of Zion to publish the character and glory of the great God. Every day's experience should be to us a new gazette of love, a court circular from heaven, a daily dispatch from the headquarters of grace. We are bound to inform our fellow Christians of all this, making them helpers in our praise, as they hear of the goodness which we have experienced. While God's mercies speak so eloquently, we ought not to be dumb. To communicate to others what God has done for us personally and for the church at large is so evidently our duty, that we ought not to need urging to fulfill it. God has ever an eye to the glory of his grace in all that he does, and we ought not willfully to defraud him of the revenue of his praise.

22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the LORD.

102:22 When the people are gathered together, and the kingdoms, to serve the Lord. The great work of restoring ruined Zion is to be spoken of in those golden ages when the heathen nations shall be converted unto God; even those glorious times will not be able to despise that grand event, which, like the passage of Israel through the Red Sea, will never be eclipsed and never cease to awaken the enthusiasm of the chosen people.
Happy will the day be when all nations shall unite in the sole worship of Jehovah, then shall the histories of the olden times be read with adoring wonder, and the hand of the Lord shall be seen as having ever rested upon the sacramental host of his elect: then shall shouts of exulting praise ascend to heaven in honour of him who loosed the captives, delivered the condemned, raised up the desolations of ages, and made out of stones and rubbish a temple for his worship.

23 ¶ He weakened my strength in the way; he shortened my days.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>102: 23 He weakened my strength in the way.</th>
<th>Here the Psalmist comes down again to the mournful string, and pours forth his personal complaint. His sorrow had cast down his spirit, and even caused weakness in his bodily frame, so that he was like a pilgrim who limped along the road, and was ready to lie down and die.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>He shortened my days.</td>
<td>Though he had bright hopes for Jerusalem, he feared that he should have departed this life long before those visions had become realities; he felt that he was pining away and would be a short-lived man. Perhaps this may be our lot, and it will materially help us to be content with it, if we are persuaded that the grandest of all interests is safe, and the good old cause secure in the hands of the Lord.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days: thy years are throughout all generations.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>102: 24 I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days.</th>
<th>He betook himself to prayer. What better remedy is there for heart-sickness and depression? We may lawfully ask for recovery from sickness and may hope to be heard. Good men should not dread death, but they are not forbidden to love life: for many reasons the man who has the best hope of heaven may nevertheless think it desirable to continue here a little longer, for the sake of his family, his work, the church of God, and even the glory of God itself. Some read the passage, &quot;Take me not up, &quot;let me not ascend like disappearing smoke, do not whirl me away like Elijah in a chariot of fire, for as yet I have only seen half my days, and that a sorrowful half; give me to live till the blustering morning shall have softened into a bright afternoon of happier existence.</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Thy years are throughout all generations.</td>
<td>Thou livest, Lord; let me live also. A fullness of existence is with thee, let me partake therein. Note the contrast between himself pining and ready to expire, and his God living on in the fullness of strength for ever and ever; this contrast is full of consolatory power to the man whose heart is stayed upon the Lord. Blessed be his name, he faileth not, and, therefore, our hope shall not fail us, neither will we despair for ourselves or for his church.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

25 Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth: and the heavens are the work of thy hands.
Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth. Creation is no new work with God, and therefore to "create Jerusalem a praise in the earth" will not be difficult to him. Long ere the holy city was laid in ruins the Lord made a world out of nothing, and it will be no labour to him to raise the walls from their heaps and replace the stones in their courses. We can neither continue our own existence nor give being to others; but the Lord not only is, but he is the Maker of all things that are; hence, when our affairs are at the very lowest ebb we are not at all despairing, because the Almighty and Eternal Lord can yet restore us.

And the heavens are the work of thine hands. Thou canst therefore not merely lay the foundations of Zion, but complete its roof, even as thou hast arched in the world with its ceiling of blue; the loftiest stories of thine earthly palace shall be piled on high without difficulty when thou dost undertake the building thereof, since thou art architect of the stars, and the spheres in which they move. When a great labour is to be performed it is eminently reassuring to contemplate the power of him who has undertaken to accomplish it; and when our own strength is exhausted it is supremely cheering to see the unfailing energy which is still engaged on our behalf.

26 They shall perish, but thou shalt endure: yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt thou change them, and they shall be changed:

But thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end.

As a man remains the same when he has changed his clothing, so is the Lord evermore the unchanging One, though his works in creation may be changed, and the operations of his providence may vary. When heaven and earth shall flee away from the dread presence of the great Judge, he will be unaltered by the terrible confusion, and the world in conflagration will effect no change in him; even so, the Psalmist remembered that when Israel was vanquished, her capital destroyed, and her temple leveled with the ground, her God remained the same self-existent, all-sufficient being, and would restore his people, even as he will restore the heavens and the earth, bestowing at the same time a new glory never known before.
The doctrine of the immutability of God should be more considered than it is, for the neglect of it tinges the theology of many religious teachers, and makes them utter many things of which they would have seen the absurdity long ago if they had remembered the divine declaration, "I am God, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed."

And thy years shall have no end. God lives on, no decay can happen to him, or destruction overtake him. What a joy is this! We may lose our dearest earthly friends, but not our heavenly Friend. Men's days are often suddenly cut short, and at the longest they are but few, but the years of the right hand of the Most High cannot be counted, for they have neither first nor last, beginning nor end. O my soul, rejoice thou in the Lord always, since he is always the same.

28 The children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee.

102:28 The children of thy servants shall continue. The Psalmist had early in the psalm looked forward to a future generation, and here he speaks with confidence that such a race would arise and be preserved and blessed of God. Some read it as a prayer, "let the sons of thy servants abide." Any way, it is full of good cheer to us; we may plead for the Lord's favour to our seed, and we may expect that the cause of God and truth will revive in future generations. Let us hope that those who are to succeed us will not be so stubborn, unbelieving and erring as we have been. If the church has been minished and brought low by the lukewarmness of the present race, let us entreat the Lord to raise up a better order of men, whose zeal and obedience shall win and hold a long prosperity. May our own dear ones be among the better generation who shall continue in the Lord's ways, obedient to the end.

And their seed shall be established before thee. God does not neglect the children of his servants. It is the rule that Abraham's Isaac should be the Lord's, that Isaac's Jacob should be beloved of the Most High, and that Jacob's Joseph should find favor in the sight of God. Grace is not hereditary, yet God loves to be served by the same family time out of mind, even as many great landowners feel a pleasure in having the same families as tenants upon their estates from generation to generation. Here is Zion's hope, her sons will build her up, her offspring will restore her former glories. We may, therefore, not only for our own sakes, but also out of love to the church of God, daily pray that our sons and daughters may be saved, and kept by divine grace even unto the end,—established before the Lord. We have thus passed through the cloud, and in the next psalm we shall bask in the sunshine. Such is the chequered experience of the believer. Paul in the seventh of Romans cries and groans, and then in the eighth rejoices and leaps for joy; and so, from the moaning of the hundred and second psalm, we now advance to the songs and dancing of the hundred and third, blessing the Lord that, "though weeping may endure for a night, joy cometh in the morning."
Psalm 103

A Psalm of David

TITLE. A Psalm of David.—Doubtless by David; it is in his own style when at its best, and we should attribute it to his later years when he had a higher sense of the preciousness of pardon, because a keener sense of sin, than in his younger days. His clear sense of the frailty of life indicates his weaker years, as also does the very fainess of his praiseful gratitude. As in the lofty Alps some peaks rise above all others so among even the inspired Psalms there are heights of song which overtop the rest.

This one hundred and third Psalm has ever seemed to us to be the Monte Rosa of the divine chain of mountains of praise, glowing with a ruddier light than any of the rest. It is as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and its golden fruit has a flavor such as no fruit ever bears unless it has been ripened in the full sunshine of mercy. It is man's reply to the benedictions of his God, his Song on the Mount answering to his Redeemer's Sermon on the Mount. Nebuchadnezzar adored his idol with flute, harp, sackbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music; and David, in far nobler style awakens all the melodies of heaven and earth in honour of the one only living and true God. Our attempt at exposition is commenced under an impressive sense of the utter impossibility of doing justice to so sublime a composition; we call upon our soul and all that is within us to aid in the pleasurable task; but, alas, our soul is finite, and our all of mental faculty far too little for the enterprise. There is too much in the Psalm, for a thousand pens to write, it is one of those all-comprehending Scriptures which is a Bible in itself, and it might alone almost suffice for the hymn-book of the church.

DIVISION. First the Psalmist sings of personal mercies which he had himself received Psalm 103:1-5; then he magnifies the attributes of Jehovah as displayed in his dealings with his people, Psalm 103:6-19; and he closes by calling upon all the creatures in the universe to adore the Lord and join with himself in blessing Jehovah, the ever gracious.

1 ¶ Bless the LORD, O my soul: and all that is within me, bless his holy name.

103: 1 Bless the Lord O my soul. Soul music is the very soul of music. The Psalmist strikes the best keynote when he begins with stirring up his inmost self to magnify the Lord. He soliloquizes, holds self-communion and exhorts himself, as though he felt that dullness would all too soon steal over his faculties, as, indeed, it will over us all, unless we are diligently on the watch. Jehovah is worthy to be praised by us in that highest style of adoration which is intended by the term bless—"All thy works praise thee, O God, but thy saints shall bless thee." Our very life and essential self should be engrossed with this delightful service, and each one of us should arouse his own heart to the engagement. Let others forbear if they can:

Bless the Lord, O MY soul. Let others murmur, but do thou bless. Let others bless themselves and their idols, but do thou bless the LORD. Let others use only their tongues, but as for me I will cry, "Bless the Lord, O my soul."
And all that is within me, bless his holy name. Many are our faculties, emotions, and capacities, but God has given them all to us, and they ought all to join in chorus to his praise. Half-hearted, ill-conceived, unintelligent praises are not such as we should render to our loving Lord. If the law of justice demanded all our heart and soul and mind for the Creator, much more may the law of gratitude put in a comprehensive claim for the homage of our whole being to the God of grace. It is instructive to note how the Psalmist dwells upon the holy name of God, as if his holiness were dearest to him; or, perhaps, because the holiness or wholeness of God was to his mind the grandest motive for rendering to him the homage of his nature in its wholeness. Babes may praise the divine goodness, but fathers in grace magnify his holiness. By the name we understand the revealed character of God, and assuredly those songs which are suggested, not by our fallible reasoning and imperfect observation, but by unerring inspiration, should more than any others arouse all our consecrated powers.

2 Bless the LORD, O my soul, and forget not all his benefits:

103: 2 Bless the LORD, O my soul. He is in real earnest, and again calls upon himself to arise. Had he been very sleepy before? Or was he now doubly sensible of the importance, the imperative necessity of adoration? Certainly, he uses no vain repetitions, for the Holy Spirit guides his pen; and thus he shews us that we have need, again and again, to bestir ourselves when we are about to worship God, for it would be shameful to offer him anything less than the utmost our souls can render. These first verses are a tuning of the harp, a screwing up of the loosened strings that not a note may fail in the sacred harmony.

And forget not all his benefits. Not so much as one of the divine dealings should be forgotten, they are all really beneficial to us, all worthy of himself, and all subjects for praise. Memory is very treacherous about the best things; by a strange perversity, engendered by the fall, it treasures up the refuse of the past and permits priceless treasures to lie neglected, it is tenacious of grievances and holds benefits all too loosely. It needs spurring to its duty, though that duty ought to be its delight. Observe that he calls all that is within him to remember all the Lord's benefits. For our task our energies should be suitably called out. God's all cannot be praised with less than our all. Reader, have we not cause enough at this time to bless him who blesses us? Come, let us read our diaries and see if there be not choice favors recorded there for which we have rendered no grateful return. Remember how the Persian king, when he could not sleep, read the chronicles of the empire, and discovered that one who had saved his life had never been rewarded. How quickly did he do him honour! The Lord has saved us with a great salvation, shall we render no recompense? The name of ingrate is one of the most shameful that a man can wear; surely we cannot be content to run the risk of such a brand. Let us awake then, and with intense enthusiasm bless Jehovah.

3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases;

103: 3 Who forgiveth all thine iniquities. Here David begins his list of blessings received, which he rehearses as themes and arguments for praise. He selects a few of the choicest pearls from the casket of divine love, threads them on the string of memory, and hangs them about the neck of gratitude. Pardoned sin is, in our experience, one of the choicest boons of grace, one of the
earliest gifts of mercy,—in fact, the needful preparation for enjoying all that follows it. Till iniquity is forgiven, healing, redemption, and satisfaction are unknown blessings. Forgiveness is first in the order of our spiritual experience, and in some respects first in value. The pardon granted is a present one—forgiveth; it is continual, for he still forgiveth; it is divine, for God gives it; it is far reaching, for it removes all our sins; it takes in omissions as well as commissions, for both these are in-equities; and it is most effectual, for it is as real as the healing, and the rest of the mercies with which it is placed.

**Who healeth all thy diseases.** When the cause is gone, namely, iniquity, the effect ceases. Sicknesses of body and soul came into the world by sin, and as sin is eradicated, diseases bodily, mental, and spiritual will vanish, till "the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick." Many-sided is the character of our heavenly Father, for, having forgiven as a judge, he then cures as a physician. He is all things to us, as our needs call for him, and our infirmities do but reveal him in new characters.

"In him is only good,
In me is only ill,
My ill but draws his goodness forth,
And me he loveth still."

God gives efficacy to medicine for the body, and his grace sanctifies the soul. Spiritually we are daily under his care, and he visits us, as the surgeon does his patient; healing still (for that is the exact word) each malady as it arises. No disease of our soul baffles his skill, he goes on healing all, and he will do so till the last trace of taint has gone from our nature. The two alls of this verse are further reasons for all that is within us praising the Lord. The two blessings of this verse the Psalmist was personally enjoying, he sang not of others but of himself, or rather of his Lord, who was daily forgiving and healing him. He must have known that it was so, or he could not have sung of it. He had no doubt about it, he felt in his soul that it was so, and, therefore, he bade his pardoned and restored soul bless the Lord with all its might.

4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction; who crowneth thee with loving-kindness and tender mercies;

**103: 4 Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.** By purchase and by power the Lord redeems us from the spiritual death into which we had fallen, and from the eternal death which would have been its consequence. Had not the death penalty of sin been removed, our forgiveness and healing would have been incomplete portions of salvation, fragments only, and but of small value, but the removal of the guilt and power of sin is fitly attended by the reversal of the sentence of death which had been passed upon us. Glory be to our great Substitute, who delivered us from going down into the pit, by giving himself to be our ransom. Redemption will ever constitute one of the sweetest notes in the believer's grateful song.

**Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies.** Our Lord does nothing by halves, he will not stay his hand till he has gone to the uttermost with his people. Cleansing, healing, redemption, are not enough, he must needs make them kings and crown them, and the crown must be far more precious than if it were made of corruptible things, such as silver and gold;
it is studded with gems of grace and lined with the velvet of loving-kindness; it is decked with
the jewels of mercy, but made soft for the head to wear by a lining of tenderness.

Who is like unto thee, O Lord! God himself crowns the princes of his family, for their best things
come from him directly and distinctly; they do not earn the crown, for it is of mercy not of merit;
they feel their own unworthiness of it, therefore he deals with tenderness; but lie is resolved to
bless them, and, therefore, he is ever crowning them, always surrounding their brows with
coronets of mercy and compassion. He always crowns the edifice which he commences, and
where he gives pardon he gives acceptance too.

"Since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." Our sin
deprived us of all our honors, a bill of attainder was issued against us as traitors; but he who
removed the sentence of death by redeeming us from destruction, restores to us more than all our
former honors by crowning us anew. Shall God crown us and shall not we crown him? Up, my
soul, and cast thy crown at his feet, and in lowliest reverence worship him, who has so greatly
exalted thee, as to lift thee from the dunghill and set thee among princes.

5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things; so that thy youth is renewed like
the eagle's.

103: 5 Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things, or rather "filling with good thy soul." No
man is ever filled to satisfaction but a believer, and only God himself can satisfy even him. Many
a worldling is satiated, but not one is satisfied. God satisfies the very soul of man, his noblest
part, his ornament and glory; and of consequence he satisfies his mouth, however hungry and
craving it might otherwise be. Soul-satisfaction loudly calls for soul-praise, and when the mouth
is filled with good it is bound to speak good of him who filled it. Our good Lord bestows really
good things, not vain toys and idle pleasures; and these he is always giving, so that from moment
to moment he is satisfying our soul with good: shall we not be still praising him? If we never
cease to bless him till he ceases to bless us, our employment will be eternal.

So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. Renewal of strength, amounting to a grant of a
new lease of life, was granted to the Psalmist; he was so restored to his former self that he grew
young again, and looked as vigorous as an eagle, whose eye can gaze upon the sun, and whose
wing can mount above the storm. Our version refers to the annual molting of the eagle, after
which it looks fresh and young; but the original does not appear to allude to any such fact of
natural history, but simply to describe the diseased one as so healed and strengthened, that he
became as full of energy as the bird which is strongest of the feathered race, most fearless, most
majestic, and most soaring. He who sat moping with the owl in the last Psalm, here flies on high
with the eagle: the Lord works marvelous changes in us, and we learn by such experiences to
bless his holy name. To grow from a sparrow to an eagle, and leave the wilderness of the pelican
to mount among the stars is enough to make any man cry, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Thus, is
the endless chain of grace complete. Sins forgiven, its power subdued, and its penalty averted,
then we are honored, supplied, and our very nature renovated, till we are as new-born children in
the household of God. O Lord we must bless thee, and we will; as thou dost withhold nothing
from us so we would not keep back from thy praise one solitary power of our nature, but with all
our heart, and soul, and strength praise thy holy name.
6 ¶ The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are oppressed.

103: 6 The LORD executeth righteousness and judgment for all that are of oppressed. Our own personal obligations must not absorb our song; we must also magnify the Lord for his goodness to others. He does not leave the poor and needy to perish at the hands of their enemies, but interposes on their behalf, for he is the executor of the poor and the executioner of the cruel. When his people were in Egypt he heard their groanings and brought them forth, but he overthrew Pharaoh in the Red Sea. Man's injustice shall receive retribution at the hand of God. Mercy to his saints demands vengeance on their persecutors, and he will repay it. No blood of martyrs shall be shed in vain; no groans of confessors in prison shall be left without inquisition being made concerning them. All wrongs shall be righted, all the oppressed shall be avenged. Justice may at times leave the courts of man, but it abides upon the tribunal of God. For this every right-minded person will bless God. Were he careless of his creature's good, did he neglect the administration of justice, did he suffer high-handed oppressors finally to escape, we should have greater reason for trembling than rejoicing; it is not so, however, for our God is a God of justice, and by him actions are weighed; he will mete out his portion to the proud and make the tyrant bite the dust,—yea, often he visits the haughty persecutor even in this life, so that "the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth."

7 He made known his ways unto Moses, his acts unto the children of Israel.

103:7 He made known his ways unto Moses. Moses was made to see the manner in which the Lord deals with men; he saw this at each of the three periods of his life, in the court, in retirement, and at the head of the tribes of Israel. To him the Lord gave especially clear manifestations of his dispensations and modes of ruling among mankind, granting to him to see more of God than had before been seen by mortal man, while he communed with him upon the mount.

His acts unto the children of Israel. They saw less than Moses, for they beheld the deeds of God without understanding his method therein, yet this was much, very much, and might have been more if they had not been so perverse; the stint was not in the revelation, but in the hardness of their hearts. It is a great act of sovereign grace and condescending love when the Lord reveals himself to any people, and they ought to appreciate the distinguished favour shown to them. We, as believers in Jesus, know the Lord's ways of covenant grace, and we have by experience been made to see his acts of mercy towards us; how heartily ought we to praise our divine teacher, the Holy Spirit, who has made these things known to us, for had it not been for him we should have continued in darkness unto this day, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world?" Why hast thou made us "of the election who have obtained it" while the rest are blinded? Observe how prominent is the personality of God in all this gracious teaching—"He made known." He did not leave Moses to discover truth for himself, but became his instructor. What should we ever know if he did not make it known? God alone can reveal himself. If Moses needed the Lord to make him know, how much more do we who are so much inferior to the great law-giver?

8 The LORD is merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and plenteous in mercy.
103:8 *The Lord is merciful and gracious.* Those with whom he deals are sinners. However much he favors them they are guilty and need mercy at his hands, nor is he slow to compassionate their lost estate, or reluctant by his grace to lift them out of it. Mercy pardons sin, grace bestows favour: in both the Lord abounds. This is that way of his which he made known to Moses (Ex 34:6), and in that way he will abide as long as the age of grace shall last, and men are yet in this life. He who "executeth righteousness and judgment," yet delighteth in mercy.

_Slow to anger._ He can be angry, and can deal out righteous indignation upon the guilty, but it is his strange work; he lingers long, with loving pauses, tarrying by the way to give space for repentance and opportunity for accepting his mercy. Thus deals he with the greatest sinners, and with his own children much more so: towards them his anger is short-lived and never reaches into eternity, and when it is shown in fatherly chastisements he does not afflict willingly, and soon pities their sorrows. From this we should learn to be ourselves slow to anger; if the Lord is longsuffering under our great provocations how much more ought we to endure the errors of our brethren!

_And plenteous in mercy._ Rich in it, quick in it, overflowing with it; and so had he need to be or we should soon be consumed. He is God, and not man, or our sins would soon drown his love; yet above the mountains of our sins the floods of his mercy rise.

    "Plenteous grace with thee is found,  
    Grace to cover all my sin;  
    Let the healing streams abound,  
    Make and keep me pure within."

All the world tastes of his sparing mercy, those who hear the gospel partake of his inviting mercy, the saints live by his saving mercy, are preserved by his upholding mercy, are cheered by his consoling mercy, and will enter heaven through his infinite and everlasting mercy. Let grace abounding be our hourly song in the house of our pilgrimage. Let those who feel that they live upon it glorify the plenteous fountain from which it so spontaneously flows.

9 He will not always chide: neither will he keep his anger for ever.

103: 9 *He will not always chide._ He will sometimes, for he cannot endure that his people should harbor sin in their hearts, but not for ever will he chasten them; as soon as they turn to him and forsake their evil ways he will end the quarrel. He might find constant cause for striving with us, for we have always something in us which is contrary to his holy mind, but he refrains himself lest our spirits should fail before him. It will be profitable for any one of us who may be at this time out of conscious fellowship with the Lord, to inquire at his hands the reason for his anger, saying, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me?" For he is easily entreated of, and soon ceaseth from his wrath. When his children turn from their sins he soon turns from his chidings.

_Neither will he keep his anger for ever._ He bears no grudges. The Lord would not have his people harbor resentments, and in his own course of action he sets them a grand
example. When the Lord has chastened his child he has done with his anger: he is not punishing as a judge, else might his wrath burn on, but he is acting as a father, and, therefore, after a few blows he ends the matter, and presses his beloved one to his bosom as if nothing had happened; or if the offence lies too deep in the offender's nature to be thus overcome, he continues to correct, but he never ceases to love, and he does not suffer his anger with his people to pass into the next world, but receives his erring child into his glory.

10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.

103: 10 He hath not dealt with us after our sins; nor rewarded us according to our iniquities.
Else had Israel perished outright, and we also had long ago been consigned to the lowest hell. We ought to praise the Lord for what he has not done as well as for what he has wrought for us; even the negative side deserves our adoring gratitude. Up to this moment, at our very worst estate, we have never suffered as we deserved to suffer; our daily lot has not been apportioned upon the rule of what we merited, but on the far different measure of undeserved kindness. Shall we not bless the Lord? Every power of our being might have been rent with anguish, instead of which we are all in the enjoyment of comparative happiness, and many of us are exceedingly favored with inward joy; let then every faculty, yea, all that is within us, bless his holy name.

11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.

103: 11 For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him. Boundless in extent towards his chosen is the mercy of the Lord; it is no more to be measured than the height of heaven or the heaven of heavens. "Like the height of the heavens" is the original language, which implies other points of comparison besides extent, and suggests sublimity, grandeur, and glory. As the lofty heavens canopy the earth, water it with dews and rains, enlighten it with sun, moon, and stars, and look down upon it with unceasing watchfulness, even so the Lord's mercy from above covers all his chosen, enriches them, embraces them, and stands for ever as their dwelling place. The idea of our version is a very noble one, for who shall tell how exceeding great is the height of heaven? Who can reach the first of the fixed stars, and who can measure the utmost bounds of the starry universe? Yet so great is his mercy! Oh, that great little word so! All this mercy is for "them that fear him;" there must be a humble, hearty reverence of his authority, or we cannot taste of his grace. Godly fear is one of the first products of the divine life in us, it is the beginning of wisdom, yet it fully ensures to its possessor all the benefits of divine mercy, and is, indeed, here and elsewhere, employed to set forth the whole of true religion. Many a true child of God is full of filial fear, and yet at the same time stands trembling as to his acceptance with God; this trembling is groundless, but it is infinitely to be preferred to that baseborn presumption, which incites men to boast of their adoption and consequent security, when all the while they are in the gall of bitterness. Those who are presuming upon the infinite extent of divine mercy, should here be led to consider that although it is wide as the horizon and high as the stars, yet it is only meant for them that fear the Lord, and as for obstinate rebels, they shall have justice without mercy measured out to them.
12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.

103: 12 As far as the east is from the west, so far hath he removed our transgressions from us.
O glorious verse, no word even upon the inspired page can excel it! Sin is removed from us by a miracle of love! What a load to move, and yet is it removed so far that the distance is incalculable. Fly as far as the wing of imagination can bear you, and if you journey through space eastward, you are further from the west at every beat of your wing. If sin be removed so far, then we may be sure that the scent, the trace, the very memory of it must be entirely gone. If this be the distance of its removal, there is no shade of fear of its ever being brought back again; even Satan himself could not achieve such a task. Our sins are gone, Jesus has borne them away. Far as the place of sunrise is removed from yonder west, where the sun sinks when his day's journey is done, so far were our sins carried by our scapegoat nineteen centuries ago, and now if they be sought for, they shall not be found, yea, they shall not be, saith the Lord. Come, my soul, awaken thyself thoroughly and glorify the Lord for this richest of blessings. Hallelujah. The Lord alone could remove sin at all, and he has done it in a godlike fashion, making a final sweep of all our transgressions.

13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the LORD pitieth them that fear him.

103: 13 Like as a father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him.
To those who truly reverence his holy name, the Lord is a father and acts as such. These he pities, for in the very best of men the Lord sees much to pity, and when they are at their best state they still need his compassion. This should check every propensity to pride, though at the same time it should yield us the richest comfort. Fathers feel for their children, especially when they are in pain, they would like to suffer in their stead, their sighs and groans cut them to the quick: thus sensitive towards us is our heavenly Father. We do not adore a god of stone, but the living God, who is tenderness itself. He is at this moment compassionating us, for the word is in the present tense; his pity never fails to flow, and we never cease to need it.

14 For he knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.

103: 14 For he knoweth our frame. He knows how we are made, for he made us. Our make and build, our constitution and temperament, our prevailing infirmity and most besetting temptation he well perceives, for he searches our inmost nature.

He remembereth that we are dust. Made of dust, dust still, and ready to return to dust. We have sometimes heard of "the Iron Duke," and of iron constitutions, but the words are soon belied, for the Iron Duke is dissolved, and other men of like rigor are following to the grave, where "dust to dust" is an appropriate requiem. We too often forget that we are dust, and try our minds and bodies unduly by excessive mental and bodily exertion, we are also too little mindful of the infirmities of others, and impose upon them burdens grievous to be borne; but our heavenly Father never
overloads us, and never fails to give us strength equal to our day, because he always takes our frailty into account when he is apportioning to us our lot. Blessed be his holy name for this gentleness towards his frail creatures.

15 As for man, his days are as grass: as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth.

103: 15 As for man, his days are as grass. He lives on the grass, and lives like the grass. Corn is but educated grass, and man, who feeds on it, partakes of its nature. The grass lives, grows, flowers, falls beneath the scythe, dries up, and is removed from the field: read this sentence over again, and you will find it the history of man. If he lives out his little day, he is cut down at last, and it is far more likely that he will wither before he comes to maturity, or be plucked away on a sudden, long before he has fulfilled his time.

As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. He has a beauty and a comeliness even as the meadows have when they are yellow with the king-cups, but, alas, how short-lived! No sooner come than gone, a flash of loveliness and no more! Man is not even like a flower in the conservatory or in the sheltered garden border, he grows best according to nature, as the field-flower does, and like the unprotected beautifier of the pasture, he runs a thousand risks of coming to a speedy end. A large congregation, in many-colored attire, always reminds us of a meadow bright with many hues; and the comparison becomes sadly true when we reflect, that as the grass and its goodliness soon pass away, even so will those we gaze upon, and all their visible beauty. Thus, too, must it be with all that comes of the flesh, even its greatest excellencies and natural virtues, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, "and therefore is but as grass which withers if but a breath of wind assails it. Happy are they who, born from above, have in them an incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever.

16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone; and the place thereof shall know it no more.

103:16 For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone. Only a little wind is needed, not even a scythe is demanded, a breath can do it, for the flower is so frail. "If one sharp wind sweep over the field, It withers in an hour." How small a portion of deleterious gas suffices to create a deadly fever, which no art of man can stay. No need of sword or bullet, a puff of foul air is deadlier far, and fails not to lay low the healthiest and most stalwart son of man.

And the place thereof shall know it no more. The flower blooms no more. It may have a successor, but as for itself its leaves are scattered, and its perfume will never again sweeten the evening air. Man also dies and is gone, gone from his old haunts, his dear home, and his daily labours, never to return. As far as this world is concerned, he is as though he never had been; the sun rises, the moon increases or wanes, summer and winter run their round, the rivers flow, and all things continue in their courses as though they missed him not, so little a figure does he make in the affairs of nature. Perhaps a friend will note that he is gone, and say,
"One morn. I missed him
on the accustomed hill,
Along the heath,
And near his favorite tree;

Another came, nor yet beside the rill,
    Nor up the lawn,
    Nor at the wood was he."

But when the "dirges due" are silent, beyond a mound of earth, and perhaps a crumbling stone, how small will be the memorial of our existence upon this busy scene! True there are more enduring memories, and an existence of another kind coeval with eternity, but these belong, not to our flesh, which is but grass, but to a higher life, in which we rise to close fellowship with the Eternal.

17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children;

103: 17 But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him. Blessed but! How vast the contrast between the fading flower and the everlasting God! How wonderful that his mercy should link our frailty with his eternity, and make us everlasting too! From old eternity the Lord viewed his people as objects of mercy, and as such chose them to become partakers of his grace; the doctrine of eternal election is most delightful to those who have light to see it and love wherewith to accept it. It is a theme for deepest thought and highest joy. The "to everlasting" is equally precious. Jehovah changes not, he has mercy without end as well as without beginning. Never will those who fear him find that either their sins or their needs have exhausted the great deep of his grace. The main question is, "Do we fear him?" If we are lifting up to heaven the eye of filial fear, the gaze of paternal love is never removed from us, and it never will be, world without end.

And his righteousness unto children's children. Mercy to those with whom the Lord makes a covenant is guaranteed by righteousness; it is because he is just that he never revokes a promise, or fails to fulfill it. Our believing sons and their seed for ever will find the word of the Lord the same: to them will he display his grace and bless them even as he has blessed us. Let us sing, then, for posterity. The past commands our praise and the future invites it. For our descendants let us sing as well as pray. If Abraham rejoiced concerning his seed, so also may the godly, for "instead of the fathers shall be the children, "and as the last Psalm told us in its concluding verse, "the children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee."

18 To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them.

103: 18 Children of the righteous are not, however, promised the Lord's mercy without stipulation, and this verse completes the statement of the last by adding:
To such as keep his covenant, and to those that remember his commandments to do them. The parents must be obedient and the children too. We are here bidden to abide by the covenant, and those who run off to any other confidence than the finished work of Jesus are not among those who obey this precept; those with whom the covenant is really made stand firm to it, and having begun in the Spirit, they do not seek to be made perfect in the flesh. The truly godly keep the Lord's commands carefully—they "remember"; they observe them practically—"to do them": moreover they do not pick and choose, but remember "his commandments" as such, without exalting one above another as their own pleasure or convenience may dictate. May our offspring be a thoughtful, careful, observant race, eager to know the will of the Lord, and prompt to follow it fully, then will his mercy enrich and honour them from generation to generation. This verse also suggests praise, for who would wish the Lord to smile on those who will not regard his ways? That were to encourage vice. From the manner in which some men unguardedly preach the covenant, one might infer that God would bless a certain set of men however they might live, and however they might neglect his laws. But the word teaches not so. The covenant is not legal, but it is holy. It is all of grace from first to last, yet it is no panderer to sin; on the contrary, one of its greatest promises is, "I will put my laws in their hearts and in their minds will I write them"; its general aim is the sanctifying of a people unto God, zealous for good works, and all its gifts and operations work in that direction. Faith keeps the covenant by looking alone to Jesus, while at the same time by earnest obedience it remembers the Lord's commandments to do them.

19 ¶ The LORD hath prepared his throne in the heavens; and his kingdom ruleth over all.

103: 19 The LORD has prepared his throne in the heavens. Here is a grand burst of song produced by a view of the boundless power, and glorious sovereignty of Jehovah. His throne is fixed, for that is the word; it is established, settled, immovable.

"He sits on no precarious throne,
Nor borrows leave to be."

About his government there is no alarm, no disorder, no perturbation, no hurrying to and fro in expedients, no surprises to be met or unexpected catastrophes to be warded off;— all is prepared and fixed, and he himself has prepared and fixed it. He is no delegated sovereign for whom a throne is set up by another; he is an autocrat, and his dominion arises from himself and is sustained by his own innate power. This matchless sovereignty is the pledge of our security, the pillar upon which our confidence may safely lean.

And his kingdom ruleth over all. Over the whole universe he stretches his sceptre. He now reigns universally, he always has done so, and he always will. To us the world may seem rent with anarchy, but he brings order out of confusion. The warring elements are marching beneath his banner when they most wildly rush onward in furious tempest. Great and small, intelligent and material, willing and unwilling, fierce or gentle,—all, all are under his sway. His is the only universal monarchy, he is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords. A clear view of his ever active, and everywhere supreme providence, is one of the most delightful of spiritual gifts; he who has it cannot do otherwise than bless the Lord with all his soul.
Thus has the sweet singer hymned the varied attributes of the Lord as seen in nature, grace, and providence, and now he gathers up all his energies for one final outburst of adoration, in which he would have all unite, since all are subjects of the Great King.

20 Bless the LORD, ye his angels, that excel in strength, that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word.

103: 20 Bess the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength. Finding his work of praise growing upon his hands, he calls upon "the firstborn sons of light" to speak the praises of the Lord, as well they may, for as Milton says, they best can tell. Dwelling nearer to that prepared throne than we as yet have leave to climb, they see in nearer vision the glory which we would adore. To them is given an exceeding might of intellect, and voice, and force which they delight to use in sacred services for him; let them now turn all their strength into that solemn song which we would send up to the third heaven. To him who gave angelic strength let all angelic strength be given. They are his angels, and therefore they are not loath to ring out his praises.

That do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. We are bidden to do these commandments, and alas we fail; let those unfallen spirits, whose bliss it is never to have transgressed, give to the Lord the glory of their holiness. They hearken for yet more commands, obeying as much by reverent listening as by energetic action, and in this they teach us how the heavenly will should evermore be done; yet even for this surpassing excellence let them take no praise, but render all to him who has made and kept them what they are. O that we could hear them chant the high praises of God, as did the shepherds on that greatest of all birth nights—

"When such music sweet
    Their hearts and ears did greet
    As never was by mortal finger struck;
    Divinely-warbled voice
    Answering the stringed noise,
    As well their souls
    in blissful rapture took:
    The air, such pleasure loth to lose,
    With thousand echoes still prolongs each heavenly close."

Our glad heart anticipates the hour when we shall hear them "harping in loud and solemn guise," and all to the sole praise of God.

21 Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts; ye ministers of his, that do his pleasure.

103: 21 Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts; to whatever race of creatures ye may belong, for ye are all his troops, and he is the Generalissimo of all your armies. The fowl of the air and the fish of the sea, and whatsoever passeth through the paths of the sea, should all unite in praising their Creator, after the best of their ability. Ye ministers of his that do his pleasure; in whatever way ye serve him, bless him as ye serve.
The Psalmist would have every servant in the Lord's palace unite with him, and all at once sing out the praises of the Lord. We have attached a new sense to the word "ministers" in these latter days, and so narrowed it down to those who serve in word and doctrine. Yet no true minister would wish to alter it, for we are above all men bound to be the Lord's servants, and we would, beyond all other ministering intelligences or forces, desire to bless the glorious Lord.

22 Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.

103: 22 Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion. Here is a trinity of blessing for the thrice blessed God, and each one of the three blessings is an enlargement upon that which went before. This is the most comprehensive of all, for what can be a wider call than to all in all places? See how finite man can awaken unbounded praise! Man is but little, yet, placing his hands upon the keys of the great organ of the universe, he wakes it to thunders of adoration! Redeemed man is the voice of nature, the priest in the temple of creation, the precentor in the worship of the universe.

O that all the Lord's works on earth were delivered from the vanity to which they were made subject, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God: the time is hastening on and will most surely come; then will all the Lord's works bless him indeed. The immutable promise is ripening, the sure mercy is on its way. Hasten, ye winged hours! Bless the Lord, O my soul. He closes on his key-note. He cannot be content to call on others without taking his own part; nor because others sing more loudly and perfectly, will he be content to be set aside. O my soul, come home to thyself and to thy God, and let the little world within thee keep time and tune to the spheres which are ringing out Jehovah's praise. O infinitely blessed Lord, favour us with this highest blessing of being for ever and ever wholly engrossed in blessing Thee.
Psalm 104

GENERAL, REMARKS. Here we have one of the loftiest and longest sustained flights of the inspired muse. The psalm gives an interpretation to the many voices of nature, and sings sweetly both of creation and providence. The poem contains a complete cosmos sea and land, cloud and sunlight, plant and animal, light and darkness, life and death, are all proved to be expressive of the presence of the Lord. Traces of the six days of creation are very evident, and though the creation of man, which was the crowning work of the sixth day, is not mentioned, this is accounted for from the fact that man is himself the singer: some have ever, discerned marks of the divine rest upon the seventh day in Ps 104:31. It is a poet's version of Genesis. Nor is it alone the present condition of the earth which is here the subject of song; but a hint is given of those holier times when we shall see "a new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness, "out of which the sinner shall be consumed, Psalm 104:35. The spirit of ardent praise to God runs through the whole, and with it a distinct realization of the divine Being as a personal existence, loved and trusted as well as adored.

We have no information as to the author, but the Septuagint assigns it to David, and we see no reason for ascribing it to any one else. His spirit, style, and manner of writing are very manifest therein, and if the psalm must be ascribed to another, it must be to a mind remarkably similar, and we could only suggest the wise son of David—Solomon, the poet preacher, to whose notes upon natural history in the Proverbs some of the verses bear a striking likeness. Whoever the human penman may have been, the exceeding glory and perfection of the Holy Spirit's own divine authorship are plain to every spiritual mind.

DIVISION. After ascribing blessedness to the Lord the devout psalmist sings of the light and the firmament, which were the work of the first and second days Ps 104:1-6. By an easy transition he describes the separation of the waters from the dry land, the formation of rain, brooks and rivers, and the uprising of green herbs, which were the produce of the third day Psalm 104:7-18. Then the appointment of the sun and moon to be the guardians of day and night commands the poet's admiration Psalm 104:19-23, and so he sings the work of the fourth day. Having already alluded to many varieties of living creatures, the psalmist proceeds from Psalm 104:24-30 to sing of the life with which the Lord was pleased to fill the air, the sea, and the land; these forms of existence were the peculiar produce of the fifth and sixth days. We may regard the closing verses Psalm 104:31-35 as a Sabbath meditation, hymn, and prayer. The whole lies before us as a panorama of the universe viewed by the eye of devotion. O for grace to render due praise unto the Lord while reading it.

1 ¶ Bless the LORD, O my soul. O LORD my God, thou art very great; thou art clothed with honour and majesty.

104:1 Bless the LORD, O my soul. This psalm begins and ends like the Hundred and Third, and it could not do better: when the model is perfect it deserves to exist in duplicate. True praise begins at home. It is idle to stir up others to praise if we are ungratefully silent ourselves. We should call upon our inmost hearts to awake and bestir themselves, for we are apt to be sluggish, and if we are so when called upon to bless God, we shall have great cause to be ashamed.
When we magnify the Lord, let us do it heartily: our best is far beneath his worthiness, let us not dishonour him by rendering to him half hearted worship.

O LORD my God, thou art very great. This ascription has in it a remarkable blending of the boldness of faith, and the awe of holy fear: for the psalmist calls the infinite Jehovah "my God, "and at the same time, prostrate in amazement at the divine greatness, he cries out in utter astonishment,

"Thou art very great." God was great on Sinai, yet the opening words of his law were, "I am the Lord thy God; " his greatness is no reason why faith should not put in her claim, and call him all her own. The declaration of Jehovah's greatness here given would have been very much in place at the end of the psalm, for it is a natural inference and deduction from a survey of the universe: its position at the very commencement of the poem is an indication that the whole psalm was well considered and digested in the mind before it was actually put into words; only on this supposition can we account for the emotion preceding the contemplation. Observe also, that the wonder expressed does not refer to the creation and its greatness, but to Jehovah himself. It is not "the universe is very great!" but "THOU art very great." Many stay at the creature, and so become idolatrous in spirit; to pass onward to the Creator himself is true wisdom.

Thou art clothed with honour and majesty. Thou thyself art not to be seen, but thy works, which may be called thy garments, are full of beauties and marvels which redound to thine honour. Garments both conceal and reveal a man, and so do the creatures of God. The Lord is seen in his works as worthy of honour for his skill, his goodness, and his power, and as claiming majesty, for he has fashioned all things in sovereignty, doing as he wills, and asking no man's permit. He must be blind indeed who does not see that nature is the work of a king. These are solemn strokes of God's severer mind, terrible touches of his sterner attributes, broad lines of inscrutable mystery, and deep shadings of overwhelming power, and these make creation's picture a problem never to be solved, except by admitting that he who drew it giveth no account of his matters, but ruleth all things according to the good pleasure of his will. His majesty is, however, always so displayed as to reflect honour upon his whole character; he does as he wills, but he wills only that which is thrice holy, like himself. The very robes of the unseen Spirit teach us this, and it is ours to recognize it with humble adoration.

2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain:

103:2 Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment: wrapping the light about him as a monarch puts on his robe. The conception is sublime: but it makes us feel how altogether inconceivable the personal glory of the Lord must be; if light itself is but his garment and veil, what must be the blazing splendor of his own essential being! We are lost in astonishment, and dare not pry into the mystery lest we be blinded by its insufferable glory.

Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain—within which he might dwell. Light was created on the first day and the firmament upon the second, so that they fitly follow each other in this verse. Oriental princes put on their glorious apparel and then sit in state within curtains, and the Lord is spoken of under that image: but how far above all comprehension the figure must be
lifted, since the robe is essential light, to which suns and moons owe their brightness, and the
curtain is the azure sky studded with stars for gems. This is a substantial argument for the truth
with which the psalmist commenced his song, "O Lord my God, thou art very great."

3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters: who maketh the clouds
his chariot: who walketh upon the wings of the wind:

104: 3 Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters. His lofty halls are framed with the
waters which are above the firmament. The upper rooms of God's great house, the secret stories
far above our ken, the palatial chambers wherein he resides, are based upon the floods which
form the upper ocean. To the unsubstantial he lends stability; he needs no joists and rafters, for
his palace is sustained by his own power. We are not to interpret literally where the language is
poetical, it would be simple absurdity to do so.

Who maketh the clouds his chariot. When he comes forth from his secret pavilion it is thus he
makes his royal progress. "It is chariot of wrath deep thunder clouds form, "and his chariot of
mercy drops plenty as it traverses the celestial road.

Who walketh or rather goes upon the wings of the wind. With the clouds for a car, and the
winds for winged steeds, the Great King hastens on his movements whether for mercy or for
judgment. Thus we have the idea of a king still further elaborated—his lofty palace, his chariot,
and his coursers are before us; but what a palace must we imagine, whose beams are of crystal,
and whose base is consolidated vapor! What a stately car is that which is fashioned out of
the flying clouds, whose gorgeous colors Solomon in all his glory could not rival; and what a
Godlike progress is that in which spirit wings and breath of winds bear up the moving throne. "O
Lord, my God, thou art very great!"

4 Who maketh his angels spirits; his ministers a flaming fire:

104: 4 Who maketh his angels spirits; or wields, for the word means either. Angels are pure
spirits, though they are permitted to assume a visible form when God desires us to see them. God
is a spirit, and he is waited upon by spirits in his royal courts. Angels are like winds for mystery,
force, and invisibility, and no doubt the winds themselves are often the angels or messengers of
God. God who makes his angels to be as winds, can also make winds to be his angels, and they
are constantly so in the economy of nature.

His ministers a flaming fire. Here, too, we may choose which we will of two meanings: God's
ministers or servants he makes to be as swift, potent, and terrible as fire, and on the other hand he
makes fire, that devouring element, to be his minister flaming forth upon his errands. That the
passage refers to angels is clear from Heb 1:7; and it was most proper to mention them here in
connection with light and the heavens, and immediately after the robes and paltree of the Great
King. Should not the retinue of the Lord of Hosts be mentioned as well as his chariot? It would
have been a flaw in the description of the universe had the angels not been alluded to, and this is
the most appropriate place for their introduction.
When we think of the extraordinary powers entrusted to angelic beings, and the mysterious glory of the seraphim and the four living creatures, we are led to reflect upon the glory of the Master whom they serve, and again we cry out with the psalmist, "O Lord, my God, thou art very great."

5 Who laid the foundations of the earth, that it should not be removed for ever.

104: 5 Who laid the foundations of the earth. Thus the commencement of creation is described, in almost the very words employed by the Lord himself in Job 38:4. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened, and who laid the corner stone thereof?" And the words are found in the same connection too, for the Lord proceeds to say, "When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy."

That it should not be removed forever. The language is, of course, poetical, but the fact is none the less wonderful: the earth is so placed in space that it remains as stable as if it were a fixture. The several motions of our planet are carried on so noiselessly and evenly that, as far as we are concerned, all things are as permanent and peaceful as if the old notion of its resting upon pillars were literally true. With what delicacy has the great Artificer poised our globe! What power must there be in that hand which has caused so vast a body to know its orbit, and to move so smoothly in it! What engineer can save every part of his machinery from an occasional jar, jerk, or friction? Yet to our great world in its complicated motions no such thing has ever occurred. "O Lord, my God, thou art very great."

6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment: the waters stood above the mountains.

104: 6 Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment. The new born earth was wrapped in aqueous swaddling bands. In the first ages, ere man appeared, the proud waters ruled the whole earth.

The waters stood above the mountains, no dry land was visible, vapor as from a steaming cauldron covered all. Geologists inform us of this as a discovery, but the Holy Spirit had revealed the fact long before. The passage before us shows us the Creator commencing his work, and laying the foundation for future order and beauty: to think of this reverently will fill us with adoration; to conceive of it grossly and carnally would be highly blasphemous.

7 At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away.

104: 7 At thy rebuke they fled; at the voice of thy thunder they hasted away. When the waters and vapors covered all, the Lord had but to speak and they disappeared at once. As though they had been intelligent agents the waves hurried to their appointed deeps and left the land to itself; then the mountains lifted their heads, the high lands rose from the main, and at length continents and islands, slopes and plains were left to form the habitable earth. The voice of the Lord effected this great marvel. Is not his word equal to every emergency? Potent enough to work the greatest miracle?
By that same word shall the water floods of trouble be restrained, and the raging billows of sin be rebuked: the day cometh when at the thunder of Jehovah's voice all the proud waters of evil shall utterly haste away. "O Lord, my God, thou art very great."

8 They go up by the mountains; they go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them.

104:8 The vanquished waters are henceforth obedient.

They go up by the mountains, climbing in the form of clouds even to the summits of the Alps.

They go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded for them: they are as willing to descend in rain, and brooks, and torrents as they were eager to ascend in mists. The loyalty of the mighty waters to the laws of their God is most notable; the fierce flood, the boisterous rapid; the tremendous torrent, are only forms of that gentle dew which trembles on the tiny blade of grass, and in those ruder shapes they are equally obedient to the laws which their Maker has impressed upon them. Not so much as a solitary particle of spray ever breaks rank, or violates the command of the Lord of sea and land, neither do the awful cataracts and terrific floods revolt from his sway. It is very beautiful among the mountains to see the divine system of water supply—the rising of the fleecy vapors, the distillation of the pure fluid, the glee with which the newborn element leaps down the crags to reach the rivers, and the strong eagerness with which the rivers seek the ocean, their appointed place.

9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth.

104: 9 Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass over; that they turn not again to cover the earth. That bound has once been passed, but it shall never be so again. The deluge was caused by the suspension of the divine mandate which held the floods in check: they knew their old supremacy, and hastened to reassert it, but now the covenant promise for ever prevents a return of that carnival of waters, that revolt of the waves: ought we not rather to call it that impetuous rush of the indignant floods to avenge the injured honour of their King, whom men had offended? Jehovah's word bounds the ocean, using only a narrow belt of sand to confine it to its own limits: that apparently feeble restraint answers every purpose, for the sea is obedient as a little child to the bidding of its Maker. Destruction lies asleep in the bed of the ocean, and though our sins might well arouse it, yet are its bands made strong by covenant mercy, so that it cannot break loose again upon the guilty sons of men.

10 ¶ He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills.

104: 10 He sendeth the springs into the valleys, which run among the hills. This is a beautiful part of the Lord's arrangement of the subject waters: they find vents through which they leap into liberty where their presence will be beneficial in the highest degree. Depressions exist in the sides of the mountains, and down these the water brooks are made to flow, often taking their rise at bubbling fountains which issue from the bowels of the earth.
It is God who sends these springs even as a gardener makes the water courses, and turns the current with his foot. When the waters are confined in the abyss the Lord sets their bound, and when they sport at liberty he sends them forth.

11 They give drink to every beast of the field: the wild asses quench their thirst.

104: 11 *They give drink to every beast of the field.* Who else would water them if the Lord did not? They are his cattle, and therefore he leads them forth to watering. Not one of them is forgotten of him.

The wild asses quench their thirst. The good Lord gives them enough and to spare. They know their Master's crib. Though bit or bridle of man they will not brook, and man denounces them as unteachable, they learn of the Lord, and know better far than man where flows the cooling crystal of which they must drink or die. They are only asses, and wild, yet our heavenly Father careth for them. Will he not also care for us? We see here, also, that nothing is made in vain; though no human lip is moistened by the brooklet in the lone valley, yet are there other creatures which need refreshment, and these slake their thirst at the stream. Is this nothing? Must everything exist for man, or else be wasted? What but our pride and selfishness could have suggested such a notion? It is not true that flowers which blush unseen by human eye are wasting their sweetness, for the bee finds them out, and other winged wanderers live on their luscious juices. Man is but one creature of the many whom the heavenly Father feedeth and watereth.

12 By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, *which* sing among the branches.

104: 12 *By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.* How refreshing are these words! What happy memories they arouse of splashing waterfalls and entangled boughs, where the merry din of the falling and rushing water forms a sort of solid background of music, and the sweet tuneful notes of the birds are the brighter and more flashing lights in the harmony. Pretty birdies, sing on! What better can ye do, and who can do it better? When we too drink of the river of God, and eat of the fruit of the tree of life, it well becomes us to "sing among the branches." Where ye dwell ye sing; and shall not we rejoice in the Lord, who has been our dwelling place in all generations. As ye fly from bough to bough, ye warble forth your notes, and so will we as we flit through time into eternity. It is not meet that birds of Paradise should be outdone by birds of earth.

13 He watereth the hills from his chambers: the earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works.

104:13 *He watereth the hills from his chambers.* As the mountains are too high to be watered by rivers and brooks, the Lord himself refreshes them from those waters above the firmament which the poet had in a former verse described as the upper chambers of heaven. Clouds are detained among the mountain crags, and deluge the hill sides with fertilizing rain. Where man cannot reach the Lord can, whom none else can water with grace he can, and where all stores of refreshment fail he can supply all that is needed from his own halls.
The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works. The result of the divine working is fullness everywhere, the soil is saturated with rain, the seed germinates, the beasts drink, and the birds sing—nothing is left without supplies. So, too, is it in the new creation, he giveth more grace, he fills his people with good, and makes them all confess, "of his fullness have all we received and grace for grace."

14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man: that he may bring forth food out of the earth;

104: 14 He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man. Grass grows as well as herbs, for cattle must be fed as well as men. God appoints to the lowliest creature its portion and takes care that it has it: Divine power is as truly and as worthily put forth in the feeding of beasts as in the nurturing of man; watch but a blade of grass with a devout eye and you may see God at work within it. The herb is for man, and he must till the soil, or it will not be produced, yet it is God that causeth it to grow in the garden, even the same God who made the grass to grow in the unenclosed pastures of the wilderness. Man forgets this and talks of his produce, but in very truth without God he would plough and sow in vain. The Lord causeth each green blade to spring and each ear to ripen; do but watch with opened eye and you shall see the Lord walking through the cornfields.

That he may bring forth food out of the earth. Both grass for cattle and corn for man are food brought forth out of the earth and they are signs that it was God's design that the very dust beneath our feet, which seems better adapted to bury us than to sustain us, should actually be transformed into the staff of life. The more we think of this the more wonderful it will appear. How great is that God who from among the sepulchres finds the support of life, and out of the ground which was cursed brings forth the blessings of corn and wine and oil.

15 And wine that maketh glad the heart of man, and oil to make his face to shine, and bread which strengtheneth man's heart.

104:15 And wine that maketh glad the heart of man. By the aid of genial showers the earth produces not merely necessaries but luxuries, that which furnishes a feast as well as that which makes a meal. O that man were wise enough to know how to use this gladdening product of the vine; but, alas, he full often turns it to ill account, and debases himself therewith. Of this he must himself bear the blame; he deserves to be miserable who turns even blessings into curses.

And oil to make his face to shine. The easterns use oil more than we do, and probably are wiser in this respect than we are: they delight in anointing with perfumed oils, and regard the shining of the face as a choice emblem of joy. God is to be praised for all the products of the soil, not one of which could come to us were it not that he causeth it to grow.

And bread which strengtheneth man's heart. Men have more courage after they are fed: many a depressed spirit has been comforted by a good substantial meal. We ought to bless God for
strength of heart as well as force of limb, since if we possess them they are both the bounties of his kindness.

16 The trees of the LORD are full of sap; the cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted;

104:16 The watering of the hills not only produces the grass and the cultivated herbs, but also the nobler species of vegetation, which come not within the range of human culture:

Their veins with genial moisture fed,
    Jehovah's forests lift the head:
    Nor other than his fostering hand
    Thy cedars, Lebanon, demand.

The trees of the Lord—the greatest, noblest, and most royal of trees; those too which are unknown of man, and untouched by his hand. Are full of sap, or are full, well supplied, richly watered, so that they become, as the cedars, full of resin, flowing with life, and verdant all the year round.

The cedars of Lebanon, which he hath planted. They grow where none ever thought of planting them, where for ages they were unobserved, and where at this moment they are too gigantic for man to prune them. What would our psalmist have said to some of the trees in the Yosemite valley? Truly these are worthy to be called the trees of the Lord, for towering stature and enormous girth. Thus is the care of God seen to be effectual and all sufficient. If trees uncared for by man are yet so full of sap, we may rest assured that the people of God who by faith live upon the Lord alone shall be equally well sustained. Planted by grace, and owing all to our heavenly Father's care, we may defy the hurricane, and laugh at the fear of drought, for none that trust in him shall ever be left unwatered.

17 Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.

104:17 Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house. So far from being in need, these trees of God afford shelter to others, birds small and great make their nests in the branches. Thus what they receive from the great Lord they endeavor to return to his weaker creatures. How one thing fits into another in this fair creation, each link drawing on its fellow: the rains water the fir trees, and the fir trees become the happy home of birds; thus do the thunder clouds build the sparrow's house, and the descending rain sustains the basis of the stork's nest. Observe, also, how everything has its use—the boughs furnish a home for the birds; and every living thing has its accommodation—the stork finds a house in the pines. Her nest is called a house, because this bird exhibits domestic virtues and maternal love which make her young to be comparable to a family.

No doubt this ancient writer had seen storks' nests in fir trees; they appear usually to build on houses and ruins, but there is also evidence that where there are forests they are content with pine trees. Has the reader ever walked through a forest of great trees and felt the awe which strikes the
heart in nature's sublime cathedral? Then he will remember to have felt that each bird was holy, since it dwelt amid such sacred solitude. Those who cannot see or hear of God except in Gothic edifices, amid the swell of organs, and the voices of a surpliced choir, will not be able to enter into the feeling which makes the simple, unsophisticated soul hear "the voice of the Lord God walking among the trees."

18 The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies.

104:18 The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats; and the rocks for the conies. All places teem with life. We call our cities populous, but are not the forests and the high hills more densely peopled with life? We speak of uninhabitable places, but where are they? The chamois leaps from crag to crag, and the rabbit burrows beneath the soil. For one creature the loftiness of the hills, and for another the hollowness of the rocks, serves as a protection:

"Far over the crags the wild goats roam,  
The rocks supply the coney's home."

Thus all the earth is full of happy life, every place has its appropriate in habitant, nothing is empty and void and waste. See how goats, and storks, and conies, and sparrows, each contribute a verse to the psalm of nature; have we not also our canticles to sing unto the Lord? Little though we may be in the scale of importance, yet let us fill our sphere, and so honour the Lord who made us with a purpose.

19 ¶ He appointed the moon for seasons: the sun knoweth his going down.

104:19 The appointed rule of the great lights is now the theme for praise. The moon is mentioned first, because in the Jewish day the night leads the way.

He appointed the moon for seasons. By the waxing and waning of the moon the year is divided into months, and weeks, and by this means the exact dates of the holy days were arranged. Thus the lamp of night is made to be of service to man, and in fixing the period of religious assemblies (as it did among the Jews) it enters into connection with his noblest being. Never let us regard the moon's motions as the inevitable result of inanimate impersonal law, but as the appointment of our God.

The sun knoweth his going down. In finely poetic imagery the sun is represented as knowing when to retire from sight, and sink below the horizon. He never loiters on his way, or pauses as if undecided when to descend; his appointed hour for going down, although it is constantly varying, he always keeps to a second. We need to be aroused in the morning, but he arises punctually, and though some require to watch the clock to know the hour of rest, he, without a timepiece to consult, hides himself in the western sky the instant the set time has come.
For all this man should praise the Lord of the sun and moon, who has made these great lights to be our chronometers, and thus keeps our world in order, and suffers no confusion to distract us.
20 Thou makest darkness, and it is night: wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth.

104: 20 Thou, makest darkness, and it is night. Drawing down the blinds for us, he prepares our bedchamber that we may sleep. Were there no darkness we should sigh for it, since we should find repose so much more difficult, if the weary day were never calmed into night. Let us see God's hand in the veiling of the sun, and never fear either natural or providential darkness, since both are of the Lord's own making.

Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. Then is the lion's day, his time to hunt his food. Why should not the wild beast have his hour as well as man? He has a service to perform, should he not also have his food? Darkness is fitter for beasts than man; and those men are most brutish who love darkness rather than light. When the darkness of ignorance broods over a nation, then all sorts of superstitions, cruelties, and vices abound; the gospel, like the sun rising, soon clears the world of the open ravages of these monsters, and they seek more congenial abodes. We see here the value of true light, for we may depend upon it where there is night there will also be wild beasts to kill and to devour.

21 The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.

104: 21 The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God. This is the poetic interpretation of a roar. To whom do the lions roar? Certainly not to their prey, for the terrible sound tends to alarm their victims, and drive them away. They after their own fashion express their desires for food, and the expression of desire is a kind of prayer. Out of this fact comes the devout thought of the wild beast's appealing to its Maker for food. But neither with lions nor men will the seeking of prayer suffice, there must be practical seeking too, and the lions are well aware of it. What they have in their own language asked for they go forth to seek; being in this thing far wiser than many men who offer formal prayers not half so earnest as those of the young lions, and then neglect the means in the use of which the object of their petitions might be gained. The lions roar and seek; too many are liars before God, and roar but never seek. How comforting is the thought that the Spirit translates the voice of a lion, and finds it to be a seeking of meat from God! May we not hope that our poor broken cries and groans, which in our sorrow we have called "the voice of our roaring" Psalm 12:10, will be understood by him, and interpreted in our favour. Evidently he considers the meaning rather than the music of the utterance and puts the best construction upon it.

22 The sun ariseth, they gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens.

104:22 The sun ariseth. Every evening has its morning to make the day. Were it not that we have seen the sun rise so often we should think it the greatest of miracles, and the most amazing of blessings.

They gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Thus they are out of man's way, and he seldom encounters them unless he desires to do so. The forest's warriors retire to
their quarters when the morning's drum is heard, finding in the recesses of their dens a darkness suitable for their slumbers: there they lay them down and digest their food, for God has allotted even to them their portion of rest and enjoyment. There was one who in this respect was poorer than lions and foxes, for he had not where to lay his head: all were provided for except their incarnate Provider. Blessed Lord, thou hast stooped beneath the conditions of the brutes to lift up worse than brutish men! It is very striking how the Lord controls the fiercest of animals far more readily than the shepherd manages his sheep.

At nightfall they separate and go forth each one upon the merciful errand of ending the miseries of the sickly and decrepit among grass eating animals. The younger of these animals being swift of foot easily escape them and are benefited by the exercise, and for the most part only those are overtaken and killed to whom life would have been protracted agony. So far lions are messengers of mercy, and are as much sent of God as the sporting dog is sent by man on his errands. But these mighty hunters must not always be abroad, they must be sent back to their lairs when man comes upon the scene. Who shall gather these ferocious creatures and shut them in? Who shall chain them down and make them harmless?

The sun suffices to do it. He is the true lion tamer. They gather themselves together as though they were so many sheep, and in their own retreats they keep themselves prisoners till returning darkness gives them another leave to range. By simply majestic means the divine purposes are accomplished. In like manner even the devils are subject unto our Lord Jesus, and by the simple spread of the light of the gospel these roaring demons are chased out of the world. No need for miracles or displays of physical power, the Sun of Righteousness arises, and the devil and the false gods, and superstitions and errors of men, all seek their hiding places in the dark places of the earth among the moles and the bats.

23 Man goeth forth unto his work and to his labour until the evening.

104:23 Man goeth forth. It is his turn now, and the sunrise has made things ready for him. His warm couch he forsakes and the comforts of home, to find his daily food; this work is good for him, both keeping him out of mischief, and exercising his faculties.

Unto his work and to his labour until the evening. He goes not forth to sport but to work, not to loiter but to labour; at least, this is the lot of the best part of mankind. We are made for work and ought to work, and should never grumble that so it is appointed. The hours of labour, however, ought not to be too long. If labour lasts out the average daylight it is certainly all that any man ought to expect of another, and yet there are poor creatures so badly paid that in twelve hours they cannot earn bread enough to keep them from hunger. Shame on those who dare so impose upon helpless women and children. Night work should also be avoided as much as possible. There are twelve hours in which a man ought to work: the night is meant for rest and sleep. Night, then as well as day has its voice of praise. It is more soft and hushed, but it is none the less true. The moon lights up a solemn silence of worship among the fir trees, through which the night wind softly breathes its "songs without words." Every now and then a sound is heard, which, however simple by day, sounds among the shadows startling and weird like, as if the presence of the unknown had filled the heart with trembling, and made the influence of the Infinite to be realized. Imagination awakens herself; unbelief finds the silence and the solemnity
uncongenial, faith looks up to the skies above her and sees heavenly things all the more clearly in the absence of the sunlight, and adoration bows itself before the Great Invisible! There are spirits that keep the night watches, and the spell of their presence has been felt by many a wanderer in the solitudes of nature: God also himself is abroad all night long, and the glory which concealeth is often felt to be even greater than that which reveals. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

24 O LORD, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches.

104: 24 O Lord, how manifold are thy works. They are not only many for number but manifold for variety. Mineral, vegetable, animal—what: a range of works is suggested by these three names! No two even of the same class are exactly alike, and the classes are more numerous than science can number. Works in the heavens above and in the earth beneath, and in the waters under the earth, works which abide the ages, works which come to perfection and pass away in a year, works which with all their beauty do not outlive a day, works within works, and works within these—who can number one of a thousand? God is the great worker, and ordainer of variety. It is ours to study his works, for they are great, and sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. The kingdom of grace contains as manifold and as great works as that of nature, but the chosen of the Lord alone discern them.

In wisdom hast thou made them all, or wrought them all. They are all his works, wrought by his own power, and they all display his wisdom. It was wise to make their—none could be spared; every link is essential to the chain of nature—wild beasts as much as men, poisons as truly as odoriferous herbs. They are wisely made—each one fits its place, fills it, and is happy in so doing. As a whole, the "all" of creation is a wise achievement, and however it may be chequered with mysteries, and clouded with terrors, it all works together for good, and as one complete harmonious piece of workmanship it answers the great Worker's end.

The earth is full of thy riches. It is not a poor house, but a palace; not a hungry ruin, but a well filled store house. The Creator has not set his creatures down in a dwelling place where the table is bare, and the buttery empty, he has filled the earth with food; and not with bare necessaries only, but with riches—dainties, luxuries, beauties, treasures. In the bowels of the earth are hidden mines of wealth, and on her surface are teeming harvests of plenty. All these riches are the Lord's; we ought to call them not "the wealth of nations," but "thy riches" O Lord! Not in one clime alone are these riches of God to be found, but in all lands—even the Arctic ocean has its precious things which men endure much hardness to win, and the burning sun of the equator ripens a produce which flavors the food of all mankind. If his house below is so full of riches what must his house above be, where, "The very streets are paved with gold Exceeding clear and fine"?

25 So is this great and wide sea, wherein are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts.

104:25 So is this great and wide sea. He gives an instance of the immense number and variety of Jehovah's works by pointing to the sea. "Look, "saith he, "at yonder ocean, stretching itself on both hands and embracing so many lands, it too swarms with animal life, and in its deeps lie
treasures beyond all counting. The heathen made the sea a different province from the land, and gave the command thereof to Neptune, but we know of a surety that Jehovah rules the waves."

Wherein, are things creeping innumerable, both small and great beasts; read moving things and animals small arid great, and you have the true sense. The number of minute forms of animal life is indeed beyond all reckoning: when a single phosphorescent wave may bear millions of infusoria, and around a fragment of rock armies of microscopic beings may gather, we renounce all idea of applying arithmetic to such a case. The sea in many regions appears to be all alive, as if every drop were a world. Nor are these tiny creatures the only tenants of the sea, for it contains gigantic mammals which exceed in bulk those which range the land, and a vast host of huge fishes which wander among the waves, and hide in the caverns of the sea as the tiger lurks in the jungle, or the lion roams the plain. Truly, O Lord, thou makest the sea to be as rich in the works of thy hands as the land itself.

26 There go the ships: there is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein.

104: 26 There go the ships. So that ocean is not altogether deserted of mankind. It is the highway of nations, and unites, rather than divides, distant lands.

There is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. Them huge whale turns the sea into his recreation ground, and disports himself as God designed that he should do. The thought of this amazing creature caused the psalmist to adore the mighty Creator who created him, formed him for his place and made him happy in it. Our ancient maps generally depict a ship and whale upon the sea, and so show that it is most natural, as well as poetical, to connect them both with the mention of the ocean.

27 These wait all upon thee; that thou mayest give them their meat in due season.

104:27 These wait all upon thee. They come around thee as fowls around the farmer's door at the time for feeding, and look up with expectation. Men or marmots [large ground squirrel], eagles or emmets [foxes], whales or minnows, they alike rely upon thy care.

That thou mayest give them meat in due season; that is to say, when they need it and when it is ready for them. God has a time for all things, and does not feed his creatures by fits and starts; he gives them daily bread, and a quantity proportioned to their needs. This is all that any of us should expect; if even the brute creatures are content with a sufficiency we ought not to be more greedy than they.

28 That thou givest them they gather: thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.

104:28 That thou givest them they gather. God gives it, but they must gather it, and they are glad that he does so, for otherwise their gathering would be in vain. We often forget that animals and birds in their free life have to work to obtain food even as we do; and yet it is true with them as with us that our heavenly Father feeds all. When we see the chickens picking up the corn
which the housewife scatters from her lap we have an apt illustration of the manner in which the Lord supplies the needs of all living things—he gives and they gather.

*Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good.* Here is divine liberality with its open hand filling needy creatures till they want no more: and here is divine omnipotence feeding a world by simply opening its hand. What should we do if that hand were closed? There would be no need to strike a blow, the mere closing of it would produce death by famine. Let us praise the open handed Lord, whose providence and grace satisfy our mouths with good things.

29 Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled: thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.

104:29 *Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled.* So dependent are all living things upon God's smile, that a frown fills them with terror, as though convulsed with anguish. This is so in the natural world, and certainly not less so in the spiritual: saints when the Lord hides his face are in terrible perplexity.

*Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their dust.* The breath appears to be a trifling matter, and the air an impalpable substance of but small importance, yet, once withdrawn, the body loses all vitality, and crumbles back to the earth from which it was originally taken. All animals come under this law, and even the dwellers in the sea are not exempt from it. Thus dependent is all nature upon the will of the Eternal. Note here that death is caused by the act of God, "thou takest away their breath"; we are immortal till he bids us die, and so are even the little sparrows, who fall not to the ground without our Father.

30 Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.

104:30 *Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created: and thou renewest the face of the earth.* The loss of their breath destroys them, and by Jehovah's breath a new race is created. The works of the Lord are majestically simple, and are performed with royal ease—a breath creates, and its withdrawal destroys. If we read the word *spirit* as we have it in our version, it is also instructive, for we see the Divine Spirit going forth to create life in nature even as we see him in the realms of grace. At the flood the world was stripped of almost all life, yet how soon the power of God refilled the desolate places! In winter the earth falls into a sleep which makes her appear worn and old, but how readily does the Lord awaken her with the voice of spring, and make her put on anew the beauty of her youth. Thou, Lord, doest all things, and let glory be unto thy name.

31 ¶The glory of the LORD shall endure for ever: the LORD shall rejoice in his works.

104:31 *The glory of the LORD shall endure forever.* His works may pass away, but not his glory. Were it only for what he has already done, the Lord deserves to be praised without
ceasing. His personal being and character ensure that he would be glorious even were all the creatures dead.

**The LORD shall rejoice in his works.** He did so at the first, when he rested on the seventh day, and saw that everything was very good; he does so still in a measure where beauty and purity in nature still survive the Fall, and he will do so yet more fully when the earth is renovated, and the trail of the serpent is cleansed from the globe. This verse is written in the most glowing manner. The poet finds his heart gladdened by beholding the works of the Lord, and he feels that the Creator himself must have felt unspeakable delight in exercising so much wisdom, goodness, and power.

32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke.

**104:32 He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth.** The Lord who has graciously displayed his power in acts and works of goodness might, if he had seen fit, have overwhelmed us with the terrors of destruction, for even at a glance of his eye the solid earth rocks with fear.

**He toucheth the hills, and they smoke.** Sinai was altogether on a smoke when the Lord descended upon it. It was but a touch, but it sufficed to make the mountain dissolve in flame. Even our God is a consuming fire. Woe unto those who shall provoke him to frown upon them, they shall perish at the touch of his hand. If sinners were not altogether insensible a glance of the Lord's eye would make them tremble, and the touches of his hand in affliction would set their hearts on fire with repentance. "Of reason all things show some sign, " except man's unfeeling heart.

33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live: I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.

**104:33 I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live, or, literally, in my lives.** Here and hereafter the psalmist would continue to praise the Lord, for the theme is an endless one, and remains for ever fresh and new. The birds sang God's praises before men were created, but redeemed men will sing his glories when the birds are no more. Jehovah, who ever lives and makes us to live shall be for ever exalted, and extolled in the songs of redeemed men.

**I will sing praise to my God while I have my being.** A resolve both happy for himself and glorifying to the Lord. Note the sweet title—my God. We never sing so well as when we know that we have an interest in the good things of which we sing, and a relationship to the God whom we praise.

34 My meditation of him shall be sweet: I will be glad in the LORD.
My meditation of him shall be sweet. Sweet both to him and to me. I shall be delighted thus to survey his works and think of his person, and he will graciously accept my notes of praise. Meditation is the soul of religion. It is the tree of life in the midst of the garden of piety, and very refreshing is its fruit to the soul which feeds thereon. And as it is good towards man, so is it towards God. As the fat of the sacrifice was the Lord's portion, so are our best meditations due to the Most High and are most acceptable to him. We ought, therefore, both for our own good and for the Lord's honour to be much occupied with meditation, and that meditation should chiefly dwell upon the Lord himself: it should be "meditation of him." For want of it much communion is lost and much happiness is missed.

I will be glad in the Lord. To the meditative mind every thought of God is full of joy. Each one of the divine attributes is a well spring of delight now that in Christ Jesus we are reconciled unto God.

35 Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Praise ye the LORD.

Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more. They are the only blot upon creation.

"Every prospect pleases.
And only man is vile."

In holy indignation the psalmist would fain rid the world of beings so base as not to love their gracious Creator, so blind as to rebel against their Benefactor. He does but asks for that which just men look forward to as the end of history: for the day is eminently to be desired when in all God's kingdom there shall not remain a single traitor or rebel. The Christian way of putting it will be to ask that grace may turn sinners into saints, and win the wicked to the ways of truth.

Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Here is the end of the matter—whatever sinners may do, do thou, my soul, stand to thy colors, and be true to thy calling. Their silence must not silence thee, but rather provoke thee to redoubled praise to make up for their failures. Nor canst thou alone accomplish the work; others must come to thy help. O ye saints,

Praise ye the LORD. Let your hearts cry HALLELUJAH,—for that is the word in the Hebrew. Heavenly word! Let it close the Psalm: for what more remains to be said or written? HALLELUJAH. Praise ye the Lord.

Psalm 105

This historical psalm was evidently composed by King David, for the first fifteen verses of it were used as a hymn at the carrying up of the ark from the house of Obed-edom, and we read in 1Ch 16:7, "Then on that day David delivered first this psalm to thank the Lord, into the hand of Asaph and his brethren." Such a song was suitable for the occasion, for it describes the movements of the Lord's people and his guardian care over them in every place, and all this on account of the covenant of which the ark, then removing, was a symbol. Our last psalm sang the
opening chapters of Genesis, and this takes up its closing chapters and conducts us into Exodus and Numbers.

The first verses are full of joyful praise, and call upon the people to extol Jehovah, Psalm 105:1-7; then the earliest days of the infant nation, are described, Psalm 105:8-15; the going into Egypt, Psalm 105:16-23, the coming forth from it with the Lord's outstretched arm, Psalm 105:24-38, the journeying through the wilderness and the entrance into Canaan [Psalm 105:39-45].

We are now among the long Psalms, as at other times we have been among the short ones. These varying lengths of the sacred poems should teach us not to lay down any law either of brevity or prolixity in either prayer or praise. Short petitions and single verses of hymns are often the best for public occasions, but there are seasons when a whole night of wrestling or an entire day of psalm slinging will be none too long. The Spirit is ever free in his operations, and is not to be confined with, the rules of conventional propriety. The wind bloweth as it listeth, and at one time rushes in short and rapid sweep, while at another it continues to refresh the earth hour after hour with its reviving breath.

1 ¶ O give thanks unto the LORD; call upon his name: make known his deeds among the people.

---

105: 1 O give thanks unto the Lord. Jehovah is the author of all our benefits, therefore let him have all our gratitude.

Call upon his name, or call him by his name; proclaim his titles and fill the world with his renown.

Make known his deeds among the people, or among the nations. Let the heathen hear of our God, that they may forsake their idols and learn to worship him. The removal of the ark was a fit occasion for proclaiming aloud the glories of the Great King, and for publishing to all mankind the greatness of his doings, for it had a history in connection with the nations which it was well for them to remember with reverence. The rest of the psalm is a sermon, of which these first verses constitute the text.

2 Sing unto him, sing psalms unto him: talk ye of all his wondrous works.

---

105: 2 Sing unto him sing: psalms unto him. Bring your best thoughts and express them in the best language to the sweetest sounds. Take care that your singing is "unto him," and not merely for the sake of the music or to delight the ears of others. Singing is so delightful an exercise that it is a pity so much or it should be wasted upon trifles or worse than trifles. O ye who can emulate the nightingale, and almost rival the angels, we do most earnestly pray that your hearts may be renewed that so your floods of melody may be poured out at your Maker's and Redeemer's feet.
Talk ye of all his wondrous works. Men love to speak of marvels, and others are generally glad to hear of surprising things; surely the believer in the living God has before him the most amazing series of wonders ever heard of or imagined, his themes are inexhaustible and they are such as should hold men spellbound. We ought to have more of this "talk": no one would be blamed as a Mr. Talkative if this were his constant theme. Talk ye, all of you: you all know something by experience of the marvelous loving kindness of the Lord—"talk ye." In this way, by all dwelling on this blessed subject, "all" his wondrous works will be published. One cannot do it, nor ten thousand times ten thousand, but if all speak to the Lord's honour, they will at least come nearer to accomplishing the deed. We ought to have a wide range when conversing upon the Lord's doings, and should not shut our eyes to any part of them. Talk ye of his wondrous works in creation and in grace, in judgment and in mercy, in providential interpositions and in spiritual comforting; leave out none, or it will be to your damage. Obedience to this verse will give every sanctified tongue some work to do: the trained musicians can sing, and the commoner voices can talk, and in both ways the Lord will receive a measure of the thanks due to him, and his deeds will be made known among the people.

3 Glory ye in his holy name: let the heart of them rejoice that seek the LORD.

105: 3 Glory ye in his holy name. Make it a matter of joy that you have such a God. His character and attributes are such as will never make you blush to call him your God. Idolaters may well be ashamed of the actions attributed to their fancied deities, their names are foul with lust and red with blood, but Jehovah is wholly glorious; every deed of his will bear the strictest scrutiny; his name is holy, his character is holy, his law is holy, his government is holy, his influence is holy. In all this we may make our boast, nor can any deny our right to do so.

Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. If they have not yet found him so fully as they desire, yet even to be allowed and enabled to seek after such a God is cause for gladness, To worship the Lord and seek his kingdom and righteousness is the sure way to happiness, mad indeed there is no other. True seekers throw their hearts into the engagement, hence their hearts receive joy; according to the text they have a permit to rejoice and they have the promise that they shall do so. How happy all these sentences are! Where can men's ears be when they talk of the gloom of psalm singing? What worldly songs are fuller of real mirth? One hears the sound of the timbrel and the harp in every verse. Even seekers find bliss in the name of the Lord Jesus, but as for the finders, we may say with the poet,

"And those who find thee find a bliss,
    Nor tongue nor pen Call show:
The love of Jesus what it is,
    None but his loved ones know."

4 Seek the LORD, and his strength: seek his face evermore.
105: 4 Seek the Loan and his strength. Put yourselves under his protection. Regard him not as a puny God, but look unto his omnipotence, and seek to know the power of his grace. We all need strength; let us look to the strong One for it. We need infinite power to bear us safely to our eternal resting place, let us look to the Almighty Jehovah for it.

Seek his face evermore. Seek, seek, seek, we have the word three times, and though the words differ in the Hebrew, the sense is the same. It must be a blessed thing to seek, or we should not be thus stirred up to do so. To seek his face is to desire his presence, his smile, his favour consciously enjoyed. First we seek him, then his strength and then his face; from the personal reverence, we pass on to the imparted power, and then to the conscious favour. This seeking must never cease—the more we know the more we must seek to know. Finding him, we must "our minds inflame to seek him more and more." He seeks spiritual worshippers, and spiritual worshippers seek him; they are therefore sure to meet face to face ere long.

5 Remember his marvelous works that he hath done; his wonders, and the judgments of his mouth;

105: 5 Remember his marvelous works that he hath done. Memory is never better employed than upon such topics. Alas, we are far more ready to recollect foolish and evil things than to retain in our minds the glorious deeds of Jehovah. If we would keep these in remembrance our faith would be stronger, our gratitude warmer, our devotion more fervent, and our love more intense. Shame upon us that we should let slip what it would seem impossible to forget. We ought to need no exhortation to remember such wonders, especially as he has wrought them all on the behalf of his people.

His wonders, and the judgments of his mouth—these also should be had in memory. The judgments of his mouth are as memorable as the marvels of his band. God had but to speak and the enemies of his people were sorely afflicted; his threats were not mere words, but smote his adversaries terribly. As the Word of God is the salvation of his saints, so is it the destruction of the ungodly: out of his mouth goeth a two edged sword with which he will slay the wicked.

6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.

105: 6 O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen. Should all the world forget, ye are bound to remember. Your father Abraham saw his wonders and judgments upon Sodom, and upon the kings who came from far, and Jacob also saw the Lord's marvelous works in visiting the nations with famine, yet providing for his chosen a choice inheritance in a goodly land; therefore let the children praise their father's God. The Israelites were the Lord's elect nation, and they were bound to imitate their progenitor, who was the Lord's faithful servant and walked before him in holy faith: the seed of Abraham should not be unbelieving, nor should the children of so true a servant become rebels. As we read this pointed appeal to the chosen seed we should recognize the special claims which the Lord has upon ourselves, since we too have been favored above all others. Election is not a couch for case, but an argument for sevenfold diligence. If God has set his choice upon us, let us aim to be choice men.
7 He is the LORD our God: his judgments are in all the earth.

Blessed be his name. Jehovah condescends to be our God. This sentence contains a greater wealth of meaning than all the eloquence of orators can compass, and there is more joy in it than in all the sonnets of them that make merry.

His judgments are in all the earth, or in all the land, for the whole of the country was instructed by his law, ruled by his statutes, and protected by his authority. What a joy it is that our God is never absent from us, he is never nonresident, never an absentee ruler, his judgments are in all the places in which we dwell. If the second clause of this verse refers to the whole world, it is very beautiful to see the specialty of Israel's election united with the universality of Jehovah's reign. Not alone to the one nation did the Lord reveal himself, but his glory flashed around the globe. It is wonderful that the Jewish people should have become so exclusive, and have so utterly lost the missionary spirit, for their sacred literature is full of the broad and generous sympathies which are so consistent with the worship of "the God of the whole earth." Nor is it less painful to observe that among a certain class of believers in God's election of grace there lingers a hard exclusive spirit, fatal to compassion and zeal. It would be well for these also to remember that their Redeemer is "the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe."

8 ¶ He hath remembered his covenant for ever, the word which he commanded to a thousand generations.

Here is the basis of all his dealings with his people: he had entered into covenant with them in their father Abraham, and to this covenant he remained faithful. The exhortation to remember (Psalm 105:5) receives great force from the fact that God has remembered. If the Lord has his promise in memory surely we ought not to forget the wonderful manner in which he keeps it. To us it should be matter for deepest joy that never in any instance has the Lord been unmindful of his covenant engagements, nor will he be so world without end. O that we were as mindful of them as he is.

The word which he commanded to a thousand generations. This is only an amplification of the former statement, and serves to set before us the immutable fidelity of the Lord during the changing generations of men. His judgments are threatened upon the third and fourth generations of them that hate him, but his love runs on for ever, even to "a thousand generations." His promise is here said to be commanded, or vested with all the authority of a law. It is a proclamation from a sovereign, the firman of an Emperor whose laws shall stand fast in every jot and tittle though heaven and earth shall pass away. Therefore let us give thanks unto the Lord and talk of all his wondrous works, so wonderful for their faithfulness and truth.

9 Which covenant he made with Abraham, and his oath unto Isaac;

When the victims were divided and the burning lamp passed between the pieces (Gen. 15.) then the Lord made, or ratified, the covenant with the patriarch. This was a solemn deed, performed not without blood, and the cutting in pieces of the
sacrifice; it points us to the greater covenant which in Christ Jesus is signed, sealed, and ratified, that it may stand fast for ever and ever.

And his oath unto Isaac. Isaac did not in vision see the solemn making of the covenant, but the Lord renewed unto him his oath (Gen 26:2-5). This was enough for him, and must have established his faith in the Most High. We have the privilege of seeing in our Lord Jesus both the sacrificial seal, and the eternal oath of God, by which every promise of the covenant is made yea and amen to all the chosen seed.

10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law, and to Israel for an everlasting covenant:

105: 10 And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law. Jacob in his wondrous dream (Gen 28:10-15) received a pledge that the Lord's mode of procedure with him would be in accordance with covenant relations: for said Jehovah, "I will not leave thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Thus, if we may so speak with all reverence, the covenant became a law unto the Lord himself by which he bound himself to act. O matchless condescension, that the most free and sovereign Lord should put himself under covenant bonds to his chosen, and make a law for himself, though he is above all law.

And to Israel for an everlasting covenant. When he changed Jacob's name he did not change his covenant, but it is written, "he blessed him there" (Gen 32:29), and it was with the old blessing, according to the unchangeable word of abiding grace.

11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance:

105:11 Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance. This repetition of the great covenant promise is recorded in Gen 35:9-12 in connection with the change of Jacob's name, and very soon after that slaughter of the Shechemites, which had put the patriarch into such great alarm and caused him to use language almost identical with that of the next verse. When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it. Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, and my house." Thus the fears of the man of God declared themselves, and they were reasonable if we look only at the circumstances in which he was placed, but they are soon seen to be groundless when we remember that the covenant promise, which guaranteed the possession of the land, necessarily implied the preservation of the race to whom the promise was made. We often fear where no fear is. The blessings promised to the seed of Abraham were not dependent upon the number of his descendants, or their position in this world.

The covenant was made with one man, and consequently the number could never be less, and that one man was not the owner of a foot of soil in all the land, save only a cave in which to bury his dead, and therefore his seed could not have less inheritance than he. The smallness of a church, and the poverty of its members, are no barriers to the divine blessing, if it be sought
earnestly by pleading the promise. Were not the apostles few, and the disciples feeble, when the
good work began? Neither because we are strangers and foreigners here below, as our fathers
were, are we in any the more danger: we are like sheep in the midst of wolves, but the wolves
cannot hurt us, for our shepherd is near.

12 When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers in it.

105: 12 When they were but a few men in number. Literally, “men of number”; so few as easily
to be numbered: in opposition to what their posterity afterwards were, as the sand of the sea,
without number. Samuel Chandler.

13 When they went from one nation to another, from one kingdom to another
people;

105:13 When they went from one nation, to another, from one Kingdom to another people.
Migrating as the patriarchs did from the region of one tribe to the country of another they were
singularly preserved. The little wandering family might have been cut off root and branch had
not a special mandate been issued from the throne for their protection. It was not the gentleness
of their neighbours which screened them; they were hedged about by the mysterious
guardianship of heaven. Whether in Egypt, or in Philistia, or in Canaan, the heirs of the
promises, dwelling in their tents, were always secure.

14 He suffered no man to do them wrong: yea, he reproved kings for their sakes;

105: 14 He suffered no man to do them wrong. Men cannot wrong us unless he suffers them to
do so; the greatest of them must wait his permission before they can place a finger upon us.
The wicked would devour us if they could, but they cannot even cheat us of a farthing without
divine sufferance.

Yea, he reproved kings for their sakes. Pharaoh and Abimelech must both be made to respect
the singular strangers who had come to sojourn in their land; the greatest kings are very second
rate persons with God in comparison with his chosen servants.

15 Saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.

105: 15 Saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm. Abraham and his seed
were in the midst of the world a generation of priests anointed to present sacrifice unto the most
High God; since to them the oracles were committed, they were also the prophets of mankind;
and they were kings too—a royal priesthood; hence they had received a threefold anointing.
Their holy office surrounded them with a sacredness which rendered it sacrilege to molest them.
The Lord was pleased to impress the wild tribes of Canaan with a respectful awe of the pious
strangers who had come to abide with them, so that they came not near them to do them ill.
The words here mentioned may not have been actually spoken, but the impression of awe which fell upon the nations is thus poetically described. God will not have those touched who have been set apart unto himself. He calls them his own, saying, "Mine anointed" he declares that he has "anointed" them to be prophets, priests, and kings unto himself, and yet again he claims them as his prophets—"Do my prophets no harm." All through the many years in which the three great fathers dwelt in Canaan no man was able to injure them; they were not able to defend themselves by force of arms; but the eternal God was their refuge.

Even so at this present time the remnant according to the election of grace cannot be destroyed, nay, nor so much as touched, without the divine consent. Against the church of Christ the gates of hell cannot prevail. In all this we see reasons for giving thanks unto the Lord, and proclaiming his name according to the exhortation of the first verse of the Psalm. Here ends the portion which was sung at the moving of the ark: its fitness to be used for such a purpose is very manifest, for the ark was the symbol both of the covenant and of that mystic dwelling of God with Israel which was at once her glory and her defense.

None could touch the Lord's peculiar ones, for the Lord was among them, flaming forth in majesty between the cherubims. The presence of God having remained with his chosen ones while they sojourned in Canaan, it did not desert them when they were called to go down into Egypt. They did not go there of their own choice, but under divine direction, and hence the Lord prepared their way and prospered them until he saw fit to conduct them again to the land of promise.

16 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land: he brake the whole staff of bread.

105:16 Moreover he called for a famine upon the land. He had only to call for it as a man calls for his servant, and it came at once. How grateful ought we to be that he does not often call in that terrible servant of his, so meager and gaunt, and grim, so pitiless to the women and the children, so bitter to the strong men, who utterly fail before it.

He brake the whole staff of bread. Man's feeble life cannot stand without its staff—if bread fail him he fails. As a cripple with a broken staff falls to the ground, so does man when broad no longer sustains him. To God it is as easy to make a famine as to break a stall. He could make that famine universal, too, so that all countries should be in like case: then would the race of man fall indeed, and its staff would be broken for ever.

There is this sweet comfort in the matter, that the Lord has wise ends to serve even by famine: he meant his people to go down into Egypt, and the scarcity of food was his method of leading them there, for "they heard that there was corn in Egypt."

17 He sent a man before them, even Joseph, who was sold for a servant:

105:17 He sent a man before them, even Joseph. He was the advance guard and pioneer for the whole clan. His brethren sold him, but God sent him. Where the hand of the wicked is visible God's hand may be invisibly at work, overruling their malice. No one was more of a man, or
more fit to lead the van than Joseph; an interpreter of dreams was wanted, and his brethren had said of him, "Behold, this dreamer cometh."

**Who was sold for a servant,** or rather for a slave. Joseph's journey into Egypt was not so costly as Jonah's voyage when he paid his own fare: his free passage was provided by the Midianites, who also secured his introduction to a great officer of state by handing him over as a Slave. His way to a position in which he could feed his family lay through the pit, the slaver's caravan, the slave market and the prison, and who shall deny but what it was the right way, the surest way, the wisest way, and perhaps the shortest way. Yet assuredly it seemed not so. Were we to send a man on such an errand we should furnish him with money—Joseph goes as a pauper; we should clothe him with authority—Joseph goes as a slave;

we should leave him at full liberty—Joseph is a bondman: yet money would have been of little use when corn was so dear, authority would have been irritating rather than influential with Pharaoh, and freedom might not have thrown Joseph into connection with Pharaoh's captain and his other servants, and so the knowledge of his skill in interpretation might not have reached the monarch's ear. God way is the way. Our Lord's path to his mediatorial throne ran by the cross of Calvary; our road to glory runs by the rivers of grief.

18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters: he was laid in iron:

**105: 18 Whose feet they hurt with fetters.** From this we learn a little more of Joseph's sufferings than we find in the book of Genesis: inspiration had not ceased, and David was as accurate an historian as Moses, for the same Spirit guided his pen.

**He was laid in iron,** or "into iron came his soul." The prayer book version, "the iron entered into his soul," is ungrammatical, but probably expresses much the same truth. His fetters hurt his mind as well as his body, and well did Jacob say, "The archers shot at him, and sorely grieved him." Under the cruelly false accusation, which he could not disprove, his mind was, as it were, belted and bolted around with iron, and had not the Lord been with him he might have sunk under his sufferings. In all this, and a thousand things besides, he was an admirable type of him who in the highest sense is "the Shepherd, the stone of Israel." The iron fetters were preparing him to wear chains of gold, and making his feet ready to stand on high places. It is even so with all the Lord's afflicted ones, they too shall one day step from their prisons to their thrones.

19 Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.

**105:19 Until the time that his word came.** God has his times, and his children must wait till his "until" is fulfilled. Joseph was tried as in a furnace, until the Lord's assaying work was fully accomplished.

**The word of the LORD tried him.** The word of the chief butler was nothing, he had to wait until God's word came, and meanwhile the word of the Lord tried him. He believed the promise, but his faith was sorely exercised. A delayed blessing tests men, and proves their metal, whether their faith is of that precious kind which can endure the fire. Of many a choice promise we may say with Daniel "the thing was true, but the time appointed was long."
If the vision tarry it is good to wait for it with patience. There is a trying word and a delivering word, and we must bear the one till the other comes to us. How meekly Joseph endured his afflictions, and with what fortitude he looked forward to the clearing of his slandered character we may readily imagine: it will be better still if under similar trials we are able to imitate him, and come forth from the furnace as thoroughly purified as he was, and as well prepared to bear the yet harder ordeal of honour and power.

20 The king sent and loosed him; even the ruler of the people, and let him go free.

105: 20 The king sent and loosed him. He was thrust into the roundhouse by an officer, but he was released by the monarch himself.

Even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. The tide had turned, so that Egypt's haughty potentate gave him a call from the prison to the palace. He had interpreted the dreams of captives, himself a captive; he must now interpret for a ruler and become a ruler himself. When God means to enlarge his prisoners, kings become his turnkeys.

21 He made him lord of his house, and ruler of all his substance:

105: 21 He made him lord of his house. Reserving no power, but saying "only in the throne will I be greater than thou." The servitor of slaves becomes lord over nobles. How soon the Lord lifeth his chosen from the dunghill to set them among princes.

And ruler of all his substance. He empowered him to manage the storing of the seven plenteous harvests, and to dispense the provisions in the coming days of scarcity. All the treasures of Egypt were under his lock and key, yea, the granaries of the world were sealed or opened at his bidding. Thus was he in the best conceivable position for preserving alive the house of Israel with whom the covenant was made. As our Lord was himself secured in Egypt from Herod's enmity, so, ages before, the redeemed race found an equally available shelter, in the hour of need. God has always a refuge for his saints, and if the whole earth could not afford them sanctuary, the Lord himself would be their dwelling place, and take them up to lie in his own bosom.

We are always sure to be fed if all the world should starve. It is delightful to think of our greater Joseph ruling the nations for the good of his own household, and it becomes us to abide in quiet confidence in every political disaster, since Jesus is on the throne of providence, King of kings and Lord of lords, and will be so till this dispensation ends.

22 To bind his princes at his pleasure; and teach his senators wisdom.

105: 22 To bind his princes at his pleasure. He who was bound obtains authority to bind. He is no longer kept in prison, but keeps all the prisons, and casts into them the greatest nobles when justice demands it.
And teach his senators wisdom. The heads of the various peoples, the elders of the nations, learned from him the science of government, the art of providing for the people. Joseph was a great instructor in political economy, and we doubt not that he mingled with it the purest morals, the most upright jurisprudence, and something of that divine wisdom without which the most able senators remain in darkness. The king's authority made him absolute both in the executive and in the legislative courts, and the Lord instructed him to use his power with discretion. What responsibilities and honors loaded the man who had been rejected by his brothers, and sold for twenty pieces of silver! What glories crown the head of that greater one who was "separated from his brethren."

23 Israel also came into Egypt; and Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham.

And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. Shem the blessed came to lodge awhile with Ham the accursed: the dove was in the vulture's nest. God so willed it for a time, and therefore it was safe and right: still it was only a sojourn, not a settlement. The fairest Goshen in Egypt was not the covenant blessing, neither did the Lord mean his people to think it so; even so to us "earth is our lodge" but only our lodge, for heaven is our home. When we are best housed we ought still to remember that here we have no continuing city. It were ill news for us if we were doomed to reside in Egypt for ever, for all its riches are not worthy to be compared with the reproach of Christ. Thus the song rehearsed the removals of the Lord's people, and was a most fit accompaniment to the bearing up of the ark, as the priest carried it into the city of David, where the Lord had appointed it a resting place.

24 And he increased his people greatly; and made them stronger than their enemies.

And made them stronger than their enemies. Both in physical strength and in numbers they threatened to become the more powerful race. Nor was this growth of the nation impeded by tyrannical measures, but the very reverse took place, thus giving an early instance of what has since become a proverb in the church—"the more they oppressed them the more they multiplied." It is idle to contend either with God or his people.

25 ¶ He turned their heart to hate his people, to deal subtilly with his servants.
He turned their hearts to hate his people. It was his goodness to Israel which called forth the ill will of the Egyptian court, and so far the Lord caused it, and moreover he made use of this feeling to lead on to the discomfort of his people, and so to their readiness to leave the land to which they had evidently become greatly attached. Thus far but no further did the Lord turn the hearts of the Egyptians.

To deal subtilly with his servants. God cannot in any sense be the author of sin so far as to be morally responsible for its existence, but it often happens through the evil which is inherent in human nature that the acts of the Lord arouse the ill feelings of ungodly men. Is the sun to be blamed because while it softens wax it hardens clay? Is the orb of day to be accused of creating the foul exhalations which are drawn by its warmth from the pestilential marsh? The sun causes the reek of the dunghill only in a certain sense had it been a bed of flowers his beams would have called forth fragrance.

The evil is in men, and the honour of turning it to good and useful purposes is with the Lord. Hatred is often allied with cunning, and so in the case of the Egyptians, they began to deal subtilly with his servants. They treated them in a fraudulent manner, they reduced them to bondage by their exactions, they secretly concerted the destruction of their male children, and at length openly ordained that cruel measure, and all with the view of checking their increase, lest in time of war they should side with invaders in order to obtain their liberty. Surely the depths of Satanic policy were here reached, but vain was the cunning of man against the chosen seed.

26 He sent Moses his servant; and Aaron whom he had chosen.

They shewed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham.
them: bad as he was, Pharaoh had not this guilt, for the prodigies which lie beheld were marvels of judgment and not of mercy.

28 He sent darkness, and made it dark; and they rebelled not against his word.

105: 28 He sent darkness, and made it dark. It was no natural or common darkness to be accounted for by the blinding dust of the simoon [storm], it was beyond all precedent and out of the range of ordinary events. It was a horrible palpable obscurity which men felt clinging about them as though it were a robe of death. It was a thick darkness, a total darkness, a darkness which lasted three days, a darkness in which no one dared to stir. What a condition to be in! This plague is first mentioned, thought it is not first in order, because it fitly describes all the period of the plagues: the land was in the darkness of sorrow, and in the darkness of sin all the time. If we shudder as we think of that long and terrible gloom, let us reflect upon the gross darkness which still covers heathen lands as the result of sin, for it is one of the chief plagues which iniquity creates for itself. May the day soon come when the people which sit in darkness shall see a great light.

And they rebelled not against his word. Moses and Aaron did as they were bidden, and during the darkness the Egyptians were so cowed that even when it cleared away they were anxious for Israel to be gone, and had it not been for the pride of Pharaoh they would have rejoiced to speed them on their journey there and then. God can force men to obey, and even make the stoutest hearts eager to pay respect to his will, for fear his plagues should be multiplied. Possibly, however, the sentence before us neither refers to Moses nor the Egyptians, but to the plagues which came at the Lord's bidding. The darkness, the hail, the frogs, the murrain, were all so many obedient servants of the great Lord of all.

29 He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish.

105:29 He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish. So that the plague was not a mere coloring of the water with red earth, as some suppose, but the river was offensive and fatal to the fish. The beloved Nile and other streams were all equally tainted and ensanguined. Their commonest mercy became their greatest curse.

Water is one of the greatest blessings, and the more plentiful it is the better, but blood is a hideous sight to look upon, and to see rivers and pools of it is frightful indeed. Fish in Egypt furnished a large part of the food supply, and it was no small affliction to see them floating dead and white upon a stream of crimson. The hand of the Lord thus smote them where all classes of the people would become aware of it and suffer from it.

30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance, in the chambers of their kings.

105:30 Their land brought forth frogs in abundance. If fish could not live frogs might, yea, they multiplied both on land and in the water till they swarmed beyond all count.

In the chambers of their kings. They penetrated the choicest rooms of the palace, and were found upon the couches of state. The Lord called for them and they marched forth. Obnoxious
and even loathsome their multitudes became, but there was no resisting them; they seemed to spring out of the ground, the very land brought them forth. Their universal presence must have inspired horror and disgust which would cause sickness and make life a burden; their swarming even in the king’s own chambers was a rebuke to his face, which his pride must have felt. Kings are no more than other men with God, nay less than others when they are first in rebellion; if the frogs had abounded elsewhere, but had been kept out of his select apartments, the monarch would have cared little, for he was a heartless being, but God took care that there should be a special horde of the invaders for the palace; they were more than ordinarily abundant in the chambers of their kings.

31 He spake, and there came divers sorts of flies, and lice in all their coasts.

105:31 He spake. See the power of the divine word. He had only to say it and it was done:

and there came divers sorts of flies. Insects of various annoying kinds came up in infinite hordes, a mixture of biting, stinging, buzzing gnats, mosquitoes, flies, beetles, and other vermin such as make men’s flesh their prey, the place of deposit for their eggs, and the seat of peculiar torments.

And lice in all their coasts. These unutterably loathsome forms of life were as the dust of the ground, and covered their persons, their garments, and all they ate. Nothing is too small to master man when God commands it to assail him. The sons of Ham had despised the Israelites and now they were made to loathe themselves. The meanest beggars were more approachable than the proud Egyptians; they were reduced to the meanest condition of filthiness, and the most painful state of irritation. What armies the Lord can send forth when once his right arm is bared for war! And what scorn he pours on proud nations when he fights them, not with angels, but with lice! Pharaoh had little left to be proud of when his own person was invaded by filthy parasites. It was a slap in the face which ought to have humbled his heart, but, alas, man, when he is altogether polluted, still maintains his self conceit, and when he is the most disgusting object in the universe he still vaunts himself. Surely pride is moral madness.

32 He gave them hail for rain, and flaming fire in their land.

105:32 He gave them hail for rain. They seldom had rain, but now the showers assumed the form of heavy, destructive hail storms, and being accompanied with a hurricane and thunderstorm, they were overwhelming, terrible, and destructive.

And flaming fire in their land. The lightning was peculiarly vivid, and seemed to run along upon the ground, or fall in fiery flakes. Thus all the fruit of the trees and the harvests of the fields were either broken to pieces or burned on the spot, and universal fear bowed the hearts of men to the dust. No phenomena are more appalling to the most of mankind than those which attend a thunderstorm; even the most audacious blasphemers quail when the dread artillery of heaven opens fire upon the earth.
33 He smote their vines also and their fig trees; and brake the trees of their coasts.

**105:33. He smote their vines also and their fig trees.** So that all hope of gathering their best fruits was gone, and the trees were injured for future bearing. All the crops were destroyed, and these are mentioned as being the more prominent forms of their produce, used by them both at festivals and in common meals.

*And brake the trees of their coasts.* From end to end of Egypt the trees were battered and broken by the terrible hailstorm. God is in earnest when he deals with proud spirits, he will either end them or mend them.

34 He spake, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number,

**105: 34 He spoke, and the locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number.** One word from the Captain and the armies leap forward. The expression is very striking, and sets forth the immediate result of the divine word. The caterpillar is called the licker, because it seems to lick up every green thing as in a moment. Perhaps the caterpillar here meant is still the locust in another form. That locusts swarm in countless armies is a fact of ordinary observation, and the case would be worse on this occasion. We have ourselves ridden for miles through armies of locusts, and we have seen with our own eyes how completely they devour every green thing. The description is not strained when we read, "And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground." Nothing escapes these ravenous creatures, they even climb the trees to reach any remnant of foliage which may survive. Commissioned as these were by God, we may be sure they would do their work thoroughly, and leave behind them nothing but a desolate wilderness.

35 And did eat up all the herbs in their land, and devoured the fruit of their ground.

**105:35 Did eat up all the herbs.** The locusts had devoured every green herb and every blade of grass; and had it not been for the reeds, on which our cattle entirely subsisted while we skirted the banks of the river, the journey must have been discontinued, at least in the line that had been proposed. The larvae, as generally is the case in this class of nature, are much more voracious than the perfect insect; nothing that is green seems to come amiss to them. The traces of their route over the country are very obvious for many weeks after they have passed it, the surface appearing as if swept by a broom, or as if a harrow had been drawn over it. *John Barrow, 1764-1849.*

36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength.

**105: 36 He smote also all the firstborn in their land, the chief of all their strength.** Now came the master blow. The Lord spoke before, but now he smites; before he only smote vines, but now
he strikes men themselves. The glory of the household dies in a single night, the prime and pick of the nation are cut off, the flower of the troops, the heirs of the rich, and the hopes of the poor all die at midnight. Now the target was struck in the centre, there was no confronting this plague. Pharaoh feels it as much as the woman slave at the mill: he had smitten Israel, the Lord's firstborn, and the Lord repaid him to his face. What a cry went up throughout the land of Egypt when every house wailed its firstborn at the dead of night! O Jehovah, thou didst triumph in that hour, and with an outstretched arm didst thou deliver thy people.

37 He brought them forth also with silver and gold: and there was not one feeble person among their tribes.

105: 37 *He brought them forth also with silver and gold.* This they asked of the Egyptians, perhaps even demanded, and well they might, for they had been robbed and spoiled for many a day, and it was not meet that they should go forth empty handed. Glad were the Egyptians to hand over their jewels to propitiate a people who had such a terrible friend above; they needed no undue pressure, they feared them too much to deny them their requests. The Israelites were compelled to leave their houses and lands behind them, and it was but justice that they should be able to turn these into portable property.

*And there was not one feeble person among their tribes*—a great marvel indeed. The number of their army was very great and yet there was not one in hospital, not one carried in an ambulance, or limping in the rear. Poverty and oppression had not enfeebled them. JEHOVAH ROPHI had healed them; they carried none of the diseases of Egypt with them, and felt none of the exhaustion which sore bondage produces. When God calls his people to a long journey he fits them for it; in the pilgrimage of life our strength shall be equal to our day. See the contrast between Egypt and Israel—in Egypt one dead in every house, and among the Israelites not one so much as limping.

38 Egypt was glad when they departed: for the fear of them fell upon them.

105: 38 *Egypt was glad when they departed,* which would not have been the case had the gold and silver been borrowed by the Israelites, for men do not carry their goods into a far country.

*For the fear of them fell upon them.* The awe of God like to see borrowers lad to nay them to be was on Egypt, and they feared his people and were glad to pay them to be gone. What a change from the time when the sons of Jacob were the drudges of the land, the off scouring of all things, the brick makers whose toil was only requited by the lash or the stick. Now they were reverenced as prophets and priests; for the fear of them fell upon them, the people proceeded even to a superstitious terror them. Thus with cheers and good wishes their former taskmasters sent them on their way: Pharaoh was foiled and the chosen people were once more on the move, journeying to the place which the Lord had given to them by a covenant of salt. "*O give thanks unto Jehovah; call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people.*"

39 He spread a cloud for a covering; and fire to give light in the night.
105:39 *He spread a cloud for a covering.* Never people were so favored. What would not travelers in the desert now give for such a canopy? The sun could not scorch them with its burning ray; their whole camp was screened like a king in his pavilion. Nothing seemed to be too good for God to give his chosen nation, their comfort was studied in every way.

*And fire to give light in the night.* While cities were swathed in darkness, their town of tents enjoyed a light which modern art with all its appliances cannot equal. God himself was their sun and shield, their glory and their defense. Could they be unbelieving while so graciously shaded, or rebellious while they walked at midnight in such a light? Alas, the tale of their sin is as extraordinary as this story of His love; but this Psalm selects the happier theme and dwells only upon covenant love and faithfulness. O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good. We, too, have found the Lord all this to us, for he has been our sun and shield, and has preserved us alike from the perils of joys and the evils of grief;

"He hath been my joy in woe,
Cheered my heart when it was low;
And with warnings softly sad
Calmed my heart when it was glad."

So has the promise been fulfilled to us, "*the sun shall not hurt thee by day, nor the moon by night.*"

40 *The people* asked, and he brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.

105:40 *The people asked.* But how badly, how wickedly! And yet his grace forgave the sin of their murmuring and heard its meaning: or perhaps we may consider that while the multitude murmured there were a few, who were really gracious people, who prayed, and therefore the blessing came.

*He brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven.* He gave them what they asked amiss as well as what was good for them, mingling judgment with goodness, for their discipline. The quails were more a curse than a blessing in the end, because of their greed and lust, but in themselves they were a peculiar indulgence, and favour: it was their own fault, that the dainty meat brought death with it. As for the manna it was unmingled good to them, and really satisfied them, which the quails never did. It was bread from heaven, and the bread of heaven, sent by heaven; it was a pity that they were not led to look up to heaven whence it came, and fear and love the God who out of heaven rained it upon them. Thus they were housed beneath the Lord's canopy and fed with food from his own table; never people were so lodged and boarded. O house of Israel, praise ye the Lord.

41 He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out; they ran in the dry places *like* a river.
He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out. With Moses’ rod and his own word he cleft the rock in the desert, and forth leaped abundant floods for their drinking where they had feared to die of thirst. From most unlikely sources the all sufficient God can supply his people's needs; hard rocks become springing fountains at the Lord's command.

They ran in the dry places like a river: so that those at a distance from the rock could stoop down and refresh themselves, and the stream flowed on, so that in future journeyings they were supplied. The desert sand would naturally swallow up the streams, and yet it did not so, the refreshing river ran "in the dry places." We know that the rock set forth our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom there flows a fountain of living waters which shall never be exhausted till the last pilgrim has crossed the Jordan and entered Canaan.

42 For he remembered his holy promise, and Abraham his servant.

Here is the secret reason for all this grace. The covenant and he for whose sake it was made are ever on the heart of the Most High. He remembered his people because he remembered his covenant. He could not violate that gracious compact for it was sacred to him,—"his holy promise." A holy God must keep his promise holy. In our case the Lord’s eye is upon his beloved Son, and his engagements with him. On our behalf, and this is the source and well ahead of those innumerable favors which enrich us in all our wanderings through this life’s wilderness.

43 And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness:

Up from the wilderness he led them, rejoicing over them himself and making them rejoice too. They were his people, his chosen, and hence in them he rejoiced, and upon them he showered his favors, that they might rejoice in him as their God, and their portion.

44 And gave them the lands of the heathen: and they inherited the labour of the people;

He drove out the Canaanites and allotted the lands to the tribes. They were called on to fight, but the Lord wrought so wonderfully that the conquest was not effected by their bow or spear—the Lord gave them the land.

And they inherited the labour of the people, they dwelt in houses which they had not built, and gathered fruit front vines and olives which they had not planted. They were not settled in a desert which needed to be reclaimed, but in a land fertile to a proverb, and cultivated carefully by its inhabitants. Like Adam, they were placed in a garden. This entrance into the goodly land was fitly celebrated when the ark was being moved to Zion.

45 That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws. Praise ye the LORD.
**105:45 That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws.** This was the practical design of
it all. The chosen nation was to be the conservator of truth, the exemplar of morality, the pattern
of devotion: everything was so ordered as to place them in advantageous circumstances for
fulfilling this trust. Theirs was a high calling and a glorious election. It involved great
responsibilities, but it was in itself a distinguished blessing, and one for which the nation was
bound to give thanks. Most justly then did the music close with the jubilant but solemn shout of
HALLELUJAH.

*Praise ye the Lord.* If this history did trot make Israel praise God, what would?

---

**PSALM 106**

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

Israel's history is here written with the view of showing human sin, even as the preceding psalm
was composed to magnify divine goodness. It is, in fact, a national confession, and includes an
acknowledgment of the transgressions of Israel in Egypt, in the wilderness, and in Canaan, with devout petitions for forgiveness such as rendered the Psalm suitable for use in all succeeding generations, and especially in times of national captivity. It was probably written by David,—at any rate its first and last two verses are to be found in that sacred song which David delivered to Asaph when he brought up the ark of the Lord (1Chron. 16:34, 35, 36). While we are studying this holy Psalm, let us all along see ourselves in the Lord's ancient people, and bemoan our own provocations of the Most High, at the same time admiring his infinite patience, and adoring him because of it. May the Holy Spirit sanctify it to the promotion of humility and gratitude.

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

1 ¶ Praise ye the LORD. O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

106:1. Praise ye the Lord. Hallelujah. Praise ye Jah. This song is for the assembled people, and they are all exhorted to join in praise to Jehovah. It is not meet for a few to praise and the rest to be silent; but all should join. If David were present in churches where quartets and choirs carry on all the singing, he would turn to the congregation and say, "Praise ye the Lord." Our meditation dwells upon human sin; but on all occasions and in all occupations it is seasonable and profitable to praise the Lord.

O give thanks unto the Lord; for he is good. To us needy creatures the goodness of God is the first attribute which excites praise, and that praise takes the form of gratitude. We praise the Lord truly when we give him thanks for what we have received from his goodness. Let us never be slow to return unto the Lord our praise; to thank him is the least we can do—let us not neglect it. For his mercy endureth for ever. Goodness towards sinners assumes the form of mercy, mercy should therefore be a leading note in our song. Since man ceases not to be sinful, it is a great blessing that Jehovah ceases not to be merciful. From age to age the Lord deals graciously with his church, and to every individual in it he is constant and faithful in his grace, even for evermore. In a short space we have here two arguments for praise, "for he is good".

for his mercy endureth for ever, "and these two arguments are themselves praises. The very best language of adoration is that which adoringly in the plainest words sets forth the simple truth with regard to our great Lord. No rhetorical flourishes or poetical hyperboles are needed, the bare facts are sublime poetry, and the narration of them with reverence is the essence of adoration. This first verse is the text of all that which follows; we are now to see how from generation to generation the mercy of God endured to his chosen people.
2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? Who can shew forth all his praise?

106:2 Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? What tongue of men or angels can duly describe the great displays of divine power? They are unutterable. Even those who saw them could not fully tell them.

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

3 Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times.

106:3 Since the Lord is so good and so worthy to be praised, it must be for our happiness to obey him.

Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times. Multiplied are the blessings which must descend upon the whole company of the keepers of the way of justice, and especially upon that one rare man who at all times follows that which is right. Holiness is happiness. The way of right is the way of peace. Yet men leave this road, and prefer the paths of the destroyer. Hence the story which follows is in sad contrast with the happiness here depicted, because the way of Israel was not that of judgment and righteousness, but that of folly and iniquity.

The Psalmist, while contemplating the perfections of God, was impressed with the feeling that the servants of such a being must be happy, and when he looked around and saw how the tribes of old prospered when they obeyed, and suffered when they sinned, he was still more fully assured of the truth of his conclusion. O could we but be free of sin we should be rid of sorrow! We would not only be just, but "keep judgment"; we would not be content with occasionally acting rightly, but would "do justice at all times."

4 Remember me, O LORD, with the favour that thou bearest unto thy people: O visit me with thy salvation;

106:4 Remember me, O Lord, with the favour which thou bearest unto thy people. Insignificant as I am, do not forget me. Think of me with kindness, even as thou thinkest of thine own elect. I cannot ask more, nor would I seek less. Treat me as the least of thy saints are treated and I am content. It should be enough for us if we fare as the rest of the family. If even Balaam desired no more than to die the death of the righteous, we may be well content both to live as they live, and die as they die. This feeling would prevent our wishing to escape trial, persecution, and chastisement; these have fallen to the lot of saints, and why should we escape them.
"Must I be carried to the skies
On flowery beds of ease?
While others fought to will the prize,
And sailed through bloody seas."

At the same time we pray to have their sweets as well as their bitters. If the Lord smiled upon their souls we cannot rest unless he smiles upon us also. We would dwell where they dwell, rejoice as they rejoice, sorrow as they sorrow, and in all things be for ever one with them in the favour of the Lord. The sentence before us is a sweet prayer, at once humble and aspiring, submissive and expansive; it might be used by a dying thief or a living apostle; let us use it now.

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

5 That I may see the good of thy chosen, that I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation, that I may glory with thine inheritance.

106: 5 That I may see the good of thy chosen. His desire for the divine favour was excited by the hope that he might participate in all the good things which flow to the people of God through their election. The Father has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in Christ Jesus, according as he has chosen us in him, and in these precious gifts we desire to share through the saving visitation of the Lord. No other good do we wish to see, perceive, and apprehend, but that which is the peculiar treasure of the saints.

That I may rejoice in the gladness of thy nation. The psalmist, having sought his portion in the good of the chosen, now also begs to be a partaker in their joy for of all the nations under heaven the Lord's true people are the happiest.

That I may glory with thine inheritance. He would have a part and lot in their honour as well as their joy. He was willing to find glory where saints find it, namely, in being reproached for truth's sake. To serve the Lord and endure shame for his sake is the glory of the saints below: Lord, let me rejoice to bear my part therein. To be with God above, for ever blessed in Christ Jesus, is the glory of saints above: O Lord, be pleased to allot me a place there also. These introductory thanksgivings and supplications, though they occur first in the psalm, are doubtless the result of the contemplations which succeed them, and may be viewed not only as the preface, but also as the moral of the whole sacred song.
6 ¶We have sinned with our fathers, we have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly.

106:6 We have sinned with our fathers. Here begins a long and particular confession. Confession of sin is the readiest way to secure an answer to the prayer of verse 4; God visits with his salvation the soul which acknowledges its need of a Saviour. Men may be said to have sinned with their fathers when they imitate them, when they follow the same objects, and make their own lives to be mere continuations of the follies of their sires. Moreover, Israel was but one nation in all time, and the confession which follows sets forth the national rather than the personal sin of the Lord's people. They enjoyed national privileges, and therefore they shared in national guilt.

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

7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt; they remembered not the multitude of thy mercies; but provoked him at the sea, even at the Red sea.

106:7 Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt. The Israelites saw the miraculous plagues and ignorantly wondered at them: their design of love, their deep moral and spiritual lessons, and their revelation of the divine power and justice they were unable to perceive. A long sojourn among idolaters had blunted the perceptions of the chosen family, and cruel slavery had ground them down into mental sluggishness. Alas, how many of God's wonders are not understood, or misunderstood by us still. We fear the sons are no great improvement upon the sires. We inherit from our fathers much sin and little wisdom; they could only leave us what they themselves possessed. We see from this verse that a want of understanding is no excuse for sin, but is itself one count in the indictment against Israel.

They remembered not the multitude of thy mercies. The sin of the understanding leads on to the sin of the memory. What is not understood will soon be forgotten. Men feel little interest in preserving husks; if they know nothing of the inner kernel they will take no care of the shells. It was an aggravation of Israel's sin that when God's mercies were so numerous they yet were able to forget them all. Surely some out of such a multitude of benefits ought to have remained engraven upon their hearts; but if grace does not give us understanding, nature will soon east out the memory of God's great goodness.

But provoked him at the sea, even; at the Red sea. To fall out at starting was a bad sign. Those who did not begin well can hardly be expected to end well. Israel is not quite out of Egypt, and yet she begins to provoke the Lord by doubting his power to deliver, and questioning his faithfulness to his promise. The sea was only called Red, but their sins were scarlet in reality; it was known as the "sea of weeds," but far worse weeds grew in their hearts.
8 Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known.

106: 8 Nevertheless he saved them for his name's sake, that he might make his mighty power to be known. When he could find no other reason for his mercy he found it in his own glory, and seized the opportunity to display his power. If Israel does not deserve to be saved, yet Pharaoh's pride needs to be crushed, and therefore Israel shall be delivered. The Lord very jealously guards his own name and honour. It shall never be said of him that he cannot or will not save his people, or that he cannot abate the haughtiness of his defiant foes. This respect unto his own honour ever leads him to deeds of mercy, and hence we may well rejoice that he is a jealous God.

9 He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up: so he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness.

106:9 He rebuked the Red sea also, and it was dried up. A word did it. The sea heard his voice and obeyed. How many rebukes of God are lost upon us! Are we not more unmanageable than the ocean? God did, as it were, chide the sea, and say, "Wherefore dost thou stop the way of my people? Their path to Canaan lies through thy channel, how dare you hinder them?" The sea perceived its Master and his seed royal, and made way at once.

So he led them through the depths, as through the wilderness. As if it had been the dry floor of the desert the tribes passed over the bottom of the gulf; nor was their passage venturesome, for HE bade them go; nor dangerous, for He led them. We also have under divine protection passed through many trials and afflictions, and with the Lord as our guide we have experienced no fear and endured no perils. We have been led through the deeps as through the wilderness.

10 And he saved them from the hand of him that hated them, and redeemed them from the hand of the enemy.

106: 10 And he saved them from the hand of them that hated them. Pharaoh was drowned, and the power of Egypt so crippled that throughout the forty years' wanderings of Israel they were never threatened by their old masters.

And redeemed them from the hand of the enemy. This was a redemption by power, and one of the most instructive types of the redemption of the Lord's people from sin and hell by the power which worketh in them.

11 And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left.

106:11 And the waters covered their enemies: there was not one of them left. The Lord does nothing by halves. What he begins he carries through to the end. This, again, made Israel's sin the greater, because they saw the thoroughness of the divine justice, and the perfection of the divine faithfulness. In the covering of their enemies we have a type of the pardon of our sins; they are sunk as in the sea, never to rise again; and, blessed be the Lord, there is
12 Then believed they his words; they sang his praise.

106: 12 Then believed they his words. That is to say, they believed the promise when they saw it fulfilled, but not till then. This is mentioned, not to their credit, but to their shame. Those who do not believe the Lord's word till they see it performed are not believers at all. Who would not believe when the fact stares them in the face? The Egyptians would have done as much as this. They sang his praise. How could they do otherwise? Their song was very excellent, and is the type of the song of heaven; but sweet as it was, it was quite as short, and when it was ended they fell to murmuring.

They sang his praise, "but they soon forgat his works." Between Israel singing and Israel sinning there was scarce a step. Their song was good while it lasted, but it was no sooner begun than over.

13 ¶ They soon forgat his works; they waited not for his counsel:

106:13 They soon forgat his works. They seemed in a hurry to get the Lord's mercies out of their memories; they hasted to be ungrateful.

They waited not for his counsel, neither waiting for the word of command or promise; eager to have their own way, and prone to trust in themselves. This is a common fault in the Lord's family to this day; we are long in learning to wait for the Lord, and upon the Lord. With him is counsel and strength, but we are vain enough to look for these to ourselves, and therefore we grievously err.

14 But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness, and tempted God in the desert.

106: 14. But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness. Though they would not wait God's will, they are hot to have their own. When the most suitable and pleasant food was found them in abundance, it did not please them long, but they grew dainty and sniffed at angel's food, and must needs have flesh to eat, which was unhealthy diet for that warm climate, and for their easy life. This desire of theirs they dwelt upon till it became a mania with them, and, like a wild horse, carried away its rider. For a meal of meat they were ready to curse their God and renounce the land which floweth with milk and honey. What a wonder that the Lord did not take them at their word! It is plain that they vexed him greatly,

And tempted God in the desert. In the place where they were absolutely dependent upon him and were everyday fed by his direct provision, they had the presumption to provoke their God. They would have him change the plans of his wisdom, supply their sensual appetites, and work miracles to meet their wicked unbelief: these things the Lord would not do, but they went as far
as they could in trying to induce him to do so. They failed not in their wicked attempt because of any goodness in themselves, but because God "cannot be tempted,"—temptation has no power over him, he yields not to man's threats or promises.

15 And he gave them their request; but sent leanness into their soul.

106: 15 And he gave them their request. Prayer may be answered in anger and denied in love. That God gives a man his desire is no proof that he is the object of divine favour, everything depends upon what that desire is.

But sent leanness into their soul. Ah, that "but"! It embittered all. The meat was poison to them when it came without a blessing; whatever it might do in fattening the body, it was poor stuff when it made the soul lean. If we must know scantiness, may God grant it may not be scantiness of soul: yet this is a common attendant upon worldly prosperity. When wealth grows with many a man his worldly estate is fatter, but his soul's state is leaner. To gain silver and lose gold is a poor increase; but to win for the body and lose for the soul is far worse. How earnestly might Israel have unprayed her prayers had she known what would come with their answer! The prayers of lust will have to be wept over. We fret and fume till we have our desire, and then we have to fret still more because the attainment of it ends in bitter disappointment.

16 They envied Moses also in the camp, and Aaron the saint of the LORD.

106:16 They envied Moses also in the camp. Though to him as the Lord's chosen instrument they owed everything, they grudged him the authority which it was needful that he should exercise for their good. Some were more openly rebellious than others, and became leaders of the mutiny, but a spirit of dissatisfaction was general, and therefore the whole nation is charged with it. Who can hope to escape envy when the meekest of men was subject to it? How unreasonable was this envy, for Moses was the one man in all the camp who laboured hardest and had most to bear. They should have sympathized with him; to envy him was ridiculous.

And Aaron the saint of the Lord. By divine choice Aaron was set apart to be holiness unto the Lord, and instead of thanking God that he had favored them with a high priest by whose intercession their prayers would be presented, they caviled at the divine election, and quarreled with the man who was to offer sacrifice for them. Thus neither church nor state was ordered aright for them; they would snatch from Moses his sceptre, and from Aaron his mitre. It is the mark of bad men that they are envious of the good, and spiteful against their best benefactors.

17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram.

106:17 The earth opened and swallowed up Dathan, and covered the company of Abiram. Korah is not mentioned, for mercy was extended to his household, though he himself perished. The earth could no longer bear up under the weight of these rebels and ingrates: God's patience was exhausted when they began to assail his servants, for his children are very dear to him, and
he that toucheth them touches the apple of his eye. Moses had opened the sea for their deliverance, and now that they provoke him, the earth opens for their destruction. It was time that the nakedness of their sins was covered, and that the earth should open her mouth to devour those who opened their mouths against the Lord and his servants.

18 And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked.

106: 18 And a fire was kindled in their company; the flame burned up the wicked. The Levites who were with Korah perished by fire, which was a most fitting death for those who intruded into the priesthood, and so offered strange fire. God has more than one arrow in his quiver, the fire can consume those whom the earthquake spares. These terrible things in righteousness are mentioned here to show the obstinacy of the people in continuing to rebel against the Lord. Terrors were as much lost upon them as mercies had been; they could neither be drawn nor driven.

19 They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image.

106: 19 They made a calf in Horeb. In the very place where they had solemnly pledged themselves to obey the Lord they broke the second, if not the first, of his commandments, and set up the Egyptian symbol of the ox, and bowed before it. The ox image is here sarcastically called "a calf"; idols are worthy of no respect, scorn is never more legitimately used than when it is poured upon all attempts to set forth the Invisible God. The Israelites were foolish indeed when they thought they saw the slightest divine glory in a bull, nay, in the mere image of a bull. To believe that the image of a bull could be the image of God must need great credulity.

And worshipped the molten image. Before it they paid divine honors, and said, "These be thy gods, O Israel." This was sheer madness. After the same fashion the Ritualists must needs set up their symbols and multiply them exceedingly. Spiritual worship they seem unable to apprehend; their worship is sensuous to the highest degree, and appeals to eye, and ear, and nose. O the folly of men to block up their own way to acceptable worship, and to make the path of spiritual religion, which is hard to our nature, harder still through the stumblingblocks which they cast into it. We have heard the richness of Popish paraphernalia much extolled, but an idolatrous image when made of gold is not one jot the less abominable than it would have been had it been made of dross and dung: the beauty of art cannot conceal the deformity of sin. We are told also of the suggestiveness of their symbols, but what of that, when God forbids the use of them? Vain also is it to plead that such worship is hearty. So much the worse. Heartiness in forbidden actions is only an increase of transgression.

20 Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass.

106:20 Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. They said that they only meant to worship the one God under a fitting and suggestive similitude by which his great power would be set forth to the multitude; they pleaded the great Catholic revival which followed upon this return to a more ornate ceremonial, for the people thronged around Aaron,
and danced before the calf with all their might. But in very deed they had given up the true God, whom it had been their glory to adore, and had set up a rival to him, not a representation of him; for how should he be likened to a bullock? The psalmist is very contemptuous, and justly so: irreverence towards idols is an indirect reverence to God. False gods, attempts to represent the true God, and indeed, all material things which are worshipped, are so much filth upon the face of the earth, whether they be crosses, crucifixes, virgins, wafers, relics, or even the Pope himself. We are by far too mealy mouthed about these infamous abominations: God abhors them, and so should we. To renounce the glory of spiritual worship for outward pomp and show is the height of folly, and deserves to be treated as such.

21 They forgat God their savior, which had done great things in Egypt;

106: 21 They forgat God their Saviour. Remembering the calf involved forgetting God. He had commanded them to make no image, and in daring to disobey they forgot his commands. Moreover, it is clear that they must altogether have forgotten the nature and character of Jehovah, or they could never have likened him to a grass eating animal. Some men hope to keep their sins and their God too—the fact being that he who sins is already so far departed from the Lord that he has actually forgotten him.

Which had done great things in Egypt. God in Egypt had overcome all the idols, and yet they so far forgot him as to liken him to them. Could an ox work miracles? Could a golden calf cast plagues upon Israel's enemies? They were brutish to set up such a wretched mockery of deity, after having seen what the true God could really achieve. "Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea". They saw several ranges of miracles, the Lord did not stint them as to the evidences of his eternal power and godhead, and yet they could not rest content with worshipping him in his own appointed way, but must needs have a Directory of their own invention, an elaborate ritual after the old Egyptian fashion, and a manifest object of worship to assist them in adoring Jehovah. This was enough to provoke the Lord, and it did so; how much he is angered every day in our own land no tongue can tell.

22 Wondrous works in the land of Ham, and terrible things by the Red sea.
23 Therefore he said that he would destroy them, had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach, to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them.

106: 23 Therefore he said that he would destroy them. The threatening of destruction came at last. For the first wilderness sin he chastened them, sending leanness into their soul; for the second he weeded out the offenders, the flame burned up the wicked; for the third he threatened to destroy them; for the fourth he lifted up his hand and almost came to blows (Psalm 106:26); for the fifth he actually smote them,

"and the plague brake in among them"; and so the punishment increased with their perseverance in sin. This is worth noting, and it should serve as a warning to the man who goeth on in his iniquities. God tries words before he comes to blows, "he said that he would destroy them": but his words are not to be trifled with, for he means them, and has power to make them good.
Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach. Like a bold warrior who defends the wall when there is an opening for the adversary and destruction is rushing in upon the city, Moses stopped the way of avenging justice with his prayers. Moses had great power with God. He was an eminent type of our Lord, who is called, as Moses here is styled, "mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." As the Elect Redeemer interposed between the Lord and a sinful world, so did Moses stand between the Lord and his offending people. The story as told by Moses himself is full of interest and instruction, and tends greatly to magnify the goodness of the Lord, who thus suffered himself to be turned from the fierceness of his anger. With disinterested affection, and generous renunciation of privileges offered to himself and his family, the great Lawgiver interceded with the Lord to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them. Behold the power of a righteous man's intercession. Mighty as was the sin of Israel to provoke vengeance, prayer was mightier in turning it away. How diligently ought we to plead with the Lord for this guilty world, and especially for his own backsliding people! Who would not employ an agency so powerful for an end so gracious! The Lord still harkens to the voice of a man, shall not our voices be often exercised in supplicating for a guilty people?

24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land, they believed not his word:

106: 24 Yea, they despised the pleasant land. They spoke lightly of it, though it was the joy of all lands: they did not think it worth the trouble of seeking and conquering; they even spoke of Egypt, the land of their iron bondage, as though they preferred it to Canaan, the land which floweth with milk and honey. It is an ill sign with a Christian when he begins to think lightly of heaven and heavenly things; it indicates a perverted mind, and it is, moreover, a high offence to the Lord to despise that which he esteems so highly that he in infinite love reserves it for his own chosen. To prefer earthly things to heavenly blessings is to prefer Egypt to Canaan, the house of bondage to the land of promise.

They believed not his word. This is the root sin. If we do not believe the Lord's word, we shall think lightly of his promised gifts. "They could not enter in because of unbelief"—this was the key which turned the lock against them. When pilgrims to the Celestial City begin to doubt the Lord of the way, they soon come to think little of the rest at the journey's end, and this is the surest way to make them bad travelers. Israel's unbelief demanded spies to see the land; the report of those spies was of a mingled character, and so a fresh crop of unbelief sprang up, with consequences most deplorable.

25 But murmured in their tents, and hearkened not unto the voice of the LORD.

106: 25 But murmured in their tents. From unbelief to murmuring is a short and natural step; they even fell to weeping when they had the best ground for rejoicing. Murmuring is a great sin and not a mere weakness; it contains within itself unbelief, pride, rebellion, and a whole host of sins. It is a home sin, and is generally practiced by complainers "in their tents," but it is just as evil there as in the streets, and will be quite as grievous to the Lord.
And hearkened not unto the voice of the Lord. Making a din with their own voices, they refused attention to their best Friend. Murmurers are bad hearers.

26 Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness:

**106: 26 Therefore he lifted up his hand against them, to overthrow them in the wilderness.** He swore in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest; he commenced his work of judgment upon them, and they began to die. Only let God lift his hand against a man and his day has come; he falls terribly whom Jehovah overthrows. To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands. Foreseeing that their descendants would reproduce their sins, he solemnly declared that he would give them over to captivity and the sword. Those whose carcases fell in the wilderness were, in a sense, exiles from the land of promise, and, being surrounded by many hostile tribes, they were virtually in a foreign land: to die far off from their father's inheritance was a just and weighty doom, which their rebellions had richly deserved. Our own loss of fellowship with God, and the divisions in our churches, doubtless often come to us as punishments for the sins out of which they grow.

If we will not honour the Lord we cannot expect him to honour us. Our captains shall soon become captives, and our princes shall be prisoners if we forget the Lord and despise his mercies. Our singing shall be turned into sighing, and our mirth into misery if we walk contrary to the mind of the Lord.

27 To overthrow their seed also among the nations, and to scatter them in the lands.

28 They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor, and ate the sacrifices of the dead.

**106:28 They joined themselves also unto Baalpeor.** Ritualism led on to the adoration of false gods. If we choose a false way of worship we shall, ere long, choose to worship a false god. This abomination of the Moabites was an idol in whose worship women gave up their bodies to the most shameless lust. Think of the people of a holy God coming down to this.

And ate the sacrifices of the dead. In the orgies with which the Baalites celebrated their detestable worship Israel joined, partaking even in their sacrifices as earnest inner court worshippers, though the gods were but dead idols. Perhaps they assisted in necromantic rites which were intended to open a correspondence with departed spirits, thus endeavoring to break the seal of God's providence, and burst into the secret chambers which God has shut up. Those who are weary of seeking the living God have often shown a hankering after dark sciences, and have sought after fellowship with demons and spirits. To what strong delusions those are often given up who cast off the fear of God! This remark is as much needed now as in days gone by.

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

30 Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.

Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed. God has his champions left in the worst times, and they will stand up when the time comes for them to come forth to battle. This righteous indignation moved him to a quick execution of two open offenders. His honest spirit could not endure that lewdness should be publicly practiced at a time when a fast had been proclaimed. Such daring defiance of God and of all law he could not brook, and so with his sharp javelin he transfixed the two guilty ones in the very act. It was a holy passion which inflamed him, and no enmity to either of the persons whom he slew. The circumstances were so remarkable and the sin so flagrant that it would have involved great sin in a public man to have stood still and seen God thus defied, and Israel thus polluted. Phinehas was not of this mind, he was no trimmer, or palliator [excuser] of sin, his heart was sound in God's statutes, and his whole nature was ablaze with zeal for God's glory, and therefore, though a priest, and therefore not obliged to be an executioner, he undertook the unwelcome task, and though both transgressors were of princely stock he had no respect of persons, but dealt justice upon them as if they had been the lowest of the people. This brave and decided deed was so acceptable to God as a proof that there were some sincere souls in Israel that the deadly visitation went no further. Two deaths had sufficed to save the lives of the multitude.

31 And that was counted unto him for righteousness unto all generations for evermore.

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

### 106:32 They angered him also at the waters of strife.

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

33 Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

### 106:33 Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.

Which seems a small sin compared with that of others, but then it was the sin of Moses, the Lord's chosen servant, who had seen and known so much of the Lord, and therefore it could not be passed by. He did not speak blasphemously, or falsely, but only hastily and without care; but this is a serious fault in a lawgiver, and especially in one who speaks for God. This passage is to our mind one of the most terrible in the Bible. Truly we serve a jealous God. Yet he is not a hard master, or austere; we must not think so, but we must then rather be jealous of ourselves, and watch that we live the more carefully, and speak the more advisedly, because we serve such a Lord. We ought also to be very careful how we treat the ministers of the gospel, lest by provoking their spirit we should drive them into any unseemly behaviour which should bring upon them the chastisement of the Lord. Little do a murmuring, quarrelsome people dream of the perils in which they involve their pastors by their untoward behaviour.

34 ¶ They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them:

### 106:34 They did not destroy the nations, concerning whom the LORD commanded them.

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

35 But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.

106: 35 But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works. It was not the wilderness which caused Israel's sins; they were just as disobedient when settled in the land of promise. They found evil company, and delighted in it. Those whom they should have destroyed they made their friends. Having enough faults of their own, they were yet ready to go to school to the filthy Canaanites, and educate themselves still more in the arts of iniquity. It was certain that they could learn no good from men whom the Lord had condemned to utter destruction. Few would wish to go to the condemned cell for learning, yet Israel sat at the feet of accursed Canaan, and rose up proficient in every abomination. This, too, is a grievous but common error among professors: they court worldly company and copy worldly fashions, and yet it is their calling to bear witness against these things. None can tell what evil has come of the folly of worldly conformity.

36 And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them.

106: 36 And they served their idols: which were a snare unto them. They were fascinated by the charms of idolatry, though it brings misery upon its votaries. A man cannot serve sin without being ensnared by it. It is like birdlime, and to touch it is to be taken by it. Samson laid his head in the Philistine woman's lap, but ere long he woke up shorn of his strength. Dalliance with sin is fatal to spiritual liberty.

37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils,

106: 37 Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils. This was being snared indeed; they were spell bound by the cruel superstition, and were carried so far as even to become murderers of their own children, in honour of the most detestable deities, which were rather devils than gods. "And shed innocent blood." The poor little ones whom they put to death in sacrifice had not been partakers of their sin, and God looked with the utmost indignation upon the murder of the innocent. "Even the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan." Who knows how far evil will go? It drove men to be unnatural as well as ungodly. Had they but thought for a moment, they must have seen that a deity who could be pleased with the blood of babes spilt by their own sires could not be a deity at all, but must be a demon, worthy to be detested and not adored. How could they prefer such service to that of Jehovah? Did he tear their babes from their bosoms and smile at their death throes? Men will sooner wear the iron yoke of Satan than carry the pleasant burden of the Lord; does not this prove to a demonstration the deep depravity of their hearts? If man be not totally depraved, what worse would he do if he were? Does not this verse describe the ne plus ultra of iniquity? And the land was polluted with blood. The promised land, the holy land, which was the glory of all lands, for God was there, was defiled with the reeking gore of innocent babes, and by the blood red hands of their parents, who slew them in order to pay homage to devils. Alas! alas! What vexation was this to the spirit of the Lord.
38 And shed innocent blood, *even* the blood of their sons and of their daughters, whom they sacrificed unto the idols of Canaan: and the land was polluted with blood.

39 Thus were they defiled with their own works, and went a whoring with their own inventions.

40 Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his people, insomuch that he abhorred his own inheritance.

41 And he gave them into the hand of the heathen; and they that hated them ruled over them.

42 Their enemies also oppressed them, and they were brought into subjection under their hand.
106: 42 Their enemies also oppressed them. This was according to their nature; an Israelite always fares ill at the hands of the heathen. Leniency to Canaan turned out to be cruelty to themselves.

And they were brought into subjection under their hand. They were bowed down by laborious bondage, and made to lie low under tyranny. In their God they had found a kind master, but in those with whom they had perversely sought fellowship they found despots of the most barbarous sort. He who leaves his God leaves happiness for misery. God can make our enemies to be rods in his hands to flog us back to our best Friend.

43 Many times did he deliver them; but they provoked him with their counsel, and were brought low for their iniquity.

106: 43 Many times did he deliver them. By reading the book of Judges we shall see how truthful is this sentence: again and again their foes were routed, and they were set free again, only to return with rigor to their former evil ways.

But they provoked him with their counsel. With deliberation they agreed to transgress anew; self will was their counselor, and they followed it to their own destruction.

And were brought low for their iniquity. Worse and worse were the evils brought upon them, lower and lower they fell in sin, and consequently in sorrow. In dens and caves of the earth they hid themselves; they were deprived of all warlike weapons, and were utterly despised by their conquerors; they were rather a race of serfs than of free men until the Lord in mercy raised them up again. Could we but fully know the horrors of the wars which desolated Palestine, and the ravages which caused famine and starvation, we should shudder at the sins which were thus rebuked. Deeply engrained in their nature must the sin of idolatry have been, or they would not have returned to it with such persistence in the teeth of such penalties; we need not marvel at this, there is a still greater wonder, man prefers sin and hell to heaven and God. The lesson to ourselves, as God's people, is to walk humbly and carefully before the Lord and above all to keep ourselves from idols. Woe unto those who become partakers of Rome's idolatries, for they will be joined with her in her plagues. May grace be given to us to keep the separated path, and remain undefiled with the fornication of the scarlet harlot of Babylon.

44 Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry:

106: 44 Nevertheless he regarded their affliction, when he heard their cry. Notwithstanding all these provoking rebellions and detestable enormities the Lord still heard their prayer and pitied them. This is very wonderful, very godlike. One would have thought that the Lord would have shut out their prayer, seeing they had shut their ears against his admonitions; but no, he had a father's heart, and a sight of their sorrows touched his soul, the sound of their cries overcame his heart, and he looked upon them with compassion. His fiercest wrath towards his own people is only a temporary flame, but his love burns on for ever like the light of his own immortality.
45 And he remembered for them his covenant, and repented according to the multitude of his mercies.

**106:45 And he remembered for them his covenant.** The covenant is the sure foundation of mercy, and when the whole fabric of outward grace manifested in the saints lies in ruins this is the fundamental basis of love which is never moved, and upon it the Lord proceeds to build again a new structure of grace. Covenant mercy is sure as the throne of God.

**And repented according to the multitude of his mercies.** He did not carry out the destruction which he had commenced. Speaking after the manner of men he changed his mind, and did not leave them to their enemies to be utterly cut off, because he saw that his covenant would in such a case have been broken. The Lord is so full of grace that he has not only mercy but mercies, yea a multitude of them, and these hive in the covenant and treasure up good for the erring sons of men.

46 He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.

**106:46 He made them also to be pitied of all those that carried them captives.** Having the hearts of all men in his hands he produced compassion even in heathen bosoms. Even as he found Joseph friends in Egypt, so did he raise up sympathizers for his captive servants. In our very worst condition our God has ways and means for allaying the severity of our sorrows: he can find us helpers among those who have been our oppressors, and he will do so if we be indeed his people.

47 Save us, O LORD our God, and gather us from among the heathen, to give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise.

**106: 47** This is the closing prayer, arranged by prophecy for those who would in future time be captives, and suitable for all who before David’s days had been driven from home by the tyranny of the various scatterings by famine and distress which had happened in the iron age of the judges.

**Save us, O Lord our God.** The mention of the covenant encouraged the afflicted to call the Lord their God, and this enabled them with greater boldness to entreat him to interpose on their behalf and rescue them.

**And gather us from among the Heathen.** Weary now of the ungodly and their ways, they long to be brought into their own separated country, where they might again enjoy the means of grace, enter into holy fellowship with their brethren, escape from contaminating examples, and be free to wait upon the Lord. How often do true believers now a days long to be removed from ungodly households, where their souls are vexed with the conversation of the wicked.

**To give thanks unto thy holy name, and to triumph in thy praise.** Weaned from idols, they desire to make mention of Jehovah's name alone, and to ascribe their mercies to his ever abiding faithfulness and love.
The Lord had often saved them for his holy name’s sake, and therefore they feel that when again restored they would render all their gratitude to that saving name, yea, it should be their glory to praise Jehovah and none else.

48 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting: and let all the people say, Amen. Praise ye the LORD.

106:48 Blessed be the LORD God of Israel from everlasting to everlasting. Has not his mercy endured for ever, and should not his praise be of like duration? Jehovah, the God of Israel, has blessed his people, should they not also bless him?

And let all the people say, Amen. They have all seen spared by his grace, let them all join in the adoration with loud unanimous voice. What a thunder of praise would thus be caused! Yet should a nation thus magnify him, yea, should all the nations past and present unite in the solemn acclaim, it would fall far short of his deserts. O for the happy day when all flesh shall see the glory of God, and all shall aloud proclaim his praise. Praise ye the LORD, or "Hallelujah." Reader, praise thou the Lord, as he who writes this feeble exposition now does with his whole heart.

"Now blest, for ever blest, be He,  
The same throughout eternity,  
Our Israel's God adored!

Let all the people join the lay,  
And loudly, 'Hallelujah', say,  
`Praise ye the living Lord!'"
SUBJECT. This is a choice song for the redeemed of the Lord (Psalm 107:2). Although it celebrates providential deliverances, and therefore may be sung by any man whose life has been preserved in time of danger; yet under cover of this, it mainly magnifies the Lord for spiritual blessings, of which temporal favors are but types and shadows. The theme is thanksgiving, and the motives for it. The construction of the psalm is highly poetical, and merely as a composition it would be hard to find its compeere among human productions. The bards of the Bible hold no second place among the sons of song.

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

1 ¶ O give thanks unto the LORD, for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so, whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy;
**107: 2 Let the redeemed of the LORD say so.** Whatever others may think or say, the redeemed have overwhelming reasons for declaring the goodness of the Lord. Theirs is a peculiar redemption, and for it they ought to render peculiar praise. The Redeemer is so glorious, the ransom price so immense, and the redemption so complete, that they are under sevenfold obligations to give thanks unto the Lord, and to exhort others to do so. Let them not only feel so but say so; let them both sing and bid their fellows sing.

**Whom he hath redeemed from the hand of the enemy.** Snatched by superior power away from fierce oppressions, they are bound above all men to adore the Lord, their Liberator. Theirs is a divine redemption, "he hath redeemed" them, and no one else has done it. His own unaided arm has wrought out their deliverance. Should not emancipated slaves be grateful to the hand which set them free? What gratitude can suffice for a deliverance from the power of sin, death, and hell? In heaven itself there is no sweeter hymn than that whose burden is, "Thou hast redeemed us unto God by thy blood."

3 And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.

**107:3 And gathered them out of the lands, from the east, and from the west, from the north, and from the south.** Gathering follows upon redeeming. The captives of old were restored to their own land from every quarter of the earth, and even from beyond the sea; for the word translated *south* is really *the sea*. No matter what divides, the Lord will gather his own into one body, and first on earth by "one Lord, one faith, and one baptism", and then in heaven by one common bliss they shall be known to be the one people of the One God. What a glorious Shepherd must he be who thus collects the blood bought flock from the remotest regions, guides them through countless perils, and at last makes them to lie down in the green pastures of Paradise. Some have wandered one way and some another they have all left Immanuel's land and strayed as far as they could, and great are the grace and power by which they are all collected into one flock by the Lord Jesus. With one heart and voice let the redeemed praise the Lord who gathers them into one.

4 They wandered in the wilderness in a solitary way; they found no city to dwell in.

**107:4 They wandered in the wilderness.** They wandered, for the track was lost, no vestige of a road remained; worse still, they wandered in a wilderness, where all around was burning sand. They were lost in the worst possible place, even as the sinner is who is lost in sin; they wandered up and down in vain searches and researches as a sinner does when he is awakened and sees his lost estate; but it ended in nothing, for they still continued in the wilderness, though they had hoped to escape from it.
In a solitary way. No dwelling of man was near, and no other company of travelers passed within hail. Solitude is a great intensifier of misery. The loneliness of a desert has a most depressing influence upon the man who is lost in the boundless waste. The traveler’s way in the wilderness is a waste way, and when he leaves even that poor, barren trail, to get utterly beyond the path of man, he is in a wretched plight indeed. A soul without sympathy is on the borders of hell: a solitary way is the way of despair.

They found no city to dwell in. How could they? There was none. Israel in the wilderness abode under canvas, and enjoyed none of the comforts of settled life; wanderers in the Sahara find no town or village. Men when under distress of soul find nothing to rest upon, no comfort and no peace; their efforts after salvation are many, weary, and disappointing, and the dread solitude of their hearts fills them with dire distress.

5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them.

107: 5 Hungry and thirsty, their soul fainted in them. The spirits sink when the bodily frame becomes exhausted by long privations. Who can keep his courage up when he is ready to fall to the ground at every step through utter exhaustion? The supply of food is all eaten, the water is spent in the bottles, and there are neither fields nor streams in the desert, the heart therefore sinks in dire despair. Such is the condition of an awakened conscience before it knows the Lord Jesus; it is full of unsatisfied cravings, painful needs, and heavy fears. It is utterly spent and without strength, and there is nothing in the whole creation which can minister to its refreshment.

6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he delivered them out of their distresses.

107: 6 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble. Not till they were in extremities did they pray, but the mercy is that they prayed then, and prayed in the right manner, with a cry, and to the right person, even to the Lord. Nothing else remained for them to do; they could not help themselves, or find help in others, and therefore they cried to God. Supplications which are forced out of us by stern necessity are none the less acceptable with God; but, indeed, they have all the more prevalence, since they are evidently sincere, and make a powerful appeal to the divine pity. Some men will never pray till they are half starved, and for their best interests it is far better for them to be empty and faint than to be full and stouthearted. If hunger brings us to our knees it is more useful to us than feasting; if thirst drives us to the fountain it is better than the deepest draughts of worldly joys; and if fainting leads to crying it is better than the strength of the mighty,

And he delivered them out of their distresses. Deliverance follows prayer most surely. The cry must have been very feeble, for they were faint, and their faith was as weak as their cry; but yet they were heard, and heard at once. A little delay would have been their death: but there was none, for the Lord was ready to save them. The Lord delights to come in when no one else can be of the slightest avail. The case was hopeless till Jehovah interposed, and then all was changed immediately; the people were shut up, straitened, and almost pressed to death, but enlargement came to them at once when they began to remember their God, and look to him in prayer.
Those deserve to die of hunger who will not so much as ask for bread, and he who being lost in a desert will not beg the aid of a guide cannot be pitied even if he perish in the wilds and feed the vultures with his flesh.

7 And he led them forth by the right way, that they might go to a city of habitation.

107: 7 And he led them forth by the right way. There are many wrong ways, but only one right one, and into this none can lead us but God himself. When the Lord is leader the way is sure to be right; we never need question that. Forth from the pathless mazes of the desert he conducted the lost ones; he found the way, made the way, and enabled them to walk along it, faint and hungry as they were.

That they might go to a city of habitation. The end was worthy of the way: he did not lead them from one desert to another, but he gave the wanderers an abode, the weary ones a place of rest. They found no city to dwell in, but he found one readily enough. What we can do and what God can do are two very different things. What a difference it made to them to leave their solitude for a city, their trackless path for well frequented streets, and their faintness of heart for the refreshment of a home! Far greater are the changes which divine love works in the condition of sinners when God answers their prayers and brings them to Jesus. Shall not the Lord be magnified for such special mercies? Can we who have enjoyed them sit down in ungrateful silence?

8 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

107:8 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness. Men are not mentioned here in the original, but the word is fitly supplied by the translators; the psalmist would have all things in existence magnify Jehovah's name. Surely men will do this without being exhorted to it when the deliverance is fresh in their memories. They must be horrible ingrates who will not honour such a deliverer for so happy a rescue from the most cruel death. It is well that the redeemed should be stirred up to bless the Lord again and again, for preserved life deserves life long thankfulness. Even those who have not encountered the like peril, and obtained the like deliverance, should bless the Lord in sympathy with their fellows, sharing their joy.

And for his wonderful works to the children of men. These favors are bestowed upon our race, upon children of the family to which we belong, and therefore we ought to join in the praise. The children of men are so insignificant, so feeble, and so undeserving, that it is a great wonder that the Lord should do anything for them; but he is not content with doing little works, he puts forth his wisdom, power, and love to perform marvels on the behalf of those who seek him. In the life of each one of the redeemed there is a world of wonders, and therefore from each there should resound a world of praises. As to the marvels of grace which the Lord has wrought for his church as a whole there is no estimating them, they are as high above our thoughts as the heavens are high above the earth. When shall the day dawn when the favored race of man shall be as devoted to the praise of God as they are distinguished by the favour of God?
9 For he satisfieth the longing soul, and filleth the hungry soul with goodness.

107:9 *For he satisfieth the longing soul.* This is the summary of the lost traveler’s experience. He who in a natural sense has been rescued from perishing in a howling wilderness ought to bless the Lord who brings him again to eat bread among men. The spiritual sense is, however, the more rich in instruction. The Lord sets us longing and then completely satisfies us. That longing leads us into solitude, separation, thirst, faintness and self despair, and all these conduct us to prayer, faith, divine guidance, satisfying of the soul's thirst, and rest: the good hand of the Lord is to be seen in the whole process and in the divine result.

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

10 ¶ Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, *being* bound in affliction and iron;

107:10 *Such as sit in darkness and in the shadow of death.* The cell is dark of itself, and the fear of execution casts a still denser gloom over the prison. Such is the cruelty of man to man that tens of thousands have been made to linger in places only fit to be tombs; unhealthy, suffocating, filthy sepulchres, where they have sickened and died of broken hearts. Meanwhile the dread of sudden death has been the most hideous part of the punishment; the prisoners have felt as if the chill shade of death himself froze them to the very marrow. The state of a soul under conviction of sin is forcibly symbolized by such a condition; persons in that state cannot see the promises which would yield them comfort, they sit still in the inactivity of despair, they fear the approach of judgment, and are thereby as much distressed as if they were at death's door.

*Being bound in affliction and iron.* Many prisoners have been thus doubly fettered in heart and hand; or the text may mean that affliction becomes as an iron band to them, or that the iron chains caused them great affliction. None know these things but those who have felt them; we should prize our liberty more if we knew by actual experience what manacles and fetters mean. In a spiritual sense affliction frequently attends conviction of sin, and then the double grief causes a double bondage. In such cases the iron enters into the soul, the poor captives cannot stir because of their bonds, cannot rise to hope because of their grief, and have no power because of their despair. Misery is the companion of all those who are shut up and cannot come forth. O ye who are made free by Christ Jesus, remember those who are in bonds.
Because they rebelled against the words of God, and contemned the counsel of the most High:

107: 11 Because they rebelled against the words of God. This was the general cause of bondage among the ancient people of God, they were given over to their adversaries because they were not loyal to the Lord. God's words are not to be trifled with, and those who venture on such rebellion will bring themselves into bondage.

And contemned the counsel of the Most High. They thought that they knew better than the Judge of all the earth, and therefore they left his ways and walked in their own. When men do not follow the divine counsel they give the most practical proof of their contempt for it. Those who will not be bound by God's law will, ere long, be bound by the fetters of judgment. There is too much contemning of the divine counsel, even among Christians, and hence so few of them know the liberty wherewith Christ makes us free.

12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour; they fell down, and there was none to help.

107: 12 Therefore he brought down their heart with labour. In eastern prisons men are frequently made to labour like beasts of the field. As they have no liberty, so they have no rest. This soon subdues the stoutest heart, and makes the proud boaster sing another tune. Trouble and hard toil are enough to tame a lion. God has methods of abating the loftiness of rebellious looks; the cell and the mill make even giants tremble.

They fell down, and there was none to help. Stumbling on in the dark beneath their weary task, they at last fell prone upon the ground, but no one came to pity them or to lift them up. Their fall might be fatal for aught that any man cared about them; their misery was unseen, or, if observed, no one could interfere between them and their tyrant masters. In such a wretched plight the rebellious Israelite became more lowly in mind, and thought more tenderly of his God and of his offences against him. When a soul finds all its efforts at self salvation prove abortive, and feels that it is now utterly without strength, then the Lord is at work hiding pride from man and preparing the afflicted one to receive his mercy. The spiritual case which is here figuratively described is desperate, and therefore affords the finer field for the divine interposition; some of us remember well how brightly mercy shone in our prison, and what music the fetters made when they fell off from our hands. Nothing but the Lord's love could have delivered us; without it we must have utterly perished.

13 Then they cried unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saved them out of their distresses.

107: 13 Then they cried unto the Lord in their trouble. Not a prayer till then. While there was any to help below they would not look above. No cries till their hearts were brought down and their hopes were all dead—then they cried, but not before.
So many a man offers what he calls prayer when he is in good case and thinks well of himself, but in very deed the only real cry to God is that which is forced out of him by a sense of utter helplessness and misery. We pray best when we are fallen on our faces in painful helplessness.

And he saved them out of their distresses. Speedily and willingly he sent relief. They were long before they cried, but he was not long before he saved. They had applied everywhere else before they came to him, but when they did address themselves to him, they were welcome at once. He who saved men in the open wilderness can also save in the close prison: bolts and bars cannot shut him out, nor long shut in his redeemed ones.

14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and brake their bands in sunder.

107: 14 He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death. The Lord in providence fetches out prisoners from their cells and bids them breathe the sweet fresh air again, and then he takes off their fetters, and gives liberty to their aching limbs. So also he frees men from care and trouble, and especially from the misery and slavery of sin. This he does with his own hand, for in the experience of all the saints it is certified that there is no jail delivery unless by the Judge himself.

And brake their bands in sunder. Set them free by force, so liberating them that they could not be chained again, for he had broken the manacles to pieces. The Lord's deliverances are of the most complete and triumphant kind, he neither leaves the soul in darkness nor in bonds, nor does he permit the powers of evil again to enthrall the liberated captive. What he does is done for ever. Glory be to his name.

15 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

107:15 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. The sight of such goodness makes a right minded man long to see the Lord duly honored for his amazing mercy. When dungeon doors fly open, and chains are snapped, who can refuse to adore the glorious goodness of the Lord? It makes the heart sick to think of such gracious mercies remaining unsung: we cannot but plead with men to remember their obligations and extol the Lord their God.

16 For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of iron in sunder.

107: 16 For he hath broken the gates of brass, and cut the bars of Zion in sunder. This verse belongs to that which precedes it, and Sums up the mercy experienced by captives. The Lord breaks the strongest gates and bars when the time comes to set free his prisoners: and spiritually the Lord Jesus has broken the most powerful of spiritual bonds and made us free indeed. Brass and iron are as tow before the flame of Jesus' love.
The gates of hell shall not prevail against us, neither shall the bars of the grave detain us. Those of us who have experienced his redeeming power must and will praise the Lord for the wonders of his grace displayed on our behalf.

17 ¶ Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted.

107: 17 Fools because of their transgression, and because of their iniquities, are afflicted. Many sicknesses are the direct result of foolish acts. Thoughtless and lustful men by drunkenness, gluttony, and the indulgence of their passions fill their bodies with diseases of the worst kind. Sin is at the bottom of all sorrow, but some sorrows are the immediate results of wickedness: men by a course of transgression afflict themselves and are fools for their pains. Worse still, even when they are in affliction they are fools still; and if they were brayed in a mortar among wheat with a pestle, yet would not their folly depart from them. From one transgression they go on to many iniquities, and while under the rod they add sin to sin. Alas, even the Lord's own people sometimes play the fool in this sad manner.

18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat; and they draw near unto the gates of death.

107: 18 Their soul abhorreth all manner of meat. Appetite departs from men when they are sick: the best of food is nauseous to them, their stomach turns against it. And they draw near unto the gates of death. From want of food, and from the destructive power of their malady, they slide gradually down till they lie at the door of the grave; neither does the skill of the physician suffice to stay their downward progress. As they cannot eat there is no support given to the system, and as the disease rages their little strength is spent in pain and misery. Thus it is with souls afflicted with a sense of sin, they cannot find comfort in the choicest promises, but turn away with loathing even from the gospel, so that they gradually decay into the grave of despair. The mercy is that though near the gates of death they are not yet inside the sepulchre.

19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he saveth them out of their distresses.

107: 19 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble. They join the praying legion at last. Saul also is among the prophets. The fool lays aside his motley in prospect of the shroud, and betakes himself to his knees. What a cure for the soul sickness of body is often made to be by the Lord's grace! And he saveth them out of their distresses. Prayer is as effectual on a sick bed as in the wilderness or in prison; it may be tried in all places and circumstances with certain result.
We may pray about our bodily pains and weaknesses, and we may look for answers too. When we have no appetite for meat we may have an appetite for prayer. He who cannot feed on the word of God may yet turn to God himself and find mercy.

20 He sent his word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions.

107: 20 He sent his word and healed them. Man is not healed by medicine alone, but by the word which proceedeth out of the mouth of God is man restored from going down to the grave. A word will do it, a word has done it thousands of times.

And delivered them from their destructions. They escape though dangers had surrounded them, dangers many and deadly. The word of the Lord has a great delivering power; he has but to speak and the armies of death flee in an instant. Sin sick souls should remember the power of the Word, and be much in hearing it and meditating upon it. Spiritually considered, these verses describe a sin sick soul: foolish but yet aroused to a sense of guilt, it refuses comfort from any and every quarter, and a lethargy of despair utterly paralyses it. To its own apprehension nothing remains but utter destruction in many forms: the gates of death stand open before it, and it is, in its own apprehension, hurried in that direction. Then is the soul driven to cry in the bitterness of its grief unto the Lord, and Christ, the eternal Word, comes with healing power in the direst extremity, saving to the uttermost.

21 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

107: 21 Oh that men would praise the Lord for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men. It is marvelous that men can be restored from sickness and yet refuse to bless the Lord. It would seem impossible that they should forget such great mercy, for we should expect to see both themselves and the friends to whom they are restored uniting in a lifelong act of thanksgiving. Yet when ten are healed it is seldom that more than one returns to give glory to God. Alas, where are the nine? When a spiritual cure is wrought by the great Physician, praise is one of the surest signs of renewed health. A mind rescued from the disease of sin and the weary pains of conviction, must and will adore Jehovah Rophi, the healing God; yet it were well if there were a thousand times as much even of this.

22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving, and declare his works with rejoicing.

107: 22 And let them sacrifice the sacrifices of thanksgiving. In such a case let there be gifts and oblations as well as words. Let the good Physician have his fee of gratitude. Let life become a sacrifice to him who has prolonged it, let the deed of self denying gratitude be repeated again and again: there must be many cheerful sacrifices to celebrate the marvelous boon.
And declare his works with rejoicing. Such things are worth telling, for the personal declaration honors God, relieves ourselves, comforts others, and puts all men in possession of facts concerning the divine goodness which they will not be able to ignore.

23 ¶ They that go down to the sea in ships, that do business in great waters;

107: 23 They that go down to the sea in ships. Navigation was so little practiced among the Israelites that mariners were invested with a high mystery, and their craft was looked upon as one of singular daring degree of and peril. Tales of the sea thrilled all hearts with awe, and he who had been to Ophir or to Tarshish and had returned alive was looked upon as a man of renown, an ancient mariner to be listened to with reverent attention. Voyages were looked on as descending to an abyss, "going down to the sea in ships"; whereas now our bolder and more accustomed sailors talk of the "high seas."

That do business in great waters. If they had not had business to do, they would never have ventured on the ocean, for we never read in the Scriptures of any man taking his pleasure on the sea: so averse was the Israelitish mind to seafaring, that we do not hear of even Solomon himself keeping a pleasure boat. The Mediterranean was "the great sea" to David and his countrymen, and they viewed those who had business upon it with no small degree of admiration.

24 These see the works of the LORD, and his wonders in the deep.

107: 24 These see the works of the LORD. Beyond the dwellers on the land they see the Lord's greatest works, or at least such as stayers at home judge to be so when they hear the report thereof. Instead of the ocean proving to be a watery wilderness, it is full of God's creatures, and if we were to attempt to escape from his presence by flying to the uttermost parts of it, we should only rush into Jehovah's arms, and find ourselves in the very centre of his workshop.

And his wonders in the deep. They see wonders in it and on it. It is in itself a wonder and it swarms with wonders. Seamen, because they have fewer objects around them, are more observant of those they have than landsmen are, and hence they are said to see the wonders in the deep. At the same time, the ocean really does contain many of the more striking of God's creatures, and it is the scene of many of the more tremendous of the physical phenomena by which the power and more majesty of the Lord are revealed among men. The chief wonders alluded to by the Psalmist are a sudden storm and the calm which follows it. All believers have not the same deep experience; but for wise ends, that they may do business for him, the Lord sends some of his saints to the sea of soul trouble, and there they see, as others do not, the wonders of divine grace. Sailing over the deeps of inward depravity, the waste waters of poverty, the billows of persecution, and the rough waves of temptation, they need God above all others, and they find him.

25 For he commandeth, and raiseth the stormy wind, which lifteth up the waves thereof.
For he commandeth: his word is enough for anything, he has but to will it and the tempest rages.

And raiseth the stormy wiled. It seemed to be asleep before, but it knows its Master's bidding, and is up at once in all its fury.

Which liftest up the waves thereof. The glassy surface of the sea is broken, and myriads of white heads appear and rage and toss themselves to and fro as the wind blows upon them. Whereas they were lying down in quiet before, the waves rise in their might and leap towards the sky as soon as the howling of the wind awakens them. Thus it needs but a word from God and the soul is in troubled waters, tossed to and fro with a thousand afflictions. Doubts, fears, terrors, anxieties lift their heads like so many angry waves, when once the Lord allows the storm winds to beat upon us.

26 They mount up to the heaven, they go down again to the depths: their soul is melted because of trouble.

Borne aloft on the crest of the wave, the sailors and their vessels appear to climb the skies, but it is only for a moment, for very soon in the trough of the sea they go down again to the depths. As if their vessel were but a sea bird, the mariners are tossed "up and down, up and down, from the base of the wave to the billow's crown."

Their soul is melted because of trouble. Weary, wet, dispirited, hopeless of escape, their heart is turned to water, and they seem to have no manhood left. Those who have been on the spiritual deep in one of the great storms which occasionally agitate the soul know what this verse means. In these spiritual cyclones presumption alternates with despair, indifference with agony! No heart is left for anything, courage is gone, hope is almost dead. Such an experience is as real as the tossing of a literal tempest and far more painful. Some of us have weathered many such an internal hurricane, and have indeed seen the Lord's wondrous works.

27 They reel to and fro, and stagger like a drunken man, and are at their wits' end.

The violent motion of the vessel prevents their keeping their legs, and their fears drive them out of all power to use their brains, and therefore they look like intoxicated men.

And are at their wit's end. What more can they do? They have used every expedient known to navigation, but the ship is so strained and beaten about that they know not how to keep her afloat. Here too the spiritual mariner's log agrees with that of the sailor on the sea. We have staggered frightfully! We could stand to nothing and hold by nothing. We knew not what to do, and could have done nothing if we had known it. We were as men distracted, and felt as if destruction itself would be better than our horrible state of suspense. As for wit and wisdom, they were clean washed out of us, we felt ourselves to be at a nonplus altogether.
28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble, and he bringeth them out of their distresses.

107: 28 Then they cry unto the LORD in their trouble. Though at their wit's end, they had wit enough to pray; their heart was melted, and it ran out in cries for help. This was well and ended well, for it is written,

And he brought them out of their distresses. Prayer is good in a storm. We may pray staggering and reeling, and pray when we are at our wit's end. God will hear us amid the thunder and answer us out of the storm. He brought their distresses upon the mariners, and therefore they did well to turn to him for the removal of them; nor did they look in vain.

29 He maketh the storm a calm, so that the waves thereof are still.

107: 29 He maketh the storm a calm. He reveals his power in the sudden and marvelous transformations which occur at his bidding. He commanded the storm and now he ordains a calm: God is in all natural phenomena, and we do well to recognize his working.

So that the waves thereof are still. They bow in silence at his feet. Where huge billows leaped aloft there is scarce a ripple to be seen. When God makes peace it is peace indeed, the peace of God which passeth all understanding. He can in an instant change the condition of a man's mind, so that it shall seem an absolute miracle to him that he has passed so suddenly from hurricane to calm. O that the Lord would thus work in the reader, should his heart be storm beaten with outward troubles or inward fears. Lord, say the word and peace will come at once.

30 Then are they glad because they be quiet; so he bringeth them unto their desired haven.

107: 30 Then are they glad because they be quiet. No one can appreciate this verse unless he has been in a storm at sea. No music can be sweeter than the rattling of the chain as the shipmen let down the anchor; and no place seems more desirable than the little cove, or the wide bay, in which the ship rests in peace.

So he bringeth them unto their desired haven. The rougher the voyage the more the mariners long for port, and heaven becomes more and more "a desired haven", as our trials multiply. By storms and by favorable breezes, though tempest and fair weather, the great Pilot and Ruler of the sea brings mariners to port, and his people to heaven. HE must have the glory of the successful voyage of time, and when we are moored in the river of life above we shall take care that his praises are not forgotten. We should long ago have been wrecked if it had not been for his preserving hand, and our only hope of outliving the storms of the future is based upon his wisdom, faithfulness and power. Our heavenly haven shall ring with shouts of grateful joy when once we reach its blessed shore.
31 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men!

107: 31 Oh that men would praise the LORD for his goodness, and for his wonderful works to the children of men! Let the sea sound forth Jehovah's praises because of his delivering grace. As the sailor touches the shore let him lift the solemn hymn to heaven, and let others who see him rescued from the jaws of death unite in his thanksgiving.

32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people, and praise him in the assembly of the elders.

107: 32 Let them exalt him also in the congregation of the people. Thanks for such mercies should be given in public in the place where men congregate for worship.

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

33 ¶ He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the water springs into dry ground;

107: 33 He turneth rivers into a wilderness, and the watersprings into dry ground. When the Lord deals with rebellious men he can soon deprive them of those blessings of which they feel most assured: their rivers and perennial springs they look upon as certain never to be taken from them, but the Lord at a word can deprive them even of these. In hot climates after long droughts streams of water utterly fail, and even springs cease to flow, and this also has happened in other parts of the world when great convulsions of the earth's surface have occurred. In providence this physical catastrophe finds its counterpart when business ceases to yield profit and sources of wealth are made to fail; as also when health and strength are taken away, when friendly aids are withdrawn, and comfortable associations are broken up. So, too, in soul matters, the most prosperous ministries may become dry, the most delightful meditations cease to benefit us, and the most fruitful religious exercises grow void of the refreshment of grace which they formerly yielded. Since

"It is God who lifts our comforts high,  
Or sinks them in the grave".

it behooves us to walk before him with reverential gratitude, and so to live that it may not become imperative upon him to afflict us.
34 A fruitful land into barrenness, for the wickedness of them that dwell therein.

107: 34 A fruitful land into barrenness. This has been done in many instances, and notably in the case of the psalmist's own country, which was once the glory of all lands and is now almost a desert.

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

35 He turneth the wilderness into a standing water, and dry ground into water springs.

107: 35 He turneth the wilderness into a standing water. With another turn of his hand he more than restores that which in judgment he took away. He does his work of mercy on a royal scale, for a deep lake is seen where before there was only a sandy waste. It is not by natural laws, working by some innate force, that this wonder is wrought, but by himself—HE TURNETH.

And dry ground into watersprings. Continuance, abundance, and perpetual freshness are all implied in watersprings, and these are created where all was dry. This wonder of mercy is the precise reversal of the deed of judgment, and wrought by the selfsame hand. Even thus in the church, and in each individual saint, the mercy of the Lord soon works wonderful changes where restoring and renewing grace begin their benign work. O that we might see this verse fulfilled in all around us, and within our own hearts: then would these words serve us for an exclamation of grateful astonishment, and a song of well deserved praise.

36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, that they may prepare a city for habitation;

107: 36 And there he maketh the hungry to dwell, where none could dwell before. They will appreciate the change and prize his grace; as the barrenness of the land caused their hunger so will its fertility banish it for ever, and they will settle down a happy and thankful people to bless God for every handful of corn which the land yields to them. None are so ready to return a revenue of praise to God for great mercies as those who have known the lack of them. Hungry souls make sweet music when the Lord fills them with his gracious gifts. Are we hungry? Or are we satisfied with the husks of this poor, swinish world?
That they may prepare a city for habitation. When the earth is watered and men cultivate it, cities spring up and teem with inhabitants; when grace abounds where sin formerly reigned, hearts find peace and dwell in God's love as in a strong city. The church is built up where once all was a waste when the Lord causes the broad rivers and streams of gospel grace to flow forth.

37 And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase.

107: 37 And sow the fields, and plant vineyards, which may yield fruits of increase. Men work when God works. His blessing encourages the Sower, cheers the planter, and rewards the laborer. Not only necessaries but luxuries are enjoyed, wine as well as corn, when the heavens are caused to yield the needed rain to fill the watercourses. Divine visitations bring great spiritual riches, foster varied works of faith and labours of love, and cause every good fruit to abound to our comfort and to God's praise. When God sends the blessing it does not supersede, but encourages and develops human exertion. Paul plants, Apollos waters, and God gives the increase.

38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease.

107: 38 He blesseth them also, so that they are multiplied greatly; and suffereth not their cattle to decrease. God's blessing is everything. It not only makes men happy, but it makes men themselves, by causing men to be multiplied upon the earth. When the Lord made the first pair he blessed them and said "be fruitful and multiply", and here he restores the primeval blessing. Observe that beasts as well as men fare well when God favors his people: they share with men in the goodness or severity of divine providence. Plagues and pests are warded off from the flock and the herd when the Lord means well towards a people; but when chastisement is intended, the flocks and herds rot from off the face of the earth. O that nations in the day of their prosperity would but own the gracious hand of God, for it is to his blessing that they owe their all.

39 Again, they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow.

107: 39 Again they are minished and brought low through oppression, affliction, and sorrow. As they change in character, so do their circumstances alter. Under the old dispensation, this was very clearly to be observed; Israel's ups and downs were the direct consequences of her sins and repentance. Trials are of various kinds; here we have three words for affliction, and there are numbers more: God has many rods and we have many smarts; and all because we have many sins. Nations and churches soon diminish in number when they are diminished in grace. If we are low in love to God, it is small wonder that he brings us low in other respects. God can reverse the order of our prosperity, and give us a diminuendo where we had a crescendo; therefore let us walk before him with great tenderness of spirit, conscious of our dependence upon his smile.

40 He poureth contempt upon princes, and causeth them to wander in the wilderness, where there is no way.
41 Yet setteth he the poor on high from affliction, and maketh him families like a flock.

Psalm 107: 40-41

In these two verses we see how the Lord at will turns the wheel of providence. Paying no respect to man's imaginary grandeur, he puts princes down and makes them wander in banishment as they had made their captives wander when they drove them from land to land: at the same time, having ever a tender regard for the poor and needy, the Lord delivers the distressed and sets them in a position of comfort and happiness. This is to be seen upon the roll of history again and again, and in spiritual experience we remark its counterpart: the self sufficient are made to despise themselves and search in vain for help in the wilderness of their nature, while poor convicted souls are added to the Lord's family and dwell in safety as the sheep of his fold.

42 The righteous shall see it, and rejoice: and all iniquity shall stop her mouth.

107: 42 The righteous shall see it, and rejoice. Divine providence causes joy to God's true people; they see the hand of the Lord in all things, and delight to study the ways of his justice and of his grace.

And all iniquity shall stop her mouth. What can she say? God's providence is often so conclusive in its arguments of fact, that there is no replying or questioning. It is not long that the impudence of ungodliness can be quiet, but when God's judgments are abroad it is driven to hold its tongue.

43 Whoso is wise, and will observe these things, even they shall understand the loving-kindness of the LORD.

107: 43 Those who notice providence shall never be long without a providence notice. It is wise to observe what the Lord doth, for he is wonderful in counsel; has given us eyes to see with, and it is foolish to close them when there is most to observe; but we must observe wisely, otherwise we may soon confuse ourselves and others with hasty reflections upon the dealings of the Lord. In a thousand ways the loving-kindness of the Lord is shown, and if we will prudently watch, we shall come to a better understanding of it. To understand the delightful attribute of loving-kindness is an attainment as pleasant it is profitable: those who are proficient scholars in this art will be among sweetest singers to the glory of Jehovah.
PSALM 108

A Song or Psalm of David

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

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

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

1 ¶O God, my heart is fixed; I will sing and give praise, even with my glory.

These five verses are found in Psalm 57:7-11 almost verbatim: the only important alteration being the use of the great name of JEHOVAH in Psalm 108:3 instead of Adonai in Psalm 57:9. This the English reader will only be able to perceive by the use of capitals in the present Psalm and not in Psalm 57:7-11. There are other inconsiderable alterations, but the chief point of difference probably lies in the position of the verses. In Psalm 57:7-11 these notes of praise follow prayer and grow out of it; but in this case the psalmist begins at once to sing and give praise, and afterwards prays to God in a remarkably confident manner, so that he seems rather to seize the blessing than to entreat for it. Sometimes we must climb to praise by the ladder of prayer, and at other times we must bless God for the past in order to be able in faith to plead for the present and the future. By the aid of God's Spirit we can both pray ourselves up to praise, or praise the Lord till we get into a fit frame for prayer. In Psalm 57:7-11 these words are a song in the cave of Adullam, and are the result of faith which is beginning its battles amid domestic enemies of the most malicious kind; but here they express the continued resolve and praise of a man who has already weathered many a campaign, has overcome all home conflicts, and is looking forward to conquests far and wide.
The passage served as a fine close for one psalm, and it makes an equally noteworthy opening for another. We cannot too often with fixed heart resolve to magnify the Lord; nor need we ever hesitate to use the same words in drawing near to God, for the Lord who cannot endure vain repetitions is equally weary of vain variations. Some expressions are so admirable that they ought to be used again; who would throw away a cup because he drank from it before? God should be served with the best words, and when we have them they are surely good enough to be used twice. To use the same words continually and never utter a new song would show great slothfulness, and would lead to dead formalism, but we need not regard novelty of language as at all essential to devotion, nor strain after it as an urgent necessity. It may be that our heavenly Father would here teach us that if we are unable to find a great variety of suitable expressions in devotion, we need not in the slightest degree distress ourselves, but may either pray or praise, "using the same words."

108: 1 O God, my heart is fixed. Though I have many wars to disturb me, and many cares to toss me to and fro, yet I am settled in one mind and cannot be driven from it. My heart has taken hold and abides in one resolve. Thy grace has overcome the fickleness of nature, and I am now in a resolute and determined frame of mind.

I will sing and give praise. Both with voice and music will I extol thee—"I will sing and play", as some read it. Even though I have to shout in the battle I will also sing in my soul, and if my fingers must needs be engaged with the bow, yet shall they also touch the ten stringed instrument and show forth thy praise. Even with my glory—with my intellect, my tongue, my poetic faculty, my musical skill, or whatever else causes me to be renowned, and confers honour upon me. It is my glory to be able to speak and not to be a dumb animal, therefore my voice shall show forth thy praise; it is my glory to know God and not to be a heathen, and therefore my instructed intellect shall adore thee; it is my glory to be a saint and no more a rebel, therefore the grace I have received shall bless thee; it is my glory to be immortal and not a mere brute which perisheth, therefore my inmost life shall celebrate thy majesty. When he says I will, he supposes that there might be some temptation to refrain, but this he puts on one side, and with fixed heart prepares himself for the joyful engagement. He who sings with a fixed heart is likely to sing on, and all the while to sing well.

2 Awake, psaltery and harp: I myself will awake early.

108:2 Awake, psaltery and harp. As if he could not be content with voice alone, but must use the well tuned strings, and communicate to them something of his own liveliness. Strings are wonderful things when some men play upon them, they seem to become sympathetic and incorporated with the minstrel as if his very soul were imparted to them and thrilled through them. Only when a thoroughly enraptured soul speaks in the instrument can music be acceptable with God: as mere musical sound the Lord can have no pleasure therein, he is only pleased with the thought and feeling which are thus expressed. When a man has musical gift, he should regard it as too lovely a power to be enlisted in the cause of sin. Well did Charles Wesley say:—
"If well I know the tuneful art
   To captivate a human heart,
   The glory, Lord, be thine.

A servant of thy blessed will,
   I here devote my utmost skill
   To sound the praise divine."

"Thine own musician, Lord, inspire,
   And let my consecrated lyre
   Repeat the Psalmist's part.

His Son and Thine reveal in me,
   And fill with sacred melody
   The fibers of my heart."

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

3 I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people: and I will sing praises unto thee among the nations.

108: 3 I will praise thee, O LORD, among the people. Whoever may come to hear me, devout or profane, believer or heathen, civilized or barbarian, I shall not cease my music. David seemed inspired to foresee that his Psalms would be sung in every land, from Greenland's icy mountains to India's coral strand. His heart was large, he would have the whole race of man listen to his joy in God, and lo, he has his desire, for his psalmody is cosmopolitan; no poet is so universally known as he. He had but one theme, he sang Jehovah and none beside, and his work being thus made of gold, silver, and precious stones, has endured the fiery ordeal of time, and was never more prized than at this day. Happy man, to have thus made his choice to be the Lord's musician, he retains his office as the Poet Laureate of the kingdom of heaven, and shall retain it till the crack of doom.

And I will sing praises unto thee among the nations. This is written, not only to complete the parallelism of the verse, but to reaffirm his fixed resolve. He would march to battle praising Jehovah, and when he had conquered he would make the captured cities ring with Jehovah's praises. He would carry his religion with him wherever he pushed his conquests, and the vanquished should not hear the praises of David, but the glories of the Lord of Hosts. Would to God that wherever professing Christians travel they would carry the praises of the Lord with them! It is to be feared that some leave their religion when they leave their homes.
Nations and peoples would soon know the gospel of Jesus if every Christian traveler were as intensely devout as the Psalmist. Alas, it is to be feared that the Lord's name is profaned rather than honored among the heathen by many who are named by the name of Christ.

4 For thy mercy is great above the heavens: and thy truth reacheth unto the clouds.

108: 4 For thy mercy is great above the heavens, and therefore there must be no limit of time, or place, or people, when that mercy is to be extolled. As the heavens over arch the whole earth, and from above mercy pours down upon men, so shalt thou be praised everywhere beneath the sky. Mercy is greater than the mountains, though they pierce the clouds; earth cannot hold it all, it is so vast, so boundless, so exceeding high that the heavens themselves are over topped thereby.

And thy truth teacheth unto the clouds. As far as we can see we behold thy truth and faithfulness, and there is much beyond which lies shrouded in cloud, but we are sure that it is all mercy, though it be far above and out of our sight. Therefore shall the song be lifted high and the psalm shall peal forth without stint of far resounding music. Here is ample space for the loudest chorus, and a subject which deserves thunders of praise.

5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth;

108: 5 Be thou exalted, O God, above the heavens: and thy glory above all the earth. Let thy praise be according to the greatness of thy mercy. Ah, if we were to measure our devotion thus, with what ardor should we sing! The whole earth with its overhanging dome would seem too scant an orchestra, and all the faculties of all mankind too little for the hallelujah. Angels would be called in to aid us, and surely they would come. They will come in that day when the whole earth shall be filled with the praises of Jehovah. We long for the time when God shall be universally worshipped, and his glory in the gospel shall be everywhere made known. This is a truly missionary prayer. David had none of the exclusiveness of the modern Jew, or the narrow heartedness of some nominal Christians. For God's sake, that his glory might be everywhere revealed, he longed to see heaven and earth full of the divine praise. Amen, so let it be. Now prayer follows upon praise, and derives strength of faith and holy boldness therefrom. It is frequently best to begin worship with a hymn, and then to bring forth our vials full of odours after the harps have commenced their sweeter sounds.

6 ¶ That thy beloved may be delivered: save with thy right hand, and answer me.

108:6 That thy beloved may be delivered: save with thy right hand, and answer me. Let my prayer avail for all the beloved ones. Sometimes a nation seems to hang upon the petitions of one man. With what ardor should such an one pour out his soul! David does so here. It is easy praying for the Lord's beloved, for we feel sure of a favorable answer, since the Lord's heart is already set upon doing them good: yet it is solemn work to plead when we feel that the condition of a whole beloved nation depends upon what the Lord means to do with us whom he has placed in a representative position. "Answer me, that thy many beloved ones may be delivered": 
it is an urgent prayer. David felt that the case demanded the right hand of God,—his wisest, speediest, and most efficient interposition, and he feels sure of obtaining it for himself, since his cause involved the safety of the chosen people. Will the Lord fail to use his right hand of power on behalf of those whom he has set at his right hand of favour? Shall not the beloved be delivered by him who loves them? When our suit is not a selfish one, but is bound up with the cause of God, we may be very bold about it.

7 God hath spoken in his holiness; I will rejoice, I will divide Shechem, and mete out the valley of Succoth.

108:7 God hath spoken in his holiness. Aforetime the Lord had made large promises to David, and these his holiness had guaranteed. The divine attributes were pledged to give the son of Jesse great blessings; there was no fear that the covenant God would run back from his plighted word.

I will rejoice. If God has spoken we may well be glad: the very fact of a divine revelation is a joy. If the Lord had meant to destroy us he would not have spoken to us as he has done. But what God has spoken is a still further reason for gladness, for he has declared "the sure mercies of David", and promised to establish his seed upon his throne, and to subdue all his enemies. David greatly rejoiced after the Lord had spoken to him by the mouth of Nathan. He sat before the Lord in a wonder of joy. See 1Chronicles 17:1-27, and note that in the next chapter David began to act vigorously against his enemies, even as in this Psalm he vows to do.

I will divide Shechem. Home conquests come first. Foes must be dislodged from Israel's territory, and lands properly settled and managed.

And mete out the valley of Succoth. On the other side Jordan as well as on this the land must be put in order, and secured against all wandering marauders. Some rejoicing leads to inaction, but not that which is grounded upon a lively faith in the promise of God. See how David prays, as if he had the blessing already, and could share it among his men: this comes of having sung so heartily unto the Lord his helper. See how he resolves on action, like a man whose prayers are only a part of his life, and vital portions of his action.

8 Gilead is mine; Manasseh is mine; Ephraim also is the strength of mine head; Judah is my lawgiver;

108:8 Gilead is mine. Thankful hearts dwell upon the gifts which the Lord has given them, and think it no task to mention them one by one.

Manasseh is mine. I have it already, and it is to me the token and assurance that the rest of the promised heritage will also come into my possession in due time. If we gratefully acknowledge what we have we shall be in better heart for obtaining that which as yet we have not received. He who gives us Gilead and Manasseh will not fail to put the rest of the promised territory into our hands.
Ephraim also is the strength of mine head. This tribe furnished David with more than twenty thousand "mighty men of valour, famous throughout the house of their fathers": the faithful loyalty of this band was, no doubt, a proof that the rest of the tribe were with him, and so he regarded them as the helmet of the state, the guard of his royal crown.

Judah is my lawgiver. There had he seated the government and chief courts of justice. No other tribe could lawfully govern but Judah: till Shiloh came the divine decree fixed the legal power in that state. To us also there is no lawgiver but our Lord who sprang out of Judah; and whenever Rome, or Canterbury, or any other power shall attempt to set up laws and ordinances for the church, we have but one reply—"Judah is my lawgiver". Thus the royal psalmist rejoiced because his own land had been cleansed of intruders, and a regular government had been set up, and guarded by an ample force, and in all this he found encouragement to plead for victory over his foreign foes. Even thus do we plead with the Lord that as in one land and another Christ's holy gospel has been set up and maintained, so also in other lands the power of his sceptre of grace may be owned till the whole earth shall bow before him, and the Edom of Antichrist shall be crushed beneath his feet.

9 Moab is my washpot; over Edom will I cast out my shoe; over Philistia will I triumph.

108:9 Moab is my washpot. This nation had shown no friendly spirit to the Israelites, but had continually viewed them as a detested rival, therefore they were to be subdued and made subject to David's throne. He claims by faith the victory, and regards his powerful enemy with contempt. Nor was he disappointed, for "the Moabitites became David's servants and brought him gifts" (2Sa 8:2). As men wash their feet after a long journey, and so are revived, so vanquished difficulties serve to refresh us: we use Moab for a washpot.

Over Edom will I cast out my shoe. It shall be as the floor upon which the bather throws his sandals, it shall lie beneath his foot, subject to his will and altogether his own. Edom was proud, but David throws his slipper at it; its capital was high, but he casts his sandal over it; it was strong, but he hurls his shoe at it as the gage of battle. He had not entered yet into its rock built fortresses, but since the Lord was with him he felt sure that he would do so. Under the leadership of the Almighty, he felt so secure of conquering even fierce Edom itself that he looks upon it as a mere slave, over which he could exult with impunity. We ought never to fear those who are defending the wrong side, for since God is not with them their wisdom is folly, their strength is weakness, and their glory is their shame. We think too much of God's foes and talk of them with too much respect. Who is this hope of Rome? His Holiness? Call him not so, but call him His Blasphemy! His Profanity! His Impudence! What are he and his cardinals, and his legates, but the image and incarnation of Antichrist, to be in due time cast with the beast and the false prophet into the lake of fire?

Over Philistia will I triumph. David had done so in his youth, and he is all the more sure of doing it again. We read that "David smote the Philistines and subdued them" (2Sa 8:1), even as he hath smitten Edom and filled it with his garrisons. The enemies with whom we battled in our
youth are yet alive, and we shall have more brushes with them before we die, but, blessed be God, we are by no means dismayed at the prospect, for we expect to triumph over them even more easily than aforetime.

“Thy right hand shall thy people aid;
Thy faithful promise makes us strong;
We will Philistia's land invade.

And over Edom chant the song.
Through thee we shall
most valiant prove,
And tread the foe beneath our feet;

Through thee our faith
shall hills remove,
And small as chaff
the mountains beat.”

10 Who will bring me into the strong city? Who will lead me into Edom?

108:10 Faith leads on to strong desire for the realization of the promise, and hence the practical question,

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

11 Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? And wilt not thou, O God, go forth with our hosts?

108:11 Wilt not thou, O God, who hast cast us off? This is grand faith which can trust the Lord even when he seems to have cast us off. Some can barely trust him when he pampers them, and yet David relied upon him when Israel seemed under a cloud and the Lord had hidden his face. O for more of this real and living faith. The casting off will not last long when faith so gloriously keeps her hold. None but the elect of God who have obtained "like precious faith" can sing—
"Now thou arrayest thine awful face  
In angry frowns, without a smile; 
We, through the cloud, believe thy grace,  
Secure of thy compassion still."

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

12 Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man.

108:12 Give us help from trouble: for vain is the help of man. This prayer has often fallen from the lips of men who have been bitterly disappointed by their fellows, and it has also been poured out unto the Lord in the presence of some gigantic labour in which mortal power is evidently of no avail. Edom cannot be entered by any human power, yet from its fastnesses the robber bands come rushing down; therefore, O Lord, do thou interpose and give thy people deliverance. Help divine is expected because help human is of no avail. We ought to pray with all the more confidence in God when our confidence in man is altogether gone. When the help of man is vain, we shall not find it vain to seek the help of God.

13 Through God we shall do valiantly: for he it is that shall tread down our enemies.

108:13 God's help shall inspire us to help ourselves. Faith is neither a coward nor a sluggard: she knows that God is with her, and therefore she does valiantly; she knows that he will tread down her enemies, and therefore she arises to tread them down in his name. Where praise and prayer have preceded the battle, we may expect to see heroic deeds and decisive victories.

Through God is our secret support; from that source we draw all our courage, wisdom, and strength.

We shall do valiantly. This is the public outflow from that secret source: our inward and spiritual faith proves itself by outward and valorous deeds.

He shall tread down our enemies. They shall fall before him, and as they lie prostrate he shall march over them, and all the hosts of his people with him. This is a prophecy.
It was fulfilled to David, but it remains true to the Son of David and all who are on his side. The Church shall yet arouse herself to praise her God with all her heart, and then with songs and hosannas she will advance to the great battle; her foes shall be overthrown and utterly crushed by the power of her God, and the Lord's glory shall be above all the earth. Send it in our time, we beseech thee, O Lord.
To The Chief Musician. Intended therefore to be sung, and sung in the temple service! Yet is it by no means easy to imagine the whole nation singing such dreadful imprecations. We ourselves, at any rate, under the gospel dispensation, find it very difficult to infuse into the Psalm a gospel sense, or a sense at all compatible with the Christian spirit; and therefore one would think the Jews must have found it hard to chant such strong language without feeling the spirit of revenge excited; and the arousal of that spirit could never have been the object of divine worship in any period of time—under law or under gospel. At the very outset this title shows that the Psalm has a meaning with which it is fitting for men of God to have fellowship before the throne of the Most High: but what is that meaning? This is a question of no small difficulty, and only a very childlike spirit will ever be able to answer it.

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

Unless it can be proved that the religion of the old dispensation was altogether hard, morose, and Draconian, and that David was of a malicious, vindictive spirit, it cannot be conceived that this Psalm contains what one author has ventured to call "a pitiless hate, a refined and insatiable malignity." To such a suggestion we cannot give place, no, not for an hour. But what else can we make of such strong language? Truly this is one of the hard places of Scripture, a passage which the soul trembles to read; yet as it is a Psalm unto God, and given by inspiration, it is not ours to sit in judgment upon it, but to bow our ear to what God the Lord would speak to us therein.

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

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

1 ¶ Hold not thy peace, O God of my praise;

109: 1 Hold not thy peace. Mine enemies speak, be thou pleased to speak too. Break thy solemn silence, and silence those who slander me. It is the cry of a man whose confidence in God is deep, and whose communion with him is very close and bold.

Note,

that he only asks the Lord to speak: a word from God is all a believer needs.

O God of my praise. Thou whom my whole soul praises, be pleased to protect my honour and guard my praise. "My heart is fixed", said he in the former psalm, "I will sing and give praise", and now he appeals to the God whom he had praised. If we take care of God's honour he will take care of ours. We may look to him as the guardian of our character if we truly seek his glory. If we live to God's praise, he will in the long run give us praise among men.

2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me: they have spoken against me with a lying tongue.

109: 2 For the mouth of the wicked and the mouth of the deceitful are opened against me. Wicked men must needs say wicked things, and these we have reason to dread; but in addition they utter false and deceitful things, and these are worst of all. There is no knowing what may come out of mouths which are at once lewd and lying. The misery caused to a good man by slanderous reports no heart can imagine but that which is wounded by them: in all Satan's armoury there are no worse weapons than deceitful tongues. To have a reputation, over which we have watched with daily care, suddenly bespattered with the foulest aspersions, is painful beyond description; but when wicked and deceitful men get their mouths fully opened we can hardly expect to escape any more than others.

They have spoken against me with a lying tongue. Lying tongues cannot lie still. Bad tongues are not content to vilify bad men, but choose the most gracious of saints to be the objects of their attacks. Here is reason enough for prayer. The heart sinks when assailed with slander, for we know not what may be said next, what friend may be alienated, what evil may be threatened, or what misery may be caused to us and others. The air is full of rumours, and shadows impalpable flit around; the mind is confused with dread of unseen foes, and invisible arrows. What ill can be worse than to be assailed with slander.
"Whose edge is sharper
than the sword, whose tongue
Out venoms all the worms of Nile"?

3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred; and fought against me without a cause.

109: 3 They compassed me about also with words of hatred. Turn which way he would they hedged him in with falsehood, misrepresentation, accusation, and scorn. Whispers, sneers, insinuations, satires, and open charges filled his ear with a perpetual buzz, and all for no reason, but sheer hate. Each word was as full of venom as an egg is full of meat: they could not speak without showing their teeth.

And fought against me without a cause. He had not provoked the quarrel or contributed to it, yet in a thousand ways they laboured to "corrode his comfort, and destroy his ease." All this tended to make the suppliant feel the more acutely the wrongs which were done to him.

4 For my love they are my adversaries: but I give myself unto prayer.

109: 4 For my love they are my adversaries. They hate me because I love them. One of our poets says of the Lord Jesus—"Found guilty of excess of love." Surely it was his only fault. Our Lord might have used all the language of this complaint most emphatically—they hated him without a cause and returned him hatred for love. What a smart this is to the soul, to be hated in proportion to the gratitude which it deserved, hated by those it loved, and hated because of its love. This was a cruel case, and the sensitive mind of the psalmist writhed under it.

But give myself unto prayer. He did nothing else but pray. He became prayer as they became malice. This was his answer to his enemies, he appealed from men and their injustice to the Judge of all the earth, who must do right. True bravery alone can teach a man to leave his traducers unanswered, and carry the case unto the Lord.

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

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

5 And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love.

109: 5 And they have rewarded me evil for good, and hatred for my love. Evil for good is devil like. This is Satan's line of action, and his children upon earth follow it greedily; it is cruel, and wounds to the quick. The revenge which pays a man back in his own coin has a kind of natural justice in it; but what shall be said of that baseness which returns to goodness the very opposite of what it has a right to expect?
Our Lord endured such base treatment all his days, and, alas, in his members, endures it still. Thus we see the harmless and innocent man upon his knees pouring out his lamentation: we are now to observe him rising from the mercy seat, inspired with prophetic energy, and pouring forth upon his foes the forewarning of their doom. We shall hear him speak like a judge clothed with stern severity, or like the angel of doom robed in vengeance, or as the naked sword of justice when she bares her arm for execution. It is not for himself that he speaks so much as for all the slandered and the down trodden, of whom he feels himself to be the representative and mouthpiece.

He asks for justice, and as his soul is stung with cruel wrongs he asks with solemn deliberation, making no stint in his demands. To pity malice would be malice to mankind; to screen the crafty seekers of human blood would be cruelty to the oppressed. Nay, love, and truth, and pity lift their wounds to heaven, and implore vengeance on the enemies of the innocent and oppressed; those who render goodness itself a crime, and make innocence a motive for hate, deserve to find no mercy from the great Preserver of men. Vengeance is the prerogative of God, and as it would be a boundless calamity if evil were for ever to go unpunished, so it is an unspeakable blessing that the Lord will recompense the wicked and cruel man, and there are times and seasons when a good man ought to pray for that blessing. When the Judge of all threatens to punish tyrannical cruelty and false hearted treachery, virtue gives her assent and consent. Amen, so let it be, saith every just man in his inmost soul.

6 ¶ Set thou a wicked man over him: and let Satan stand at his right hand.

109: 6 Set thou a wicked man over him. What worse punishment could a man have? The proud man cannot endure the proud, nor the oppressor brook the rule of another like himself. The righteous in their patience find the rule of the wicked a sore bondage; but those who are full of resentful passions, and haughty aspirations, are slaves indeed when men of their own class have the whip hand of them. For Herod to be ruled by another Herod would be wretchedness enough, and yet what retribution could be more just? What unrighteous man can complain if he finds himself governed by one of like character? What can the wicked expect but that their rulers should be like themselves? Who does not admire the justice of God when he sees fierce Romans ruled by Tiberius and Nero, and Red Republicans governed by Marat and Robespierre?

And let Satan stand at his right hand. Should not like come to like? Should not the father of lies stand near his children? Who is a better right hand friend for an adversary of the righteous than the great adversary himself? The curse is an awful one, but it is most natural that it should come to pass: those who serve Satan may expect to have his company, his assistance, his temptations, and at last his doom.

Special Note

Tiberius refers to Tiberius Caesar Augustus, born Tiberius Claudius Nero (November 16, 42 BC – March 16, AD 37). He was the second emperor of Rome following the death of Augustus in AD 14. Tiberius ruled until his own death in AD 37.
Nero, whose real name was Lucius Domitius Ahenobarbus became emperor of Rome following the death of Claudius in AD 54. He committed suicide on June 9, AD.

Marat. Jean-Paul Marat (May 24, 1743- July 13, 1793) was a French scientist and physician though born a Swiss. He is best known for his participation in the French Revolution. Marat advocated violent actions against all political enemies including the infamous massacre in September, 1792. He helped to promote the Reign of Terror and drafted “death lists.” He was stabbed to death in his bathtub by Charlotte Corday.

Robespierre was born Maximilien François Marie Isidore de Robespierre on May 6, 1758. He died on July 28, 1794 he was guillotined, face up and screaming in pain from an injured jaw. During his life Robespierre gave himself to advocating the French Revolution and promoting the Reign of Terror that characterized that Revolution. His arrest and execution in 1794 put an end to the Terror. S.E.M.

7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned: and let his prayer become sin.

109: 7 When he shall be judged, let him be condemned. He judged and condemned others in the vilest manner, he suffered not the innocent to escape; and it would be a great shame if in his time of trial, being really guilty, he should be allowed to go free. Who would wish Judge Jeffries to be acquitted if he were tried for perverting justice? Who would desire Nero or Caligula to be cleared if set at the bar for cruelty? When Shylock goes into court, who wishes him to win his suit?

And let his prayer become sin. It is sin already, let it be so treated. To the injured it must seem terrible that the black hearted villain should nevertheless pretend to pray, and very naturally do they beg that he may not be heard, but that his pleadings may be regarded as an addition to his guilt. He has devoured the widow's house, and yet he prays. He has put Naboth to death by false accusation and taken possession of his vineyard, and then he presents prayers to the Almighty. He has given up villages to slaughter, and his hands are red with the blood of babes and maidens, and then he pays his vows unto Allah! He must surely be accursed himself who does not wish that such abominable prayers may be loathed of heaven and written down as new sins. He who makes it a sin for others to pray will find his own praying become sin. When he at last sees his need of mercy, mercy herself shall resent his appeal as an insult. "Because that he remembered not to show mercy", he shall himself be forgotten by the God of grace, and his bitter cries for deliverance shall be regarded as mockeries of heaven.

Special Note

Judge Jeffries refers to George Jeffreys, 1st Baron Jeffreys of Wem, England. He was born on May 15, 1645 and died April 18, 1689. He is better known as "The Hanging Judge". He became notorious during the reign of King James II, rising to the position of Lord Chancellor and serving as Lord High Steward in certain instances. He was notorious for perverting justice. He was eventually arrested himself by political enemies and died un lamented in the Tower of London.

Caligula. Gaius Julius Caesar Augustus Germanicus (August 31, 12 – January 24, 41) is better known as Caligula.
He was the third emperor of Rome as a member of the Judio-Claudian dynasty. He ruled from AD 37 to AD 41. Caligula was known for his extreme extravagance, eccentricity, depravity and cruelty. In short he was a despot. He was assassinated in AD 41 by several of his own guards.

**Shylock** is central character in William Shakespear’s *The Merchant of Venice*. As the play unfolds Shylock is a moneylender during a time in the late 16th century in which Jews, despised as “usurers” in Christian communities for charging interest on loans were relegated to ghettos. Shylock has a grudge against all Christians, particularly a rival merchant, Antonio. When Antonio comes to him for a loan to finance his friend Bassanio’s journey to Belmont, Shylock offers to lend the money at no rate of interest. Instead he proposes as his bond a pound of flesh cut from Antonio's body should he default. Antonio agrees, thinking the proposal to be a terrible joke. However, when the ships carrying Antonio's investments sink, Shylock is determined he should receive his pound of flesh as agreed, even though it would kill Antonio. S.E.M.

8 Let his days be few; and let another take his office.

109: 8 *Let his days be few.* Who would desire a persecuting tyrant to live long? As well might we wish length of days to a mad dog. If he will do nothing but mischief the shortening of his life will be the lengthening of the world's tranquility. "Bloody and deceitful men shall not live out half their days",—this is bare justice to them, and great mercy to the poor and needy.

*And let another take his office.* Perhaps a better man may come, at any rate it is time a change were tried. So used were the Jews to look upon these verses as the doom of traitors, of cruel and deceitful mind, that Peter saw at once in the speedy death of Judas a fulfillment of this sentence, and a reason for the appointment of a successor who should take his place of oversight. A bad man does not make an office bad: another may use with benefit that which he perverted to ill uses.

9 Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.

109: 9 *Let his children be fatherless, and his wife a widow.* This would inevitably be the case when the man died, but the psalmist uses the words in an emphatic sense, he would have his widow "a widow indeed", and his children so friendless as to be orphaned in the bitterest sense. He sees the result of the bad man's decease, and includes it in the punishment. The tyrant's sword makes many children fatherless, and who can lament when his barbarities [cruel actions] come home to his own family, and they too, weep and lament. Pity is due to all orphans and widows as such, but a father's atrocious actions may dry up the springs of pity. Who mourns that Pharaoh's children lost their father, or that Sennacherib's wife became a widow? As Agag's sword had made women childless none wept when Samuel's weapon made his mother childless among women. If Herod had been slain when he had just murdered the innocents at Bethlehem no man would have lamented it even though Herod's wife would have become a widow. These awful maledictions are not for common men to use, but for judges, such as David was, to pronounce over the enemies of God and man. A judge may sentence a man to death whatever the consequences may be to the criminal's family, and in this there will be no feeling of private revenge, but simply the doing of justice because evil must be punished.
We are aware that this may not appear to justify the full force of these expressions, but it should never be forgotten that the case supposed is a very execrable one, and the character of the culprit is beyond measure loathsome and not to be met by any common abhorrence. Those who regard a sort of effeminate benevolence to all creatures alike as the acme of virtue are very much in favour with this degenerate age; these look for the salvation of the damned, and even pray for the restoration of the devil. It is very possible that if they were less in sympathy with evil, and more in harmony with the thoughts of God, they would be of a far sterner and also of a far better mind. To us it seems better to agree with God's curses than with the devil's blessings; and when at any time our heart kicks against the terrors of the Lord we take it as a proof of our need of greater humbling, and confess our sin before our God.

10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg: let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places.

109: 10 Let his children be continually vagabonds, and beg. May they have neither house nor home, settlement nor substance; and while they thus wander and beg may it ever be on their memory that their father's house lies in ruins,—

let them seek their bread also out of their desolate places. It has often been so: a race of tyrants has become a generation of beggars. Misused power and abused wealth have earned the family name universal detestation, and secured to the family character an entail of baseness. Justice herself would award no such doom except upon the supposition that the sin descended with the blood; but supreme providence which in the end is pure justice has written many a page of history in which the imprecation of this verse has been literally verified. We confess that as we read some of these verses we have need of all our faith and reverence to accept them as the voice of inspiration; but the exercise is good for the soul, for it educates our sense of ignorance, and tests our teachability. Yes, Divine Spirit, we can and do believe that even these dread words from which we shrink have a meaning consistent with the attributes of the Judge of all the earth, though his name is LOVE. How this may be we shall know hereafter.

11 Let the extortioner catch all that he hath; and let the strangers spoil his labour.

109: 11 Let the extortioner catch all that he hath. A doom indeed. Those who have once fallen into the hands of the usurer can tell you what this means: it were better to be a fly in the web of a spider. In the most subtle, worrying, and sweeping manner the extortioner takes away, piece by piece, his victim's estate, till not a fraction remains to form a pittance for old age. Baiting his trap, watching it carefully, and dexterously driving his victim into it, the extortioner by legal means performs unlawful deeds, catches his bird, strips him of every feather, and cares not if he die of starvation. He robs with law to protect him, and steals with the magistrate at his back: to fall into his clutches is worse than to be beset by professed thieves.

And let the strangers spoil his labour,—so that his kindred may have none of it. What with hard creditors and pilfering strangers the estate must soon vanish! Extortion drawing one way, and spoliation the other, a known moneylender and an unknown robber both at work, the man's substance would soon disappear, and rightly so, for it was gathered by shameless means.
This too has been frequently seen. Wealth amassed by oppression has seldom lasted to the third generation: it was gathered by wrong and by wrong it is scattered, and who would decree that it should be otherwise? Certainly those who suffer beneath high handed fraud will not wish to stay the retribution of the Almighty, nor would those who see the poor robbed and trampled on desire to alter the divine arrangements by which such evils are recompensed even in this life.

12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him: neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children.

109: 12 Let there be none to extend mercy unto him. He had no mercy, but on the contrary, he crushed down all who appealed to him. Loath to smite him with his own weapon, stern justice can do no otherwise, she lifts her scales and sees that this, too, must be in the sentence.

Neither let there be any to favour his fatherless children. We are staggered to find the children included in the father's sentence, and yet as a matter of fact children do suffer for their father's sins, and, as long as the affairs of this life are ordered as they are, it must be so. So involved are the interests of the race, that it is quite impossible in all respects to view the father and the child apart. No man among us could desire to see the fatherless suffer for their deceased father's fault, yet so it happens, and there is no injustice in the fact. They share the parent's ill gotten gain or rank, and their aggrandizement is a part of the object at which he aimed in the perpetration of his crimes; to allow them to prosper would be an encouragement and reward of his iniquity; therefore, for these and other reasons, a man perishes not alone in his iniquity. The ban is on his race. If the man were innocent this would be a crime; if he were but commonly guilty it would be excessive retribution; but when the offence reeks before high heaven in unutterable abomination, it is little marvel that men devote the man's whole house to perpetual infamy, and that so it happeneth.

13 Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out.

109: 13 Let his posterity be cut off; and in the generation following let their name be blotted out. Both from existence and from memory let them pass away till none shall know that such a vile brood ever existed. Who wishes to see the family of Domitian or Julian continued upon earth? Who would mourn if the race of Tom Paine or of Voltaire should come to an utter end? It would be undesirable that the sons of the utterly villainous and bloodthirsty should rise to honour, and if they did they would only revive the memory of their father's sins.

Special Note

Domitian refers to Titus Flavius Domitianus. He lived from October 24, AD 51 to September 18, AD 96. Domitian was an emperor of Rome of the Flavian Dynasty being the son of Vespasian by his wife Domitilla. He was the brother of Titus, whom he succeeded in AD 81. Domitian was cruel and mentally unstable.
Julian, Flavius Claudius Iulianus (June 331 – June 26, 363) was the emperor of Rome from AD 361-363. He was of the Constantinian dynasty. Because it was believed he abandoned his Christian upbringing he was called Julian the Apostate by the Christian community. He tried to restore the traditional worship of the Roman gods as a measure to stop the decay of his world. S.E.M.

14 Let the iniquity of his fathers be remembered with the LORD; and let not the sin of his mother be blotted out.

109: 14 This verse is, perhaps, the most terrible of all, but yet as a matter of fact children do procure punishment upon their parents' sins, and are often themselves the means of such punishment. A bad son brings to mind his father's bad points of character; people say, "Ah, he is like the old man. He takes after his father." A mother's sins also will be sure to be called to mind if her daughter becomes grossly wicked. "Ah", they will say, "there is little wonder, when you consider what her mother was." These are matters of everyday occurrence. We cannot, however, pretend to explain the righteousness of this malediction, though we fully believe in it. We leave it till our heavenly Father is pleased to give us further instruction. Yet, as a man's faults are often learned from his parents, it is not unjust that his consequent crimes should recoil upon him.

15 Let them be before the LORD continually, that he may cut off the memory of them from the earth.

109: 15 Again, he wishes that his father's sins may follow up the transgressor and assist to fill the measure of his own iniquities, so that for the whole accumulated load the family may be smitten with utter extinction. A king might justly wish for such an end to fall upon an incorrigible brood of rebels; and of persecutors, continuing in the same mind, the saints might well pray for their extinction; but the passage is dark; and we must leave it so. It must be right or it would not be here, but how we cannot see. Why should we expect to understand all things? Perhaps it is more for our benefit to exercise humility, and reverently worship God over a hard text, than it would be to comprehend all mysteries.

16 Because that he remembered not to shew mercy, but persecuted the poor and needy man, that he might even slay the broken in heart.

109: 16 Because that he remembered not to shew mercy. Because he had no memory to show mercy the Judge of all will have a strong memory of his sins. So little mercy had he ever shown that he had forgotten how to do it, he was without common humanity, devoid of compassion, and therefore only worthy to be dealt with after the bare rule of justice.

But persecuted the poor and needy man. He looked on poor men as a nuisance upon the earth, he ground their faces, oppressed them in their wages, and treated them as the mire of the streets. Should he not be punished, and in his turn laid low? All who know him are indignant at his brutalities, and will glory to see him overthrown.
That he might even slay the broken in heart. He had malice in his heart towards one who was already sufficiently sorrowful, whom it was a superfluity of malignity to attack. Yet no grief excited sympathy in him, no poverty ever moved him to relent. No, he would kill the heart broken and rob their orphans of their patrimony. To him groans were music, and tears were wine, and drops of blood precious rubies. Would any man spare such a monster? Will it not be serving the ends of humanity if we wish him gone, gone to the throne of God to receive his reward? If he will turn and repent, well: but if not, such a up as tree ought to be felled and cast into the fire. As men kill mad dogs if they can, and justly too, so may we lawfully wish that cruel oppressors of the poor were removed from their place and office, and, as an example to others, made to smart for their barbarities.

17 As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him: as he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him.

109: 17 As he loved cursing, so let it come unto him. Deep down in every man's soul the justice of the lex talionis [law of retaliation] is established. Retaliation, not for private revenge, but as a measure of public justice, is demanded by the psalmist and deserved by the crime. Surely the malicious man cannot complain if he is judged by his own rule, and has his corn measured with his own bushel. Let him have what he loved. They are his own chickens, and they ought to come home to roost. He made the bed, let him lie on it himself. As he brewed, so let him drink. So all men say as a matter of justice, and though the higher law of love overrides all personal anger, yet as against the base characters here described even Christian love would not wish to see the sentence mitigated.

As he delighted not in blessing, so let it be far from him. He felt no joy in any man's good, nor would he lift a hand to do another a service, rather did he frown and fret when another prospered or mirth was heard under his window; what, then, can we wish him? Blessing was wasted on him, he hated those who gently sought to lead him to a better mind; even the blessings of providence he received with murmurs and repinings, he wished for famine to raise the price of his corn, and for war to increase his trade. Evil was good to him, and good he counted evil. If he could have blasted every field of corn in the world he would have done so if he could have turned a penny by it, or if he could thereby have injured the good man whom he hated from his very soul. What can we wish for him? He hunts after evil, he hates good; he lays himself out to ruin the godly whom God has blessed, he is the devil's friend, and as fiendish as his patron; should things go well with such a being? Shall we "wish him good luck in the name of the Lord?" To invoke blessings on such a man would be to participate in his wickedness, therefore let blessing be far from him, so long as he continues what he now is.

18 As he clothed himself with cursing like as with his garment, so let it come into his bowels like water, and like oil into his bones.

19 Let it be unto him as the garment which covereth him, and for a girdle wherewith he is girded continually.
Psalm 109: 18-19

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

20 Let this be the reward of mine adversaries from the LORD, and of them that speak evil against my soul.

109: 20 This is the summing up of the entire imprecation, and fixes it upon the persons who had so maliciously assailed the inoffensive man of God. David was a man of gentle mould, and remarkably free from the spirit of revenge, and therefore we may here conceive him to be speaking as a judge or as a representative man, in whose person great principles needed to be vindicated and great injuries redressed. Thousands of God's people are perplexed with this psalm, and we fear we have contributed very little towards their enlightenment, and perhaps the notes we have gathered from others, since they display such a variety of view, may only increase the difficulty. What then? Is it not good for us sometimes to be made to feel that we are not yet able to understand all the word and mind of God? A thorough bewilderment, so long as it does not stagger our faith, may be useful to us by confounding our pride, arousing our faculties, and leading us to cry, "What I know not teach thou me."

21 ¶ But do thou for me, O GOD the Lord, for thy name's sake: because thy mercy is good, deliver thou me.

109: 21 But do thou for me, O God the Lord, for thy name's sake. How eagerly he turns from his enemies to his God! He sets the great THOU in opposition to all his adversaries, and you see at once that his heart is at rest. The words are very indistinct and though our version may not precisely translate them, yet it in a remarkable manner hits upon the sense and upon the obscurity which hangs over it. "Do thou for me"—what shall he do? Why, do whatever he thinks fit. He leaves himself in the Lord's hands, dictating nothing, but quite content so long as his God will but undertake for him. His plea is not his own merit, but the name. The saints have always felt this to be their most mighty plea. God himself has performed his grandest deeds of grace for the honour of his name, and his people know that this is the most potent argument with him. What the Lord himself has guarded with sacred jealousy we should reverence with our whole hearts and rely upon without distrust.

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

**109: 22 For I am poor and needy.** When he does plead anything about himself he urges not his riches or his merits, but his poverty and his necessities: this is gospel supplication, such as only the Spirit of God can incite upon the heart. This lowliness does not comport with the supposed vengeful spirit of the preceding verses: there must therefore be some interpretation of them which would make them suitable in the lips of a lowly minded man of God.

*And my heart is wounded within me.* The Lord has always a tender regard to broken hearted ones, and such the psalmist had become: the undeserved cruelty, the baseness, the slander of his remorseless enemies had pierced him to the soul, and this sad condition he pleads as a reason for speedy help. It is time for a friend to step in when the adversary cuts so deep. The case has become desperate without divine aid; now, therefore, is the Lord's time.

23 I am gone like the shadow when it declineth: I am tossed up and down as the locust.

**109: 23 I am gone like the shadow when it declineth.** I am a mere shadow, a shadow at the vanishing point, when it stretches far, but is almost lost in the universal gloom of evening which settles over all, and so obliterates the shadows cast by the setting sun. Lord, there is next to nothing left of me, wilt thou not come in before I am quite gone?

*I am tossed up and down as the locust,* which is the sport of the winds, and must go up or down as the breeze carries it. The psalmist felt as powerless in his distress as a poor insect, which a child may toss up and down at its pleasure. He entreats the divine pity, because he had been brought to this forlorn and feeble condition by the long persecution which his tender heart had endured. Slander and malice are apt to produce nervous disorders and to lead on to pining diseases. Those who use these poisoned arrows are not always aware of the consequences; they scatter fire brands and death and say it is sport.

24 My knees are weak through fasting; and my flesh faileth of fatness.

**109: 24 My knees are weak through fasting;** either religious fasting, to which he resorted in the dire extremity of his grief, or else through loss of appetite occasioned by distress of mind. Who can eat when every morsel is soured by envy? This is the advantage of the slanderer, that he feels nothing himself, while his sensitive victim can scarcely eat a morsel of bread because of his sensitiveness. However, the good God knoweth all this, and will succor his afflicted. The Lord who bids *us* confirm the feeble knees will assuredly do it himself.

*And my flesh faileth of fatness.* He was wasted to a skeleton, and as his body was emaciated, so was his soul bereft of comfort: he was pining away, and all the while his enemies saw it and laughed at his distress. How pathetically he states his case; this is one of the truest forms of prayer, the setting forth of our sorrow before the Lord. Weak knees are strong with God, and failing flesh has great power in pleading.
25 I became also a reproach unto them: when they looked upon me they shaked their heads.

**109: 25 I became also a reproach unto them.** They made him the theme of ridicule, the butt of their ribald jests: his emaciation by fasting made him a tempting subject for their caricatures and lampoons.

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

26 Help me, O LORD my God: O save me according to thy mercy:

**109: 26 Help me, O LORD my God.** Laying hold of Jehovah by the appropriating word my, he implores his aid both to help him to bear his heavy load and to enable him to rise superior to it. He has described his own weakness, and the strength and fury of his foes, and by these two arguments he urges his appeal with double force. This is a very rich, short, and suitable prayer for believers in any situation of peril, difficulty, or sorrow.

**O save me according to thy mercy.** As thy mercy is, so let thy salvation be. The measure is a great one, for the mercy of God is without bound. When man has no mercy it is comforting to fall back upon God's mercy. Justice to the wicked is often mercy to the righteous, and because God is merciful he will save his people by overthrowing their adversaries.

27 That they may know that this is thy hand; that thou, LORD, hast done it.

**109: 27 That they may know that this is thy hand.** Dolts as they are, let the mercy shown to me be so conspicuous that they shall be forced to see the Lord's agency in it. Ungodly men will not see God's hand in anything if they can help it, and when they see good men delivered into their power they become more confirmed than ever in their atheism; but all in good time God will arise and so effectually punish their malice and rescue the object of their spite that they will be compelled to say like the Egyptian magicians, "this is the finger of God."

**That thou, LORD, hast done it.** There will be no mistaking the author of so thorough a vindication, so complete a turning of the tables.

28 Let them curse, but bless thou: when they arise, let them be ashamed; but let thy servant rejoice.
28 Let them curse, but bless thou, or, they will curse and thou wilt bless. Their cursing will then be of such little consequence that it will not matter a straw. One blessing from the Lord will take the poison out of ten thousand curses of men.

When they arise, let them be ashamed. They lift up themselves to deal out another blow, to utter another falsehood, and to watch for its injurious effects upon their victim, but they see their own defeat and are filled with shame.

But let thy servant rejoice. Not merely as a man protected and rescued, but as God's servant in whom his master's goodness and glory are displayed when he is saved from his foes. It ought to be our greatest joy that the Lord is honored in our experience; the mercy itself ought not so much to rejoice us as the glory which is thereby brought to him who so graciously bestows it.

29 Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame, and let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle.

Let mine adversaries be clothed with shame. It is a prophecy as well as a wish, and may be read both in the indicative and the imperative. Where sin is the underclothing, shame will soon be the outer vesture. He who would clothe good men with contempt shall himself be clothed with dishonour.

And let them cover themselves with their own confusion, as with a mantle. Let their confusion be broad enough to wrap them all over from head to foot, let them bind it about them and hide themselves in it, as being utterly afraid to be seen. Now they walk abroad unblushingly and reveal their own wickedness, acting as if they either had nothing to conceal or did not care whether it was seen or no; but they will be of another mind when the great Judge deals with them, then will they entreat mountains to hide them and hills to fall upon them, that they may not be seen: but all in vain, they must be dragged to the bar with no other covering but their own confusion.

30 I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth; yea, I will praise him among the multitude.

I will greatly praise the LORD with my mouth. Enthusiastically, abundantly, and loudly will he extol the righteous Lord, who redeemed him from all evil; and that not only in his own chamber or among his own family, but in the most public manner.

Yea, I will praise him among the multitude. Remarkable and public providence demand public recognition, for otherwise men of the world will judge us to be ungrateful. We do not praise God to be heard of men, but as a natural sense of justice leads every one to expect to hear a befriended person speak well of his benefactor, we therefore have regard to such natural and just expectations, and endeavor to make our praises as public as the benefit we have received. The singer in the present case is the man whose heart was wounded within him because he was the
laughing stock of remorseless enemies; yet now he praises, praises greatly, praises aloud, praises in the teeth of all gainsayers, and praises with a right joyous spirit. Never let us despair, yea, never let us cease to praise.

31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor, to save him from those that condemn his soul.

109: 31 For he shall stand at the right hand of the poor. God will not be absent when his people are on their trial; he will hold a brief for them and stand in court as their advocate, prepared to plead on their behalf. How different is this from the doom of the ungodly who has Satan at his right hand (Psalm 109:6).

To save him from those that condemn his soul. The court only met as a matter of form, the malicious had made up their minds to the verdict, they judged him guilty, for their hate condemned him, yea, they pronounced sentence of damnation upon the very soul of their victim: but what mattered it? The great King was in court, and their sentence was turned against themselves. Nothing can more sweetly sustain the heart of a slandered believer than the firm conviction that God is near to all who are wronged, and is sure to work out their salvation. O Lord, save us from the severe trial of slander: deal in thy righteousness with all those who spitefully assail the characters of holy men, and cause all who are smarting under calumny and reproach to come forth unsullied from the affliction, even as did thine only begotten Son. Amen.
PSALM 110

A Psalm of David

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

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

1 ¶The LORD said unto my Lord, Sit thou at my right hand, until I make thine enemies thy footstool.
2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion: rule thou in the midst of thine enemies.

110:2 The LORD shall send the rod of thy strength out of Zion. It is in and through the church that for the present the power of the Messiah is known. Jehovah has given to Jesus all authority in the midst of his people, whom he rules with his royal sceptre, and this power goes forth with divine energy from the church for the ingathering of the elect, and the subduing of all evil. We have need to pray for the sending out of the rod of divine strength. It was by his rod that Moses smote the Egyptians, and wrought wonders for Israel, and even so whenever the Lord Jesus sends forth the rod of his strength, our spiritual enemies are overcome. There may be an allusion here to Aaron's rod which budded and so proved his power; this was laid up in the ark, but our Lord's rod is sent forth to subdue his foes. This promise began to be fulfilled at Pentecost, and it continues even to this day, and shall yet have a grander fulfillment. O God of eternal might, let the strength of our Lord Jesus be more clearly seen, and let the nations see it as coming forth out of the midst of thy feeble people, even from Zion, the place of thine abode.
Rule thou in the midst of thine enemies as he does whenever his mighty sceptre of grace is stretched forth to renew and save them. Moses' rod brought water out of the flinty rock, and the gospel of Jesus soon causes repentance to flow in rivers from the once hardened heart of man. Or the text may mean that though the church is situated in the midst of a hostile world, yet it exerts a great influence, it continues to manifest an inward majesty, and is after all the ruling power among the nations because the shout of a king is in her midst. Jesus, however hated by men, is still the King of kings. His rule is over even the most unwilling, so as to overrule their fiercest opposition to the advancement of Iris cause. Jesus, it appears from this text, is not inactive during his session at Jehovah's right hand, but in his own way proves the abiding nature of his kingdom both in Zion and from Zion, both among his friends and his foes. We look for the clearer manifestation of his almighty power in the latter days; but even in these waiting times we rejoice that to the Lord all power is given in heaven and in earth.

3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth.

110:3 Thy people shall be willing in the day of thy power, in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning: thou hast the dew of thy youth. In consequence of the sending forth of the rod of strength, namely, the power of the gospel, out of Zion, converts will come forward in great numbers to enlist under the banner of the Priest King. Given to him of old, they are his people, and when his power is revealed, these hasten with cheerfulness to own his sway, appearing at the gospel call as it were spontaneously, even as the dew comes forth in the morning.

This metaphor is further enlarged upon, for as the dew has a sparkling beauty, so these willing armies of converts have a holy excellence and charm about them; and as the dew is the lively emblem of freshness, so are these converts full of vivacity and youthful vigor, and the church is refreshed by them and made to flourish exceedingly. Let but the gospel be preached with divine unction, and the chosen of the Lord respond to it like troops in the day of the mustering of armies; they come arrayed by grace in shining uniforms of holiness, and for number, freshness, beauty, and purity, they are as the dewdrops which come mysteriously from the tooming's womb. Some refer this passage to the resurrection, but even if it be so, the work of grace in regeneration is equally well described by it, for it is a spiritual resurrection.

Even as the holy dead rise gladly into the lovely image of their Lord, so do quickened souls put on the glorious righteousness of Christ, and stand forth to behold their Lord and serve him. How truly beautiful is holiness! God himself admires it. How wonderful also is the eternal youth of the mystical body of Christ! As the dew is new every morning, so is there a constant succession of converts to give to the church perpetual juvenility. Her young men have a dew from the Lord upon them, and arouse in her armies an undying enthusiasm for him whose “locks are bushy and black as a raven” with unfailing youth. Since Jesus ever lives, so shall his church ever flourish. As his strength never faileth, so shall the vigor of his true people be renewed day by day. As he is a Priest King, so are his people all priests and kings, and the beauties of holiness are their priestly dress, their garments for glory and for beauty; of these priests unto God there shall be an unbroken succession. The realization of this day of power during the time of the Lord's tarrying
is that which we should constantly pray for; and we may legitimately expect it since he ever sits in the seat of honour and power, and puts forth his strength, according to his own word, "My Father worketh hitherto, and I work."

4 The LORD hath sworn, and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek.

110: 4 We have now reached the heart of the psalm, which is also the very centre and soul of our faith. Our Lord Jesus is a Priest King by the ancient oath of Jehovah: "he glorified not himself to be made an high priest, "but was ordained there unto from of old, and was called of God an high priest after the order of Melchizedek. It must be a solemn and a sure matter which leads the Eternal to swear, and with him an oath fixes and settles the decree for ever; but in this case, as if to make assurance a thousand times sure, it is added, " and will not repent." It is done, and done for ever and ever; Jesus is sworn in to be the priest of his people, and he must abide so even to the end, because his commission is sealed by the unchanging oath of the immutable Jehovah. If his priesthood could be revoked, and his authority removed, it would be the end of all hope and life for the people whom he loves; but this sure rock is the basis of our security—the oath of God establishes our glorious Lord both in his priesthood and in his throne. It is the Lord who has constituted him a priest for ever, he has done it by oath, that oath is without repentance, is taking effect now, and will stand throughout all ages: hence our security in him is placed beyond all question. The declaration runs in the present tense as being the only time with the Lord, and comprehending all other times.

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

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

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

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

5 ¶ The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath.

110:5 The Lord at thy right hand shall strike through kings in the day of his wrath. Now that he has come into the field of action, the infinite Jehovah comes with him as the strength of his right hand. Eternal power attends the coming of the Lord, and earthly power dies before it as though smitten through with a sword. In the last days all the kingdoms of the earth shall be overcome by the kingdom of heaven, and those who dare oppose shall meet with swift and overwhelming ruin. What are kings when they dare oppose the Son of God? A single stroke shall suffice for their destruction. When the angel of the Lord smote Herod there was no need of a second blow; he was eaten of worms and gave up the ghost. Concerning the last days, we read of the Faithful and True, who shall ride upon a white horse, and in righteousness judge and make war: "Out of his mouth goeth a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treadeth the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God."

6 He shall judge among the heathen, he shall fill the places with the dead bodies; he shall wound the heads over many countries.

110:6 He shall judge among the heathen, or, among the nations. All nations shall feel his power, and either yield to it joyfully or be crushed before it.

He shall fill the places with the dead bodies. In the terrible battles of his gospel all opponents shall fall till the field of fight is heaped high with the slain. This need not be understood literally, but as a poetical description of the overthrow of all rebellious powers and the defeat of all unholy principles. Yet should kings oppose the Lord with weapons of war, the result would be their overwhelming defeat and the entire destruction of their forces. Read in connection with this prophecy the passage which begins at the seventeenth verse of Revelation 19:1 and runs on to the end of the chapter. Terrible things in righteousness will be seen ere the history of this world comes to an end.
He shall wound the heads over many countries. He will strike at the greatest powers which resist him, and wound not merely common men, but those who rule and reign. If the nations will not have Christ for their Head, they shall find their political heads to be powerless to protect them. Or the passage may be read, "he has smitten the head over the wide earth." The monarch of the greatest nation shall not be able to escape the sword of the Lord; nor shall that dread spiritual prince who rules over the children of disobedience be able to escape without a deadly wound. Pope and priest must fall, with Mahomet and other deceivers who are now heads of the people. Jesus must reign and they must perish.

7 He shall drink of the brook in the way: therefore shall he lift up the head.

110: 7 He shall drink of the brook in the way. So swiftly shall he march to conquest that he shall not stay for refreshment, but drink as he hastens on. Like Gideon's men that lapped, he shall throw his heart into the fray and cut it short in righteousness, because a short work will the Lord make in the earth.

Therefore shall he lift up the head. His own head shall be lifted high in victory, and his people, in him, shall be upraised also. When he passed this way before, he was burdened and had stern work laid upon him; but in his second advent he will win an easy victory; aforetime he was the man of sorrows, but when he comes a second time his head will be lifted in triumph. Let his saints rejoice with him. "Lift up your heads, for your redemption draweth nigh." In the latter days we look for terrible conflicts and for a final victory. Long has Jesus borne with our rebellious race, but at length he wilt rise to end the warfare of longsuffering, by the blows of justice. God has fought with men's sins for their good, but he will not always by his Spirit strive with men; he will cease from that struggle of long suffering love, and begin another which shall soon end in the final destruction of his adversaries. O King priest, we who are, in a minor degree, king priests too, are full of gladness because thou reignest even now, and wilt come ere long to vindicate thy cause and establish thine empire for ever. Even so, come quickly. Amen.
TITLE. There is no title to this psalm, but it is an alphabetical hymn of praise, having for its
subject the works of the Lord in creation, providence, and grace. The sweet singer dwells upon
the one idea that God should be known by his people, and that this knowledge when turned into
practical piety is man's true wisdom, and the certain cause of lasting adoration. Many are
ignorant of what their Creator has done, and hence they are foolish in heart, and silent as to the
praises of God: this evil can only be removed by a remembrance of God's works, and a diligent
study of them; to this, therefore, the psalm is meant to arouse us. It may be called The Psalm of
God's Works intended to excite us to the work of praise.

DIVISION. The psalmist begins with an invitation to praise, Psalm 111:1; and then proceeds to
furnish us with matter for adoration in God's works and his dealings with his people, Psalm
111:2-9. He closes his song with a commendation of the worship of the Lord, and of the men
who practice it.

1 ¶ Praise ye the LORD. I will praise the LORD with my
whole heart, in the
assembly of the upright, and in the congregation.

111:1 Praise ye the LORD, or, Hallelujah! All ye his saints unite in adoring Jehovah, who
worketh so gloriously. Do it now, do it always: do it heartily, do it unanimously, do it eternally.
Even if others refuse, take care that ye have always a song for your God. Put away all doubt,
question, murmuring, and rebellion, and give yourselves up to the praising of Jehovah, both with
your lips and in your lives.

I will praise the Load with my whole heart. The sweet singer commences the song, for his heart
is all on flame: whether others will follow him or not, he will at once begin and long continue.
What we preach we should practice. The best way to enforce an exhortation is to set an example;
but we must let that example be of the best kind, or we may lead others to do the work in a
limping manner. David brought nothing less than his whole heart to the duty; all his love went
out towards God, and all his zeal, his skill, and his ardor went with it. Jehovah the one and
undivided God cannot be acceptably praised with a divided heart, neither should we attempt so to
dishonour him; for our whole heart is little enough for his glory, and there can be no reason why
it should not all be lifted up in his praise. All his works are praiseworthy, and therefore all our
nature should adore him.

In the assembly of the upright, and in the congregation;—whether with few or with many he
would pour forth his whole heart and soul in praise, and whether the company was made up of
select spirits or of the general mass of the people he would continue in the same exercise. For the
choicest society there can be no better engagement than praise, and for the general assembly
nothing can be more fitting. For the church and for the congregation, for the family or the
community, for the private chamber of pious friendship, or the great hall of popular meeting, the
praise of the Lord is suitable; and at the very least the true heart should sing hallelujah in any and
every place. Why should we fear the presence of men? The best of men will join us in our song,
and if the common sort, will not do so, our example will be a needed rebuke to them. In any case
let us praise God, whether the hearers be a little band of saints or a mixed multitude. Come, dear
reader, he who pens this comment is in his heart magnifying the Lord: will you not pause for a
moment and join in the delightful exercise?
2 The works of the LORD are great, sought out of all them that have pleasure therein.

111: 2 The works of the LORD are great. In design, in size, in number, in excellence, all the works of the Lord are great. Even the little things of God are great. In some point of view or other each one of the productions of his power, or the deeds of his wisdom, will appear to be great to the wise in heart.

Sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. Those who love their Maker delight in his handiwork, they perceive that there is more in them than appears upon the surface, and therefore they bend their minds to study and understand them. The devout naturalist ransacks nature, the earnest student of history pricks into hidden facts and dark stories, and the man of God digs into the mines of Scripture, and hoards up each grain of its golden truth. God's works are worthy of our researches, they yield us instruction and pleasure wonderfully blended, and they grow upon, appearing to be far greater, after investigation than before. Men's works are noble from a distance; God's works are great when sought out. Delitzsch reads the passage, "Worthy of being sought after in all their purposes," and this also is a grand truth, for the end and design which God hath in all that he makes or does is equally admirable with the work itself. The hidden wisdom of God is the most marvelous part of his works, and hence those who do not look below the surface miss the best part of what he would teach us. Because the works are great they cannot be seen all at once, but must be looked into with care, and this seeking out is of essential service to us by educating our faculties, and strengthening our spiritual eye gradually to bear the light of the divine glory. It is well for us that all things cannot be seen at a glance, for the search into their mysteries is as useful to us as the knowledge which we thereby attain. The history of the Lord's dealings with his people is especially a fit subject for the meditation of reverent minds who find therein a sweet solace, and a never failing source of delight.

3 His work is honourable and glorious: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

111:3 His work is honourable and glorious. His one special work, the salvation of his people, is here mentioned as distinguished from his many other works. This reflects honour and glory upon him. It is deservedly the theme of the highest praise, and compels those who understand it and experience it to ascribe all honour and glory unto the Lord. Its conception, its sure foundations, its gracious purpose, its wise arrangements, its gift of Jesus as Redeemer, its application of redemption by the Holy Ghost in regeneration and sanctification, and all else which make up the one glorious whole, all redound to the infinite honour of Him who contrived and carried out so astounding a method of salvation. No other work can be compared with it: it honors both the Saviour and the saved, and while it brings glory to God it also brings us to glory. There is none like the God of Jeshurun, and there is no salvation like that which he has wrought for his people.

And his righteousness endureth for ever. In the work of grace righteousness is not forgotten, nor deprived of its glory; rather, it is honored in the eyes of the intelligent universe. The bearing of guilt by our great Substitute proved that not even to effect the purposes of his grace would the Lord forget his righteousness; no future strain upon his justice can ever be equal to that which it
has already sustained in the bruising of his dear Son; it must henceforth assuredly endure for ever. Moreover, the righteousness of God in the whole plan can never now be suspected of failure, for all that it requires is already performed, its demands are satisfied by the double deed of our Lord in enduring the vengeance due, and in rendering perfect obedience to the law. Caprice does not enter into the government of the Lord, the rectitude of it is and must for ever be beyond all question. In no single deed of God can unrighteousness be found, nor shall there ever be: this is the very glory of his work, and even its adversaries cannot gainsay it. Let believers, therefore, praise him evermore, and never blush to speak of that work which is so honourable and glorious.

4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered: the LORD is gracious and full of compassion.

**111:4 He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered.** He meant them to remain in the recollection of his people, and they do so: partly because they are in themselves memorable, and because also he has taken care to record them by the pen of inspiration, and has written them upon the hearts of his people by his Holy Spirit. By the ordinances of the Mosaic law, the coming out of Egypt, the sojourn in the wilderness, and other memorabilia of Israel's history were constantly brought before the minds of the people, and their children were by such means instructed in the wonders which God had wrought in old time. Deeds such as God has wrought are not to be admired for an hour and then forgotten, they are meant to be perpetual signs and instructive tokens to all coming generations; and especially are they designed to confirm the faith of his people in the divine love, and to make them know that the Lord is gracious and full of compassion. They need not fear to trust his grace for the future, for they remember it in the past. Grace is as conspicuous as righteousness in the great work of God, yea, a fullness of tender love is seen in all that he has done. He treats his people with great consideration for their weakness and infirmity; having the same pity for them as a father hath towards his children. Should we not praise him for this? A silver thread of loving-kindness runs through the entire fabric of God's work of salvation and providence, and never once is it left out in the whole piece. Let the memories of his saints bear witness to this fact with grateful joy.

5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him: he will ever be mindful of his covenant.

**111:5 He hath given meat unto them that fear him.** Or spoil, as some read it, for the Lord's people both in coming out of Egypt and at other times have been enriched from their enemies. Not only in the wilderness with manna, but everywhere else by his providence he has supplied the necessities of his believing people. Somewhere or other they have had food convenient for them, and that in times of great scarcity. As for spiritual meat, that has been plentifully furnished them in Christ Jesus; they have been fed with the finest of the wheat, and made to feast on royal dainties. His word is as nourishing to the soul as bread to the body, and there is such an abundance of it that no heir of heaven shall ever be famished. Truly the fear of the Lord is wisdom, since it secures to a man the supply of all that he needs for soul and body.
He will ever be mindful of his covenant. He could not let his people lack meat because he was in covenant with them, and they can never want in the future, for he will continue to act upon the terms of that covenant. No promise of the Lord shall fall to the ground, nor will any part of the great compact of eternal love be revoked or allowed to sink into oblivion. The covenant of grace is the plan of the great work which the Lord works out for his people, and it will never be departed from: the Lord has set his hand and seal to it, his glory and honour are involved in it, yea, his very name hangs upon it, and he will not even in the least jot or tittle cease to be mindful of it. Of this the feeding of his people is the pledge: he would not so continually supply their needs if he meant after all to destroy them. Upon this most blessed earnest let us settle our minds; let us rest in the faithfulness of the Lord, and praise him with all our hearts every time that we eat bread or feed upon his word.

6 ¶ He hath shewed his people the power of his works, that he may give them the heritage of the heathen.

111: 6 He hath shewed his people the power of his works. They have seen what he is able to do and what force he is prepared to put forth on their behalf. This power Israel saw in physical works, and we in spiritual wonders, for we behold the matchless energy of the Holy Ghost and feel it in our own souls. In times of dire distress the Lord has put forth such energy of grace that we have been astonished at his power; and this was part of his intent in bringing us into such conditions that he might reveal to us the arm of his strength. Could we ever have known it so well if we had not been in pressing need of his help? We may well turn this verse into a prayer and ask to see more and more the power of the Lord at work among us in these latter days. O Lord, let us now see how mightily thou canst work in the saving of sinners and in preserving and delivering thine own people.

That he may give them the heritage of the heathen. He put forth all his power to drive out the Canaanites and bring in his people. Even thus may it please his infinite wisdom to give to his church the heathen for her inheritance in the name of Jesus. Nothing but great power can effect this, but it will surely be accomplished in due season.

7 The works of his hands are verity and judgment; all his commandments are sure.

111:7 The works of his hands are verity and judgment. Truth and justice are conspicuous in all that Jehovah does. Nothing like artifice or crooked policy can ever be seen in his proceedings; he acts faithfully and righteously towards his people, and with justice and impartiality to all mankind. This also should lead us to praise him, since it is of the utmost advantage to us to live under a sovereign whose laws, decrees, acts, and deeds are the essence of truth and justice.

All his commandments are sure. All that he has appointed or decreed shall surely stand, and his precepts which he has proclaimed shall be found worthy of our obedience, for surely they are founded in justice and are meant for our lasting good.
He is no fickle despot, commanding one thing one day and another another, but his commands remain absolutely unaltered, their necessity equally unquestionable, their excellence permanently proven, and their reward eternally secure. Take the word commandments to relate either to his decrees or his precepts, and we have in each case an important sense; but it seems more in accordance with the connection to take the first sense and consider the words to refer to the ordinances, appointments, or decrees of the great King.

“Whatever the mighty Lord decrees,  
Shall stand for ever sure.  
The settled purpose of his heart  
To ages shall endure.”

8 They stand fast for ever and ever, and are done in truth and uprightness.

111: 8 They stand fast for ever and ever. That is to say, his purposes, commands, and courses of action. The Lord is not swayed by transient motives, or moved by the circumstances of the hour; immutable principles rule in the courts of Jehovah, and he pursues his eternal purposes without the shadow of a turning. Our works are too often as wood, hay, and stubble, but his doings are as gold, silver, and precious stones. We take up a purpose for a while and then exchange it for another, but he is of one mind, and none can turn him: he acts in eternity and for eternity, and hence what he works abides for ever. Much of this lasting character arises out of the fact which is next mentioned, namely, that they

are done in truth and uprightness. Nothing stands but that which is upright. Falsehood soon vanishes, for it is a mere show, but truth has salt in it which preserves it from decay. God always acts according to the glorious principles of truth and integrity, and hence there is no need of alteration or revocation; his works will endure till the end of time.

9 He sent redemption unto his people: he hath commanded his covenant for ever: holy and reverend is his name.

111:9 He sent redemption unto his people. When they were in Egypt he sent not only a deliverer, but an actual deliverance; not only a redeemer, but complete redemption. He has done the like spiritually for all his people, having first by blood purchased them out of the hand of the enemy, and then by power rescued them from the bondage of their sins. Redemption we can sing of as an accomplished act: it has been wrought for us, sent to us, and enjoyed by us, and we are in very deed the Lord's redeemed.

He hath commanded his covenant for ever. His divine decree has made the covenant of his grace a settled and eternal institution: redemption by blood proves that the covenant cannot be altered, for it ratifies and establishes it beyond all recall. This, too, is reason for the loudest praise. Redemption is a fit theme for the heartiest music, and when it is seen to be connected with gracious engagements from which the Lord's truth cannot swerve, it becomes a subject fitted to arouse the soul to an ecstasy of gratitude. Redemption and the covenant are enough to make the tongue of the dumb sing.
Holy and reverend is his name. Well may he say this. The whole name or character of God is worthy of profoundest awe, for it is perfect and complete, whole or holy. It ought not to be spoken without solemn thought, and never heard without profound homage. His name is to be trembled at, it is something terrible; even those who know him best rejoice with trembling before him. How good men can endure to be called "reverend" we know not. Being unable to discover any reason why our fellow men should reverence us, we half suspect that in other men there is not very much which can entitle them to be called reverend, very reverend, right reverend, and so on. It may seem a trifling matter, but for that very reason we would urge that the foolish custom should be allowed to fall into disuse.

10 The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all they that do his commandments: his praise endureth for ever.
PSALM 112

TITLE AND SUBJECT. There is no title to this psalm, but it is evidently a companion to the hundred and eleventh, and, like it, it is an alphabetical psalm. Even in the number of verses, and clauses of each verse, it coincides with its predecessor, as also in many of its words and phrases. The reader should carefully compare the two psalms line by line. The subject of the poem before us is—the blessedness of the righteous man, and so it bears the same relation to the preceding which the moon does to the sun; for, while the first declares the glory of God, the second speaks of the reflection of the divine brightness in men born from above. God is here praised for the manifestation of his glory which is seen in his people, just as in the preceding psalm he was magnified for his own personal acts. The hundred and eleventh speaks of the great Father, and this describes his children renewed after his image. The psalm cannot be viewed as the extolling of man, for it commences with *Praise ye the Lord;* "and it is intended to give to God all the honour of his grace which is manifested in the sons of God.

DIVISION. The subject is stated in the first verse, and enlarged upon under several heads from 2 to 9. The blessedness of the righteousness is set forth by contrast with the fate of the ungodly in verse 10.

1 ¶ Praise ye the LORD. Blessed is the man that feareth the LORD, that delighteth greatly in his commandments.

112: 1 *Praise ye the LORD.* This exhortation is never given too often; the Lord always deserves praise, we ought always to render it, we are frequently forgetful of it, and it is always well to be stirred up to it. The exhortation is addressed to all thoughtful persons who observe the way and manner of life of men that fear the Lord. If there be any virtue, if there be any praise, the Lord should have all the glory of it, for we are his workmanship.

*Blessed is the man that feareth the Lord.* According to the last verse of Psalm 111, the fear of the Lord *is the beginning of wisdom;* this man, therefore, has begun to be wise, and wisdom has brought him present happiness, and secured him eternal felicity. Jehovah is so great that he is to be feared and had in reverence of all them that are round about him, and he is at the same time so infinitely good that the fear is sweetened into filial love, and becomes a delightful emotion, by no means engendering bondage. There is a slavish fear which is accursed; but that godly fear which leads to delight in the service of God is infinitely blessed. Jehovah is to be praised both for inspiring men with godly fear and for the blessedness which they enjoy in consequence thereof. We ought to bless God for blessing any man, and especially for setting the seal of his approbation upon the godly. His favour towards the God fearing displays his character and encourages gracious feelings in others, therefore let him be praised.

*That delighteth greatly in his commandments.* The man not only studies the divine precepts and endeavors to observe them, but rejoices to do so: holiness is his happiness, devotion is his delight, truth is his treasure. He rejoices in the precepts of godliness, yea, and delights greatly in them. We have known hypocrites rejoice in the doctrines, but never in the commandments. Ungodly men may in some measure obey the commandments out of fear, but only a gracious man will observe them with delight. Cheerful obedience is the only acceptable obedience; he
who obeys reluctantly is disobedient at heart, but he who takes pleasure in the command is truly loyal. If through divine grace we find ourselves described in these two sentences, let us give all the praise to God, for he hath wrought all our works in us, and the dispositions out of which they spring. Let self righteous men praise themselves, but he who has been made righteous by grace renders all the praise to the Lord.

2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth: the generation of the upright shall be blessed.

112:2 His seed shall be mighty upon earth, that is to say, successive generations of God fearing men shall be strong and influential in society, and in the latter days they shall have dominion. The true seed of the righteous are those who follow them in their virtues, even as believers are the seed of Abraham, because they imitate his faith; and these are the real heroes of their era, the truly great men among the sons of Adam; their lives are sublime, and their power upon their age is far greater than at first sight appears. If the promise must be regarded as alluding to natural seed, it must be understood as a general statement rather than a promise made to every individual, for the children of the godly are not all prosperous, nor all famous. Nevertheless, he who fears God, and leads a holy life, is, as a rule, doing the best he can for the future advancement of his house; no inheritance is equal to that of an unblemished name, no legacy can excel the benediction of a saint; and, taking matters for all in all, the children of the righteous man commence life with greater advantages than others, and are more likely to succeed in it, in the best and highest sense.

The generation of the upright shall be blessed. The race of sincere, devout, righteous men, is kept up from age to age, and ever abides under the blessing of God. The godly may be persecuted, but they shall not be forsaken; the curses of men cannot deprive them of the blessing of God, for the words of Balaam are true, "He hath blessed, and I cannot reverse it." Their children also are under the special care of heaven, and as a rule it shall be found that they inherit the divine blessing. Honesty and integrity are better cornerstones for an honourable house than mere cunning and avarice, or even talent and push. To fear God and to walk uprightly is a higher nobility than blood or birth can bestow.

3 Wealth and riches shall be in his house: and his righteousness endureth for ever.

112:3 Wealth and riches shall be in his house. Understood literally this is rather a promise of the old covenant than of the new, for many of the best of the people of God are very poor; yet it has been found true that uprightness is the road to success, and, all other things being equal, the honest man is the rising man. Many are kept poor through knavery and profligacy; but godliness hath the promise of the life that now is. If we understand the passage spiritually it is abundantly true. What wealth can equal that of the love of God? What riches can rival a contented heart? It matters nothing that the roof is thatched, and the floor is of cold stone: the heart which is cheered with the favour of heaven is "rich to all the intents of bliss."
And his righteousness endureth for ever. Often when gold comes in the gospel goes out; but it is not so with the blessed man. Prosperity does not destroy the holiness of his life, or the humility of his heart. His character stands the test of examination, overcomes the temptations of wealth, survives the assaults of slander, outlives the afflictions of time, and endures the trial of the last great day. The righteousness of a true saint endureth for ever, because it springs from the same root as the righteousness of God, and is, indeed, the reflection of it. So long as the Lord abideth righteous he will maintain by his grace the righteousness of his people. They shall hold on their way, and wax stronger and stronger. There is also another righteousness which belongs to the Lord's chosen, which is sure to endure for ever, namely, the imputed righteousness of the Lord Jesus, which is called "everlasting righteousness," belonging as it does to the Son of God himself, who is "the Lord our righteousness."

4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness: he is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous.

112:4 Unto the upright there ariseth light in the darkness. He does not lean to injustice in order to ease himself, but like a pillar stands erect, and he shall be found so standing when the ungodly, who are as a bowing wall and a tottering fence, shall lie in ruins. He will have his days of darkness, he may be sick and sorry, poor and pining, as well as others; his former riches may take to themselves wings and fly away, while even his righteousness may be cruelly suspected; thus the clouds may lower around him, but his gloom shall not last for ever, the Lord will bring him light in due season, for as surely as a good man's sun goes down it shall rise again. If the darkness be caused by depression of spirit, the Holy Ghost will comfort him; if by pecuniary loss or personal bereavement, the presence of Christ shall be his solace; and if by the cruelty and malignity of men, the sympathy of his Lord shall be his support. It is as ordinary for the righteous to be comforted as for the day to dawn. Wait for the light and it will surely come; for even if our heavenly Father should in our last hours put us to bed in the dark, we shall find it morning when we awake.

He is gracious, and full of compassion, and righteous. This is spoken of God in the fourth verse of the hundred and eleventh Psalm, and now the same words are used of his servant: thus we are taught that when God makes a man upright, he makes him like himself. We are at best but humble copies of the great original; still we are copies, and because we are so we praise the Lord, who hath created us anew in Christ Jesus. The upright man is "gracious," that is, full of kindness to all around him; he is not sour and churlish, but he is courteous to friends, kind to the needy, forgiving to the erring, and earnest for the good of all. He is also "full of compassion"; that is to say, he tenderly feels for others, pities them, and as far as he can assists them in their time of trouble. He does not need to be driven to benevolence, he is brimful of humanity; it is his joy to sympathize with the sorrowing. He is also said to be "righteous": in all his transactions with his fellow men he obeys the dictates of right, and none can say that he goes beyond or defrauds his neighbour. His justice is, however, tempered with compassion, and seasoned with graciousness. Such men are to be found in our churches, and they are by no means so rare as the censorious imagine; but at the same time they are far scarcer than the breadth of profession might lead us to hope. Lord, make us all to possess these admirable qualities.
5 A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth: he will guide his affairs with discretion.

112:5 A good man sheweth favour, and lendeth. Having passed beyond stern integrity into open handed benevolence he looks kindly upon all around him, and finding himself in circumstances which enable him to spare a little of his wealth he lends judiciously where a loan will be of permanent service. Providence has made him able to lend, and grace makes him willing to lend. He is not a borrower, for God has lifted him above that necessity; neither is he a hoarder, for his new nature saves him from that temptation; but he wisely uses the talents committed to him.

He will guide his affairs with discretion. Those who neglect their worldly business must not plead religion as an excuse, for when a man is truly upright he exercises great care in managing his accounts, in order that he may remain so. It is sometimes hard to distinguish between indiscretion and dishonesty; carelessness in business may become almost as great an evil to others as actual knavery; a good man should not only be upright, but he should be so discreet that no one may have the slightest reason to suspect him of being otherwise. When the righteous man lends he exercises prudence, not risking his all, for fear he should not be able to lend again, and not lending so very little that the loan is of no service. He drives his affairs, and does not allow them to drive him; his accounts are straight and clear, his plans are wisely laid, and his modes of operation carefully selected. He is prudent, thrifty, economical, sensible, judicious, discreet. Men call him a fool for his religion, but they do not find him so when they come to deal with him. “The beginning of wisdom” has made him wise, the guidance of heaven has taught him to guide his affairs, and with half an eye one can see that he is a man of sound sense. Such persons greatly commend godliness. Alas, some professedly good men act as if they had taken leave of their senses; this is not religion, but stupidity. True religion is sanctified common sense. Attention to the things of heaven does not necessitate the neglect of the affairs of earth; on the contrary, he who has learned how to transact business with God ought to be best able to do business with men. The children of this world often are in their generation wiser than the children of light, but there is no reason why this proverb should continue to be true.

6 ¶ Surely he shall not be moved for ever: the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance.

112: 6 Surely he shall not be moved for ever. God has rooted and established him so that neither men nor devils shall sweep him from his place. His prosperity shall be permanent, and not like that of the gambler and the cheat, whose gains are evanescent: his reputation shall be bright and lustrous from year to year, for it is not a mere pretence; his home shall be permanent, and he shall not need to wander from place to place as a bird that wanders from her nest; and even his memory shall be abiding, for a good man is not soon forgotten, and

the righteous shall be in everlasting remembrance. They are of a most ancient family, and not mushrooms of an hour, and their grand old stock shall be found flourishing when all the proud houses of ungodly men shall have faded into nothing. The righteous are worth remembering, their
actions are of the kind which record themselves, and God himself takes charge of their memorials. None of us likes the idea of being forgotten, and yet the only way to avoid it is to be righteous before God.

7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings: his heart is fixed, trusting in the LORD.

112:7 He shall not be afraid of evil tidings. He shall have no dread that evil tidings will come, and he shall not be alarmed when they do come. Rumours and reports he despises; prophecies of evil, vented by fanatical mouths, he ridicules; actual and verified information of loss and distress he bears with equanimity, resigning everything into the hands of God.

His heart is fixed, trusting in the Lord. He is neither fickle nor cowardly; when he is undecided as to his course he is still fixed in heart: he may change his plan, but not the purpose of his soul. His heart being fixed in solid reliance upon God, a change in his circumstances but slightly affects him; faith has made him firm and steadfast, and therefore if the worst should come to the worst, he would remain quiet and patient, waiting for the salvation of God.

8 His heart is established, he shall not be afraid, until he see his desire upon his enemies.

112:8 His heart is established. His love to God is deep and true, his confidence in God is firm and unmoved; his courage has a firm foundation, and is supported by Omnipotence. He has become settled by experience, and confirmed by years. He is not a rolling stone, but a pillar in the house of the Lord.

He shall not be afraid. He is ready to face any adversary—a holy heart gives a brave face.

Until he see his desire upon his enemies. All through the conflict, even till he seizes the victory, he is devoid of fear. When the battle wavers, and the result seems doubtful, he nevertheless believes in God, and is a stranger to dismay. Grace makes him desire his enemies’ good: though nature leads him to wish to see justice done to his cause, he does not desire for those who injure him anything by way of private revenge.

9 He hath dispersed, he hath given to the poor; his righteousness endureth for ever; his horn shall be exalted with honour.

112:9 He hath dispersed, he hath given, to the poor. What he received, he distributed; and distributed to those who most needed it. He was God's reservoir, and forth from his abundance flowed streams of liberality to supply the needy. If this be one of the marks of a man who feareth the Lord, there are some who are strangely destitute of it. They are great at gathering, but very slow at dispersing; they enjoy the blessedness of receiving, but seldom taste the greater joy of giving. "It is more blessed to give than to receive"—perhaps they think that the blessing of receiving is enough for them.
His righteousness endureth for ever. His liberality has salted his righteousness, proved its reality, and secured its perpetuity. This is the second time that we have this remarkable sentence applied to the godly man, and it must be understood as resulting from the enduring mercy of the Lord. The character of a righteous man is not spasmodic, he is not generous by fits and starts, nor upright in a few points only; his life is the result of principle, his actions flow from settled, sure, and fixed convictions, and therefore his integrity is maintained when others fail. He is not turned about by companions, nor affected by the customs of society; he is resolute, determined, and immovable.

His horn shall be exalted with honour. God shall honour him, the universe of holy beings shall honour him, and even the wicked shall feel an unconscious reverence of him. Let it be observed, in summing up the qualities of the God fearing man, that he is described not merely as righteous, but as one bearing the character to which Paul refers in the memorable verse, "For scarcely for a righteous man will one die: yet peradventure for a good man some would even dare to die." Kindness, benevolence, and generosity, are essential to the perfect character; to be strictly just is not enough, for God is love, and we must love our neighbour as ourselves: to give every one his due is not sufficient, we must act upon those same principles of grace which reign in the heart of God. The promises of establishment and prosperity are not to churlish Nabals, nor to niggard Labans, but to bountiful souls who have proved their fitness to be stewards of the Lord by the right way in which they use their substance.

10 The wicked shall see it, and be grieved; he shall gnash with his teeth, and melt away: the desire of the wicked shall perish.

112:10 The tenth and last verse sets forth very forcibly the contrast between the righteous and the ungodly, thus making the blessedness of the godly appear all the more remarkable. Usually we see Ebal and Gerizim, the blessing and the curse, set the one over against the other, to invest both with the greater solemnity.

The wicked shall see it, and be grieved. The ungodly shall first see the example of the saints to their own condemnation, and shall at last behold the happiness of the godly and to the increase of their eternal misery. The child of wrath shall be obliged to witness the blessedness of the righteous, though the sight shall make him gnaw his own heart. He shall fret and fume, lament and wax angry, but he shall not be able to prevent it, for God's blessing is sure and effectual.

He shall gnash with his teeth. Being very wrathful, and exceedingly envious, he would fain grind the righteous between his teeth; but as he cannot do that, he grinds his teeth against each other.

And melt away. The heat of his passion shall melt him like wax, and the sun of God's providence shall dissolve him like snow, and at the last the fire of divine vengeance shall consume him as the fat of rams. How horrible must that life be which like the snail melts as it proceeds, leaving a slimy trail behind. Those who are grieved at goodness deserve to be worn away by such an abominable sorrow.
**The desire of the wicked shall perish.** He shall not achieve his purpose, he shall die a disappointed man. By wickedness he hoped to accomplish his purpose—that very wickedness shall be his defeat. While the righteous shall endure for ever, and their memory shall be always green; the ungodly man and his name shall rot from off the face of the earth. He desired to be the founder of a family, and to be remembered as some great one: he shall pass away and his name shall die with him. How wide is the gulf which separates the righteous from the wicked, and how different are the portions which the Lord deals out to them. O for grace to be blessed of the Lord! This will make us praise him with our whole heart.
PSALM 113

TITLE AND SUBJECT. This Psalm is one of pure praise, and contains but little which requires exposition; a warm heart full of admiring adoration of the Most High will best of all comprehend this sacred hymn. Its subject is the greatness and condescending goodness of the God of Israel, as exhibited in lifting up the needy from their low estate. It may fitly be sung by the church during a period of revival after it has long been minished and brought low. With this Psalm begins the Hallel, or Hallelujah of the Jews, which was sung at their solemn feasts: we will therefore call it THE COMMENCEMENT OF THE HALLEL

Dr. Alfred Edersheim [1825-1889] tells us that the Talmud [an authoritative record of rabbinic discussions of Jewish law, ethics, customs, and stories in Jewish tradition] dwells upon the peculiar suitableness of the Hallel to the Passover, "since it not only recorded the goodness of God towards Israel, but especially their deliverance from Egypt, and therefore appropriately opened with Praise ye Jehovah, ye servants of Jehovah, —and no longer servants of Pharaoh." Its allusions to the poor in the dust and the needy upon the dunghill are all in keeping with Israel in Egypt, and so also is the reference to the birth of numerous children where they were least expected.

DIVISION. No division need be made in the exposition of this Psalm, except it be that which is suggested by the always instructive headings supplied by the excellent authors of our common version: an exhortation to praise God, for his excellency, 1-5; for his mercy.

1 ¶ Praise ye the LORD. Praise, O ye servants of the LORD, praise the name of the LORD.

113:1 Praise ye the LORD, or Hallelujah, praise to JAH Jehovah. Praise is an essential offering at all the solemn feasts of the people of God. Prayer is the myrrh, and praise is the frankincense, and both of these must be presented unto the Lord. How can we pray for mercy for the future if we do not bless God for his love in the past? The Lord hath wrought all good things for us, let us therefore adore him. All other praise is to be excluded, the entire devotion of the soul must be poured out unto Jehovah only.

Praise, O ye servants of the LORD. Ye above all men, for ye are bound to do so by your calling and profession. If God's own servants do not praise him, who will? Ye are a people near unto him, and should be heartiest in your loving gratitude. While they were slaves of Pharaoh, the Israelites uttered groans and sighs by reason of their hard bondage; but now that they had become servants of the Lord, they were to express themselves in songs of joy. His service is perfect freedom, and those who fully enter into it discover in that service a thousand reasons for adoration. They are sure to praise God best who serve him best; indeed, service is praise.

Praise the name of the LORD: extol his revealed character, magnify every sacred attribute, exult in all his doings, and reverence the very name by which he is called. The name of Jehovah is thrice used in this verse, and may by us who understand the doctrine of the Trinity in Unity be regarded as a thinly veiled allusion to that holy mystery. Let Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, all be praised as the one, only, living, and true God.
The close following of the words,

"Hallelujah, Hallelu, Hallelu," must have had a fine effect in the public services. Dr. Edersheim describes the temple service as responsive, and says, "Every first line of a Psalm was repeated by the people, while to each of the others they responded by a Hallelu Jah or Praise ye the Lord" thus—

“The Levites began: Hallelujah
(Praise ye the Lord).
The people repeated: Hallelu Jah.
The Levites: Praise (Hallelu), O ye servants of Jehovah.

The people responded: Hallelu Jah.
The Levites: Praise (Hallelu)
the name of Jehovah.
The people responded: Hallelu Jah.”

These were not vain repetitions, for the theme is one which we ought to dwell upon; it should be deeply impressed upon the soul, and perseveringly kept prominent in the life.

2 Blessed be the name of the L ORD from this time forth and for evermore.

113:2 Blessed be the name of the LORD. While praising him aloud, the people were also to bless him in the silence of their hearts, wishing glory to his name, success to his cause, and triumph to his truth. By mentioning the name, the Psalmist would teach us to bless each of the attributes of the Most High, which are as it were the letters of his name; not quarrelling with his justice or his severity, nor servilely dreading his power, but accepting him as we find him revealed in the inspired word and by his own acts, and loving him and praising him as such. We must not give the Lord a new name nor invent a new nature, for that would be the setting up of a false god. Every time we think of the God of Scripture we should bless him, and his august name should never be pronounced without joyful reverence.

From this time forth. If we have never praised him before, let us begin now. As the Passover stood at the beginning of the year it was well to commence the new year with blessing him who wrought deliverance for his people. Every solemn feast had its own happy associations, and might be regarded as a fresh starting place for adoration. Are there not reasons why the reader should make the present day the opening of a year of praise? When the Lord says, "From this time will I bless you," we ought to reply, "Blessed be the name of the Lord from this time forth."

And for evermore: eternally. The Psalmist could not have intended that the divine praise should cease at a future date however remote. "For evermore" in reference to the praise of God must signify endless duration: are we wrong in believing that it bears the same meaning when it refers to gloomier themes? Can our hearts ever cease to praise the name of the Lord? Can we imagine a period in which the praises of Israel shall no more surround the throne of the Divine Majesty? Impossible. For ever, and more than "for ever, "if more can be, let him be magnified.
3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name is to be praised.

113:3 From the rising of the sun unto the going down of the same the LORD'S name is to be praised. From early morn till eve the ceaseless hymn should rise unto Jehovah's throne, and from east to west over the whole round earth pure worship should be rendered unto his glory. So ought it to be; and blessed be God, we are not without faith that so it shall be. We trust that ere the world's dread evening comes, the glorious name of the Lord will be proclaimed among all nations, and all people shall call him blessed. At the first proclamation of the gospel the name of the Lord was glorious throughout the whole earth; shall it not be much more so ere the end shall be? At any rate, this is the desire of our souls. Meanwhile, let us endeavor to sanctify every day with praise to God. At early dawn let us emulate the opening flowers and the singing birds,

"Chanting every day their lauds,
While the grove their song applauds;
Wake for shame my sluggish heart,
Wake and gladly sing thy part."

It is a marvel of mercy that the sun should rise on the rebellious sons of men, and prepare for the undeserving fruitful seasons and days of pleasantness; let us for this prodigy of goodness praise the Lord of all. From hour to hour let us renew the strain, for each moment brings its mercy; and when the sun sinks to his rest, let us not cease our music, but lift up the vesper hymn—

"Father of heaven and earth!
I bless thee for the night,
The soft still night!

The holy pause of care and mirth,
Of sound and light.

Now far in glade and dell,
Flower cup, and bud, and bell
Have shut around the sleeping woodlark's nest,
The bee's long murmuring toils are done,
And I, the over wearied one,
Bless thee, O God, O Father of the oppressed!
With my last waking thought."

4 The LORD is high above all nations, and his glory above the heavens.
The Lord is high above all nations. Though the Gentiles knew him not, yet was Jehovah their ruler: their false gods were no gods, and their kings were puppets in his hands. The Lord is high above all the learning, judgment, and imagination of heathen sages, and far beyond the pomp and might of the monarchs of the nations. Like the great arch of the firmament, the presence of the Lord spans all the lands where dwell the varied tribes of men, for his providence is universal: this may well excite our confidence and praise.

And his glory above the heavens: higher than the loftiest part of creation; the clouds are the dust of his feet, and sun, moon, and stars twinkle far below his throne. Even the heaven of heavens cannot contain him. His glory cannot be set forth by the whole visible universe, nor even by the solemn pomp of angelic armies; it is above all conception and imagination, for he is God—infinit. Let us above all adore him who is above all.

Who is like unto the LORD our God, who dwelleth high,

Who is like unto the LORD our God? The challenge will never be answered. None can be compared with him for an instant; Israel's God is without parallel; our own God in covenant stands alone, and none can be likened unto him. Even those whom he has made like himself in some respects are not like him in godhead, for his divine attributes are many of them incommunicable and inimitable. None of the metaphors and figures by which the Lord is set forth in the Scriptures can give us a complete idea of him; his full resemblance is borne by nothing in earth or in heaven. Only in Jesus is the Godhead seen, but he unhesitatingly declared "he that hath seen me hath seen the Father."

Who dwelleth on high. In the height of his abode none can be like him. His throne, his whole character, his person, his being, everything about him, is lofty, and infinitely majestic, so that none can be likened unto him. His serene mind abides in the most elevated condition, he is never dishonored, nor does he stoop from the pure holiness and absolute perfection of his character. His saints are said to dwell on high, and in this they are the reflection of his glory; but as for himself, the height of his dwelling place surpasses thought, and he rises far above the most exalted of his glorified people.

"Eternal Power! Whose high abode
   Becomes the grandeur of a God:
   Infinite lengths beyond the bounds
   Where stars revolve their little rounds."

"The lowest step around thy seat
   Rises too high for Gabriel's feet;
   In vain the tall archangel tries
   To reach thine height with wondering eyes."

"Lord, what shall earth and ashes do?
   We would adore our Maker too;
   From sin and dust to thee we cry,
   The Great, the Holy, and the High!"
6 Who humbleth *himself* to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!

113:6 *Who humbleth himself to behold the things that are in heaven, and in the earth!* He dwells so far on high that even to observe heavenly things he must humble himself. He must stoop to view the skies, and bow to see what angels do. What, then, must be his condescension, seeing that he observes the humblest of his servants upon earth, and makes them sing for joy like Mary when she said, "Thou hast regarded the low estate of thine handmaiden." How wonderful are those words of Isaiah, "For thus saith the high and lofty One that inhabiteth eternity, whose name is Holy; I dwell in the high and holy place, with him also that is of a contrite and humble spirit, to revive the spirit of the humble, and to revive the heart of the contrite ones." Heathen philosophers could not believe that the great God was observant of the small events of human history; they pictured him as abiding in serene indifference to all the wants and woes of his creatures. "Our Rock is not as their rock"; we have a God who is high above all gods, and yet who is our Father, knowing what we have need of before we ask him; our Shepherd, who supplies our needs; our Guardian, who counts the hairs of our heads; our tender and considerate Friend, who sympathizes in all our griefs. Truly the name of our condescending God should be praised wherever it is known.

7 He raiseth up the poor out of the dust, *and* lifteth the needy out of the dunghill;

113: 7 *He raiseth up the poor out of the dust.* This is an instance of his gracious stoop of love: he frequently lifts the lowest of mankind out of their poverty and degradation and places them in positions of power and honour. His good Spirit is continually visiting the down trodden, giving beauty for ashes to those who are cast down, and elevating the hearts of his mourners till they shout for joy. These up liftings of grace are here ascribed directly to the divine hand, and truly those who have experienced them will not doubt the fact that it is the Lord alone who brings his people up from the dust of sorrow and death. When no hand but his can help he interposes, and the work is done. It is worth while to be cast down to be so divinely raised from the dust.

And lifteth the needy out of the dunghill, whereon they lay like worthless refuse, cast off and cast out, left as they thought to rot into destruction, and to be everlastingly forgotten. How great a stoop from the height of his throne to a dunghill! How wonderful that power which occupies itself in lifting up beggars, all befouled with the filthiness in which they lay! For he lifts them *out of* the dunghill, not disdaining to search them out from amidst the base things of the earth that he may by their means bring to nought the great ones, and pour contempt upon all human glorying. What a dunghill was that upon which we lay by nature! What a mass of corruption is our original estate! What a heap of loathsomeness we have accumulated by our sinful lives! What reeking abominations surround us in the society of our fellow men! We could never have risen out of all this by our own efforts, it was a sepulchre in which we saw corruption, and were as dead men. Almighty were the arms which lifted us, which are still lifting us, and will lift us into the perfection of heaven itself. Praise ye the Lord.

8 That he may set *him* with princes, *even* with the princes of his people.
113:8 *That he may set him with princes.* The Lord does nothing by halves: when he raises men from the dust he is not content till he places them among the peers of his kingdom. We are made kings and priests unto God, and we shall reign for ever and ever. Instead of poverty, he gives us the wealth of princes; and instead of dishonour, he gives us a more exalted rank than that of the great ones of the earth.

*Even with the princes of his people.* All his people are princes, and so the text teaches us that God places needy souls whom he favors among the princes of princes. He often enables those who have been most despairing to rise to the greatest heights of spirituality and gracious attainment, for those who once were last shall be first. Paul, though less than the least of all saints was, nevertheless, made to be not a whit behind the very chief of the apostles; and in our own times, Bunyan, the blaspheming tinker, was raised into another John, whose dream almost rivals the visions of the Apocalypse.

"Wonders of grace to God belong,
Repeat his mercies in your song."

Such verses as these should give great encouragement to those who are lowest in their own esteem. The Lord poureth contempt upon princes; but as for those who are in the dust and on the dunghill, he looks upon them with compassion, acts towards them in grace, and in their case displays the riches of his glory by Christ Jesus. Those who have experienced such amazing favour should sing continual hallelujahs to the God of their salvation.

9 He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children. Praise ye the LORD.

113:9 *He maketh the barren woman to keep house, and to be a joyful mother of children.* The strong desire of the easterns to have children caused the birth of offspring to be hailed as the choicest of favors, while barrenness was regarded as a curse; hence this verse is placed last as if to crown the whole, and to serve as a climax to the story of God's mercy. The glorious Lord displays his condescending grace in regarding those who are despised on account of their barrenness, whether it be of body or of soul. Sarah, Rachel, the wife of Manoah, Hannah, Elizabeth, and others were all instances of the miraculous power of God in literally fulfilling the statement of the psalmist. Women were not supposed to have a house till they had children; but in certain cases where childless women pined in secret the Lord visited them in mercy, and made them not only to have a house, but to keep it. The Gentile church is a spiritual example upon a large scale of the gift of fruitfulness after long years of hopeless barrenness; and the Jewish church in the latter days will be another amazing display of the same quickening power: long forsaken for her spiritual adultery, Israel shall be forgiven, and restored, and joyously shall she keep that house which now is left unto her desolate. Nor is this all, each believer in the Lord Jesus must at times have mourned his lamentable barrenness; he has appeared to be a dry tree yielding no fruit to the Lord, and yet when visited by the Holy Ghost, he has found himself suddenly to be like Aaron's rod, which budded, and blossomed, and brought forth almonds. Or ever we have been aware, our barren heart has kept house, and entertained the Saviour, our
graces have been multiplied as if many children had come to us at a single birth, and we have exceedingly rejoiced before the Lord. Then have we marvelled greatly at the Lord who dwelleth on high, that he has deigned to visit such poor worthless things. Like Mary, we have lifted up our Magnificat, and like Hannah, we have said, "There is none holy as the Lord; for there is none beside thee: neither is there any rock like our God."

**Praise ye the LORD.** The music concludes upon its key note. The Psalm is a circle, ending where it began, praising the Lord from its first syllable to its last. May our life psalm partake of the same character, and never know a break or a conclusion. In an endless circle let us bless the Lord, whose mercies never cease. Let us praise him in youth, and all along our years of strength; and when we bow in the ripeness of abundant age, let us still praise the Lord, who doth not cast off his old servants. Let us not only praise God ourselves, but exhort others to do it; and if we meet with any of the needy who have been enriched, and with the barren who have been made fruitful, let us join with them in extolling the name of him whose mercy endureth for ever. Having been ourselves lifted from spiritual beggary and barrenness, let us never forget our former estate or the grace which has visited us, but world without end let us praise the Lord. Hallelujah.
PSALM 114

SUBJECT AND DIVISION. This sublime SONG OF THE EXODUS is one and indivisible. True poetry has here reached its climax: no human mind has ever been able to equal, much less to excel, the grandeur of this Psalm. God is spoken of as leading forth his people from Egypt to Canaan, and causing the whole earth to be moved at his coming. Things inanimate are represented as imitating the actions of living creatures when the Lord passes by. They are apostrophized and questioned with marvelous force of language, till one seems to look upon the actual scene. The God of Jacob is exalted as having command over river, sea, and mountain, and causing all nature to pay homage and tribute before his glorious majesty.

1 ¶ When Israel went out of Egypt, the house of Jacob from a people of strange language;

114: 1 When Israel went out of Egypt. The song begins with a burst, as if the poetic fury could not be restrained, but overleaped all bounds. The soul elevated and filled with a sense of divine glory cannot wait to fashion a preface, but springs at once into the middle of its theme. Israel emphatically came out of Egypt, out of the population among whom they had been scattered, from under the yoke of bondage, and from under the personal grasp of the king who had made the people into national slaves. Israel came out with a high hand and a stretched out arm, defying all the power of the empire, and making the whole of Egypt to travail with sore anguish, as the chosen nation was as it were born out of its midst.

The house of Jacob from a people of strange language. They had gone down into Egypt as a single family—"the house of Jacob"; and, though they had multiplied greatly, they were still so united, and were so fully regarded by God as a single unit, that they are rightly spoken of as the house of Jacob. They were as one man in their willingness to leave Goshen; numerous as they were, not a single individual stayed behind. Unanimity is a pleasing token of the divine presence, and one of its sweetest fruits. One of their inconveniences in Egypt was the difference of languages, which was very great. The Israelites appear to have regarded the Egyptians as stammerers and babblers, since they could not understand them, and they very naturally considered the Egyptians to be barbarians, as they would no doubt often beat them because they did not comprehend their orders. The language of foreign taskmasters is never musical in an exile's ear. How sweet it is to a Christian who has been compelled to hear the filthy conversation of the wicked, when at last he is brought out from their midst to dwell among his own people!

2 Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion.

114: 2 Judah was his sanctuary, and Israel his dominion. The pronoun "his" comes in where we should have looked for the name of God; but the poet is so full of thought concerning the Lord that he forgets to mention his name, like the spouse in the Song, who begins, "Let him kiss me," or Magdalene when she cried, "Tell me where thou hast laid him." From the mention of Judah and Israel certain critics have inferred that this Psalm must have been written after the division of the two kingdoms; but this is only another instance of the extremely slender basis upon which an hypothesis is
often built up. Before the formation of the two kingdoms David had said, "Go number Israel and Judah, "and this was common parlance, for Uriah the Hittite said, "The ark, and Israel and Judah abide in tents"; so that nothing can be inferred from the use of the two names. No division into two kingdoms can have been intended here, for the poet is speaking of the coming out of Egypt when the people were so united that he has just before called them "the house of Jacob." It would be quite as fair to prove from the first verse that the Psalm was written when the people were in union as to prove from the second that its authorship dates from their separation. Judah was the tribe which led the way in the wilderness march, and it was foreseen in prophecy to be the royal tribe, hence its poetical mention in this place. The meaning of the passage is that the whole people at the coming out of Egypt were separated unto the Lord to be a peculiar people, a nation of priests whose motto should be, "Holiness unto the Lord." Judah was the Lord's "holy thing," set apart for his special use. The nation was peculiarly Jehovah's dominion, for it was governed by a theocracy in which God alone was King. It was his domain in a sense in which the rest of the world was outside his kingdom. These were the young days of Israel, the time of her espousals, when she went after the Lord into the wilderness, her God leading the way with signs and miracles. The whole people were the shrine of Deity, and their camp was one great temple. What a change there must have been for the godly amongst them from the idolatries and blasphemies of the Egyptians to the holy worship and righteous rule of the great King in Jeshurun. They lived in a world of wonders, where God was seen in the wondrous bread they ate and in the water they drank, as well as in the solemn worship of his holy place. When the Lord is manifestly present in a church, and his gracious rule obediently owned, what a golden age has come, and what honourable privileges his people enjoy! May it be so among us.

3 The sea saw it, and fled: Jordan was driven back.
4 The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs.

114: 4 The mountains skipped like rams, and the little hills like lambs. At the coming of the Lord to Mount Sinai, the hills moved; either leaping for joy in the presence of their Creator like young lambs; or, if you will, springing from their places in affright at the terrible majesty of Jehovah, and flying like a flock of sheep when alarmed. Men fear the mountains, but the mountains tremble before the Lord. Sheep and lambs move lightly in the meadows; but the hills, which we are wont to call eternal, were as readily made to move as the most active creatures. Rams in their strength, and lambs in their play, are not more stirred than were the solid hills when Jehovah marched by. Nothing is immovable but God himself: the mountains shall depart, and the hills be removed, but the covenant of his grace abideth fast for ever and ever. Even thus do mountains of sin and hills of trouble move when the Lord comes forth to lead his people to their eternal Canaan. Let us never fear, but rather let our faith say unto this mountain, "Be thou removed hence and cast into the sea," and it shall be done.

5 What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest? Thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?

114:5 What ailed thee, O thou sea? Wert thou terribly afraid? Did thy strength fail thee? Did thy very heart dry up? What ailed thee, O thou sea, that thou fleddest?
Thou wert neighbour to the power of Pharaoh, but thou didst never fear his hosts; stormy wind could never prevail against thee so as to divide thee in twain; but when the way of the Lord was in thy great waters thou was seized with affright, and thou becamest a fugitive from before him.

_Thou Jordan, that thou wast driven back?_ What ailed thee, O quick descending river? Thy fountains had not dried up, neither had a chasm opened to engulf thee! The near approach of Israel and her God sufficed to make thee retrace thy steps. What aileth all our enemies that they fly when the Lord is on our side? What aileth hell itself that it is utterly routed when Jesus lifts up a standard against it? "Fear took hold upon them there, "for fear of HIM the stoutest hearted did quake, and became as dead men.

6 Ye mountains, _that_ ye skipped like rams; _and_ ye little hills, like lambs?

114: 6 _Ye mountains, that ye skipped like rams; and ye little hills, like lambs?_ What ailed ye, that ye were thus moved? There is but one reply: the majesty of God made you to leap. A gracious mind will chide human nature for its strange insensibility, when the sea and the river, the mountains and the hills, are all sensitive to the presence of God. Man is endowed with reason and intelligence, and yet he sees unmoved that which the material creation beholds with fear. God has come nearer to us than ever he did to Sinai, or to Jordan, for he has assumed our nature, and yet the mass of mankind are neither driven back from their sins, nor moved in the paths of obedience.

7 Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob;

114: 7 _Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob._ Or "_from before the Lord, the Adonai, the Master and King._" Very fitly does the Psalm call upon all nature again to feel a holy awe because its Ruler is still in its midst.

"Quake when Jehovah walks abroad,
Quake earth, at sight of Israel's God."

Let the believer feel that God is near, and he will serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Awe is not cast out by faith, but the rather it becomes deeper and more profound. The Lord is most reverenced where he is most loved.

8 Which turned the rock _into_ a standing water, the flint into a fountain of waters.

114: 8 _Which turned the rock into a standing water,_ causing a mere or lake to stand at its foot, making the wilderness a pool: so abundant was the supply of water from the rock that it remained like water in a reservoir.

_The flint into a fountain of waters,_ which flowed freely in streams, following the tribes in their devious marches. Behold what God can do!
It seemed impossible that the flinty rock should become a fountain; but he speaks, and it is done. Not only do mountains move, but rocks yield rivers when the God of Israel wills that it should be so.

"From stone and solid rock he brings
The spreading lake, the gushing springs."

"O magnify the Lord with me, and let us exalt his name together," for he it is and he alone who doeth such wonders as these. He supplies our temporal needs from sources of the most unlikely kind, and never suffers the stream of his liberality to fail. As for our spiritual necessities they are all met by the water and the blood which gushed of old from the riven rock, Christ Jesus: therefore let us extol the Lord our God. Our deliverance from under the yoke of sin is strikingly typified in the going up of Israel from Egypt, and so also was the victory of our Lord over the powers of death and hell. The Exodus should therefore be earnestly remembered by Christian hearts. Did not Moses on the mount of transfiguration speak to our Lord of "the exodus" which he should shortly accomplish at Jerusalem; and is it not written of the hosts above that they sing the song of Moses the servant of God, and of the Lamb? Do we not ourselves expect another coming of the Lord, when before his face heaven and earth shall flee away and there shall be no more sea? We join then with the singers around the Passover table and make their Hallel ours, for we too have been led out of bondage and guided like a flock through a desert land, wherein the Lord supplies our wants with heavenly manna and water from the Rock of ages. Praise ye the Lord.
SUBJECT. In the former psalm the past wonders which God had wrought were recounted to his
honour, and in the present psalm he is entreated to glorify himself again, because the heathen
were presuming upon the absence of miracles, were altogether denying the miracles of former
ages, and insulting the people of God with the question, "Where is now their God?" It grieved
the heart of the godly that Jehovah should be thus dishonored, and treating their own condition of
reproach as unworthy of notice, they beseech the Lord at least to vindicate his own name. The
Psalmist is evidently indignant that the worshippers of foolish idols should be able to put such a
taunting question to the people who worshipped the only living and true God; and having spent
his indignation in sarcasm upon the images and their makers, he proceeds to exhort the house of
Israel to trust in God and bless his name. As those who were dead and gone could no longer sing
psalms unto the Lord among the sons of men, he exhorts the faithful who were then living to take
care that God is not robbed of his praise, and then he closes with an exulting Hallelujah. Should
not living men extol the living God?

DIVISION. For the better expounding of it, the psalm may be divided into an entreaty of God to
vindicate his own honour, verses 1, 2; a contemptuous description of the false gods and their
worshippers, 3-8; an exhortation to the faithful to trust in God and to expect great blessings from
him, 9-15; an explanation of God's relationship to their present condition of things, verse 16; and
a reminder, that, not the dead, but the living, must continually praise God here below.

1 ¶ Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory, for thy
mercy, and for thy truth's sake.

115: 1 It will be well to remember that this psalm was sung at the Passover, and therefore it bears
relationship to the deliverance from Egypt. The burden of it, seems to be a prayer that the living
God, who had been so glorious at the Red Sea and at the Jordan, should again for his own name's
sake display the wonders of his power.

Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory. The people undoubtedly
wished for relief from the contemptuous insults of idolaters, but their main desire was that
Jehovah himself should no longer be the object of heathen insults. The saddest part of all their
trouble was that their God was no longer feared and dreaded by their adversaries. When Israel
marched into Canaan, a terror was upon all the people round about, because of Jehovah, the
mighty God; but this dread the nations had shaken off since there had been of late no remarkable
display of miraculous power. Therefore Israel cried unto her God that he would again make bare
his arm as in the day when he cut Rahab and wounded the dragon. The prayer is evidently
tinctured with a consciousness of unworthiness; because of their past unfaithfulness they hardly
dared to appeal to the covenant, and to ask blessings for themselves, but they fell back upon the
honour of the Lord their God—an old style of argument which their great lawgiver, Moses, had
used with such effect when he pleaded, "Wherefore should the Egyptians speak, and say, For
mischief did he bring them out, to slay them in the mountains, and to consume them from the face
of the earth? Turn from thy fierce wrath, and repent of this evil against thy people."

Joshua also used the like argument when he said, "What wilt thou do unto thy great name?" In
such manner also let us pray when no other plea is available because of our sense of sin;
for the Lord is always jealous of his honour, and will work for his name's sake when no other motive will move him. The repetition of the words, *Not unto us,* would seem to indicate a very serious desire to renounce any glory which they might at any time have proudly appropriated to themselves, and it also sets forth the vehemence of their wish that God would at any cost to them magnify his own name. They loathed the idea of seeking their own glory, and rejected the thought with the utmost detestation; again and again disclaiming any self glorifying motive in their supplication.

*For thy mercy, and for thy truth's sake.* These attributes seemed most in jeopardy. How could the heathen think Jehovah to be a merciful God if he gave his people over to the hands of their enemies? How could they believe him to be faithful and true if, after all his solemn covenant engagements, he utterly rejected his chosen nation? God is very jealous of the two glorious attributes of grace and truth, and the plea that these may not be dishonored has great weight with him. In these times, when the first victories of the gospel are only remembered as histories of a dim and distant past, skeptics are apt to boast that the gospel has lost its youthful strength, and they even presume to cast a slur upon the name of God himself. We may therefore rightly entreat the divine interposition that the apparent blot may be removed from his escutcheon, and that his own word may shine forth gloriously as in the days of old. We may not desire the triumph of our opinions, for our own sakes, or for the honour of a sect, but we may confidently pray for the triumph of truth, that God himself may be honored.

2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God?

115: 2 Wherefore should the heathen say, Where is now their God? Or, more literally, "Where, pray, is their God?" Why should the nations be allowed with a sneer of contempt to question the existence, and mercy, and faithfulness of Jehovah? They are always ready to blaspheme; we may well pray that they may not derive a reason for so doing from the course of providence, or the decline of the church. When they see the godly down trodden while they themselves live at ease, and act the part of persecutors, they are very apt to speak as if they had triumphed over God himself, or as if he had altogether left the field of action and deserted his saints. When the prayers and tears of the godly seem to be unregarded, and their miseries are rather increased than assuaged, then do the wicked multiply their taunts and jeers, and even argue that their own wretched irreligion is better than the faith of Christians, because for the present their condition is so much preferable to that of the afflicted saints. And, truly, this is the very sting of the trials of God's chosen when they see the veracity of the Lord questioned, and the name of God profaned because of their sufferings. If they could hope that some good result would come out of all this they would endure it with patience; but as they are unable to perceive any desirable result consequent thereon, they enquire with holy anxiety. "Wherefore should the heathen be permitted to speak thus?" It is a question to which it would be hard to reply, and yet no doubt there is an answer. Sometimes the nations are permitted thus to blaspheme, in order that they may fill up the measure of their iniquity, and in order that the subsequent interposition of God may be rendered the more illustrious in contrast with their profane boastings. Do they say,

"Where is now their God?" They shall know by and by, for it is written, "Ah, I will ease me of mine adversaries"; they shall know it also when the righteous shall "shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father."
Do they say, "Where is the promise of his coming?" That coming shall be speedy and terrible to
them. In our own case, by our own lukewarmness and the neglect of faithful gospel preaching,
we have permitted the uprise and spread of modern doubt, and we are bound to confess it with
deep sorrow of soul; yet we may not therefore lose heart, but may still plead with God to save his
own truth and grace from the contempt of men of the world. Our honour and the honour of the
church are small matters, but the glory of God is the jewel of the universe, of which all else is but
the setting; and we may come to the Lord and plead his jealousy for his name, being well assured
that he will not suffer that name to be dishonored. Wherefore should the pretended wise men of
the period be permitted to say that they doubt the personality of God? Wherefore should they say
that answers to prayer are pious delusions, and that the resurrection and the deity of our Lord
Jesus are moot points? Wherefore should they be permitted to speak disparagingly of atonement
by blood and by price, and reject utterly the doctrine of the wrath of God against sin, even that
wrath which burneth for ever and ever? They speak exceeding proudly, and only God can stop
their arrogant blusterings: let us by extraordinary intercession prevail upon him to interpose, by
giving to his gospel such a triumphant vindication as shall utterly silence the perverse opposition
of ungodly men.

3 But our God is in the heavens: he hath done whatsoever he hath pleased.

115: 3 But our God is in the heavens—where he should be; above the reach of mortal sneers,
over hearing all the vain jangling of men, but looking down with silent scorn upon the makers of
the babel. Supreme above all opposing powers, the Lord reigneth upon a throne high and lifted
up. Incomprehensible in essence, he rises above the loftiest thought of the wise; absolute in will
and infinite in power, he is superior to the limitations which belong to earth and time. This God
is our God, and we are not ashamed to own him, albeit he may not work miracles at the beck and
call of every vain glorious boaster who may choose to challenge him. Once they bade his Son
come down from the cross and they would believe in him, now they would have God overstep
the ordinary bounds of his providence and come down from heaven to convince them: but other
matters occupy his august mind besides the convincement of those who willfully shut their eyes
to the superabundant evidences of his divine power and Godhead, which are all around them. If
our God be neither seen nor heard, and is not to be worshipped under any outward symbol, yet is
he none the less real and true, for he is where his adversaries can never be—in the heavens,
whence he stretches forth his sceptre, and rules with boundless power.

He hath done whatsoever he hath pleased. Up till this moment his decrees have been fulfilled,
and his eternal purposes accomplished; he has not been asleep, nor oblivious of the affairs of
men; he has worked, and he has worked effectually, none have been able to thwart, nor even so
much as to hinder him. "Whatsoever he hath pleased": however distasteful to his enemies, the
Lord has accomplished all his good pleasure without difficulty; even when his adversaries raved
and raged against him they have been compelled to carry out his designs against their will. Even
proud Pharaoh, when most defiant of the Lord was but as clay upon the potter's wheel, and the
Lord's end and design in him were fully answered. We may well endure the jeering question,
"Where is now their God?" while we are perfectly sure that his providence is undisturbed, his
throne unshaken, and his purposes unchanged. What he hath done he will yet
do, his counsel shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure, and at the end of the great drama of
human history, the omnipotence of God and his immutability and faithfulness will be more than
vindicated to the eternal confusion of his adversaries.

4 Their idols are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

115: 4 Their idols are silver and gold, mere dead inert matter; at the best only made of precious
metal, but that metal quite as powerless as the commonest wood or clay. The value of the idol
shows the folly of the maker in wasting his substance, but certainly does not increase the power
of the image, since there is no more life in silver and gold than in brass or iron.

The work of men's hands. Inasmuch as the maker is always greater than the thing that he has
made, these idols are less to be honored than the artificers, who fashioned them. How irrational
that men should adore that which is less than themselves! How strange that a man should think
that he can make a god! Can madness go further? Our God is a spirit, and his hands made the
heavens and the earth: well may we worship him, and we need not be disturbed at the sneering
question of those who are so insane as to refuse to adore the living God, and yet bow their knees
before images of their own carving.

We may make an application of all this to the times in which we are now living. The god of
modern thought is the creation of the thinker himself, evolved out of his own consciousness, or
 fashioned according to his own notion of what a god should be. Now, it is evident that such a
being is no God. It is impossible that there should be a God at all except the God of revelation. A
god who can be fashioned by our own thoughts is no more a God than the image manufactured
or produced by our own hands. The true God must of necessity be his own revealer. It is clearly
impossible that a being who can be excogitated and comprehended by the reason of man should
be the infinite and incomprehensible God. Their idols are blinded reason and diseased thought,
the product of men's muddled brains, and they will come to nought.

5 They have mouths, but they speak not: eyes have they, but they see not:

115: 5 They have mouths, but they speak not. The idols cannot utter even the faintest sound,
they cannot communicate with their worshippers, they can neither promise nor threaten,
command nor console, explain the past nor prophesy the future. If they had no mouths they
might not be expected to speak, but having mouths and speaking not, they are mere dumb idols,
and not worthy to be compared with the Lord God who thundered at Sinai, who in old time spake
by his servants the prophets, and whose voice even now breaketh the cedars of Lebanon.

Eyes have they, but they see not. They cannot tell who their worshippers may be or what they
offer. Certain idols have had jewels in their eyes more precious than a king's ransom, but they
were as blind as the rest of the fraternity. A god who has eyes, and cannot see, is a blind deity;
and blindness is a calamity, and not an attribute of godhead. He must be very blind who worships
a blind god: we pity a blind man, it is strange to worship a blind image.

6 They have ears, but they hear not: noses have they, but they smell not:
115: 6 They have ears, but they hear not. The Psalmist might have pointed to the monstrous ears with which some heathen deities are disfigured,—truly they have ears; but no prayer of their rotaries, though shouted by a million voices, can ever be heard by them. How can gold and silver hear, and how can a rational being address petitions to one who cannot even hear his words?

Noses have they, but they smell not. The Psalmist seems to heap together these sentences with something of the grim sardonic spirit of Elijah when he said, "Cry aloud: for he is a god; either he is talking, or he is pursuing, or he is on a journey, or peradventure he sleepeth, and must be awaked." In sacred scorn he mocks at those who burn sweet spices, and fill their temples with clouds of smoke, all offered to an image whose nose cannot perceive the perfume. He seems to point his finger to every part of the countenance of the image, and thus pours contempt upon the noblest part of the idol, if any part of such a thing can be noble even in the least degree.

7 They have hands, but they handle not: feet have they, but they walk not: neither speak they through their throat.

115: 7 They have hands, but they handle not. Looking lower down upon the images, the Psalmist says, "They have hands, but they handle not," they cannot receive that which is handed to them, they cannot grasp the sceptre of power or the sword of vengeance, they can neither distribute benefits nor dispense judgments, and the most trifling act they are utterly unable to perform. An infant's hand excels them in power.

Feet have they, but they walk not. They must be lifted into their places or they would never reach their shrines; they must be fastened in their shrines or they would fall; they must be carried or they could never move; they cannot come to the rescue of their friends, nor escape the iconoclasm of their foes. The meanest insect has more power of locomotion than the greatest heathen god.

Neither speak they through their throats. They cannot even reach so far as the guttural noise of the lowest order of beasts; neither a grunt, nor a growl, nor a groan, nor so much as a mutter, can come from them. Their priests asserted that the images of the gods upon special occasions uttered hollow sounds, but it was a mere pretence, or a crafty artifice: images of gold or silver are incapable of living sounds. Thus has the Psalmist surveyed the idol from head to foot, looked in its face, and sounded its throat, and he writes it down as utterly contemptible.

8 They that make them are like unto them; so is every one that trusteth in them.

115: 8 They that make them are like unto them. Those who make such things for worship are as stupid, senseless, and irrational as the figures they construct. So far as any spiritual life, thought, and judgment are concerned, they are rather the images of men than rational beings. The censure is by no means too severe. Who has not found the words leaping to his lips when he has seen the idols of the Romans?
So is every one that trusteth in them. Those who have sunk so low as to be capable of confiding in idols have reached the extreme of folly, and are worthy of as much contempt as their detestable deities. Martin Luther's hard speeches were well deserved by the Papists; they must be mere dolts to worship the rotten relics which are the objects of their veneration. The god of modern thought exceedingly resembles the deities described in this Psalm. Pantheism is wondrously akin to Polytheism, and yet differs very little from Atheism. The god manufactured by our great thinkers is a mere abstraction: he has no eternal purposes, he does not interpose on the behalf of his people, he cares but very little as to how much man sins, for he has given to the initiated "a larger hope" by which the most incorrigible are to be restored. He is what the last set of critics chooses to make him, he has said what they choose to say, and lie will do what they please to prescribe. Let this creed and its devotees alone, and they will work out their own refutation, for as now their god is fashioned like themselves, they will by degrees fashion themselves like their god; and when the principles of justice, law, and order shall have all been effectually sapped we may possibly witness in some form of socialism, similar to that which is so sadly spreading in Germany, a repetition of the evils which have in former ages befallen nations which have refused the living God, and set up gods of their own.

9 ¶ O Israel, trust thou in the LORD: he is their help and their shield.

11:9 O Israel, trust thou in the LORD. Whatever others do, let the elect of heaven keep fast to the God who chose them. Jehovah is the God of Jacob, let his children prove their loyalty to their God by their confidence in him. Whatever our trouble may be, and however fierce the blasphemous language of our enemies, let us not fear nor falter, but confidently rest in him who is able to vindicate his own honour, and protect his own servants.

He is their help and their shield. He is the friend of his servants, both actively and passively, giving them both aid in labour and defense in danger. In the use of the pronoun "their, "the Psalmist may have spoken to himself, in a sort of soliloquy: he had given the exhortation, "trust in Jehovah, "and then he whispers to himself, "They may well do so, for he is at all times the strength and security of his servants."

10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield.

11:10 O house of Aaron, trust in the LORD. You who are nearest to him, trust him most; your very calling is connected with his truth and is meant to declare his glory, therefore never entertain a doubt concerning him, but lead the way in holy confidence. The priests were the leaders, teachers, and exemplars of the people, and therefore above all others they should place an unreserved reliance upon Israel's God. The Psalmist is glad to add that they did so, for he says,

He is their help and their shield. It is good to exhort those to faith who have faith: "These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; ...that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God." We may stir up pure minds by way of remembrance, and exhort men to trust in the Lord because we know that they are trusting already.
11 Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD: he is their help and their shield.

115: 11 The next verse is of the same tenor—Ye that fear the LORD, trust in the LORD, whether belonging to Israel, or to the house of Aaron, or not, all those who reverence Jehovah are permitted and commanded to confide in him.

He is their help and their shield. He does aid and protect all those who worship him in filial fear, to whatever nation they may belong. No doubt these repeated exhortations were rendered necessary by the trying condition in which the children of Israel were found: the sneers of the adversary would assail all the people, they would most bitterly be felt by the priests and ministers, and those who were secret proselytes would groan in secret under the contempt forced upon their religion and their God. All this would be very staggering to faith, and therefore they were bidden again and again and again to trust in Jehovah. This must have been a very pleasant song to households in Babylon, or far away in Persia, when they met together in the night to eat the Paschal supper in a land which knew them not, where they wept as they remembered Zion. We seem to hear them repeating the threefold word, "Trust in Jehovah, "men and women and little children singing out their scorn of the dominant idolatry, and declaring their adhesion to the one God of Israel.

In the same manner in this day of blasphemy and rebuke it becomes us all to abound in testimonies to the truth of God. The skeptic is loud in his unbelief, let us be equally open in the avowal of our faith.

12 The LORD hath been mindful of us: he will bless us; he will bless the house of Israel; he will bless the house of Aaron.

115: 12 The Lord hath been mindful of us, or "Jehovah hath remembered us." His past mercies prove that we are on his heart, and though for the present he may afflict us, yet he does not forget us. We have not to put him in remembrance as though he found it hard to recollect his children, but he hath remembered us and therefore he will in future deal well with us.

He will bless us. The word "us" is supplied by the translators, and is superfluous, the passage should run,

He will bless; he will bless the house of Israel he will bless the house of Aaron. The repetition of the word "bless" adds great effect to the passage. The Lord has many blessings, each one worthy to be remembered, he blesses and blesses and blesses again. Where he has once bestowed his favour he continues it; his blessing delights to visit the same house very often and to abide where it has once lodged. Blessing does not impoverish the Lord: he has multiplied his mercies in the past, and he will pour them forth thick and threefold in the future. He will have a general blessing for all who fear him, a peculiar blessing for the whole house of Israel, and a double blessing for the sons of Aaron. It is his nature to bless, it is his prerogative to bless, it is his glory to bless, it is his delight to bless; he has promised to bless, and therefore be sure of this, that he will bless and bless and bless without ceasing.

13 He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great.
115: 13 He will bless them that fear the LORD, both small and great. So long as a man fears the Lord it matters nothing whether he be prince or peasant, patriarch or pauper, God will assuredly bless him. He supplies the want of every living thing, from the leviathan of the sea to the insect upon a leaf, and he will suffer none of the godly to be forgotten, however small their abilities, or mean their position. This is a sweet cordial for those who are little in faith, and own themselves to be mere babes in the family of grace. There is the same blessing for the least saint as for the greatest; yea, if anything, the "small" shall be first; for as the necessity is the more pressing, the supply shall be the more speedy.

14 The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children.

115: 14 The LORD shall increase you more and more, you and your children. Just as in Egypt he multiplied the people exceedingly, so will he increase the number of his saints upon the earth; not only shall the faithful be blessed with converts, and so with a spiritual seed; but those who are their spiritual children shall become fruitful also, and thus the multitude of the elect shall be accomplished; God shall increase the people, and shall increase the joy. Even to the end of the ages the race of true believers shall be continued, and shall increasingly multiply in number and in power. The first blessing upon mankind was, "Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth"; and it is this blessing which God now pronounces upon them that fear him. Despite the idols of philosophy and sacramentarianism, the truth shall gather its disciples, and fill the land with its defenders.

15 Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth.

115: 15 Ye are blessed of the LORD which made heaven and earth. This is another form of the blessing of Melchizedek: "Blessed be Abram of the Most High God, possessor of heaven and earth"; and upon us through our great Melchizedek this same benediction rests. It is an omnipotent blessing, conveying to us all that an Almighty God can do, whether in heaven or on earth. This fullness is infinite, and the consolation which it brings is unfailing: he that made heaven and earth can give us all things while we dwell below, and bring us safely to his palace above. Happy are the people upon whom such a blessing rests; their portion is infinitely above that of those whose only hope lies in a piece of gilded wood, or an image of sculptured stone.

16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the LORD'S: but the earth hath he given to the children of men.

115: 16 The heaven, even the heavens, are the Lord's. There he specially reigns, and manifests his greatness and his glory: but the earth hath he given to the children of men. He hath left the world during the present dispensation in a great measure under the power and will of men, so that things are not here below in the same perfect order as the things which are above. It is true the Lord rules over all things by his providence, but yet he allows and permits men to break his laws and persecute his people for the time being, and to set up their dumb idols in opposition to him. The free agency which he gave to his creatures necessitated that in some degree he should
restrain his power and suffer the children of men to follow their own devices; yet nevertheless, since he has not vacated heaven, he is still master of earth, and can at any time gather up all the reins into his own hands. Perhaps, however, the passage is meant to have another meaning, viz., that God will increase his people, because he has given the earth to them, and intends that they shall fill it. Man was constituted originally God's vicegerent over the world, and though as yet we see not all things put under him, we see Jesus exalted on high, and in him the children of men shall receive a loftier dominion even on earth than as yet they have known. "The meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace"; and our Lord Jesus shall reign amongst his ancients gloriously. All this will reflect the exceeding glory of him who reveals himself personally in heaven, and in the mystical body of Christ below. The earth belongs to the sons of God, and we are bound to subdue it for our Lord Jesus, for he must reign. The Lord hath given him the heathen for his inheritance, and the uttermost parts of the earth for his possession.

17 The dead praise not the LORD, neither any that go down into silence.

**115: 17 The dead praise not the LORD**—So far as this world is concerned. They cannot unite in the Psalms and hymns and spiritual songs with which the church delights to adore her Lord. The preacher cannot magnify the Lord from his coffin, nor the Christian worker further manifest the power of divine grace by daily activity while he lies in the grave.

*Neither any that go down into silence.* The tomb sends forth no voice; from moldering bones and flesh consuming worms there arises no sound of gospel ministry nor of gracious song. One by one the singers in the consecrated choir of saints steal away from us, and we miss their music. Thank God, they have gone above to swell the harmonies of the skies, but as far as we are concerned, we have need to sing all the more earnestly because so many songsters have left our choirs.

18 But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore. Praise the LORD.

**115: 18 But we will bless the LORD from this time forth and for evermore.** We who are still living will take care that the praises of God shall not fail among the sons of men. Our afflictions and depressions of spirit shall not cause us to suspend our praises; neither shall old age, and increasing infirmities damp the celestial fires, nay, nor shall even death itself cause us to cease from the delightful occupation. The spiritually dead cannot praise God, but the life within us constrains us to do so. The ungodly may abide in silence, but we will lift up our voices to the praise of Jehovah. Even though for a time he may work no miracle, and we may see no peculiar interposition of his power, yet on the strength of what he has done in ages past we will continue to laud his name "until the day break, and the shadows flee away, "when he shall once more shine forth as the sun to gladden the faces of his children. The present time is auspicious for commencing a life of praise, since today he bids us hear his voice of mercy.

"From this time forth" is the suggestion of wisdom, for this duty ought not to be delayed; and it is the dictate of gratitude, for there are pressing reasons for prompt thankfulness. Once begin
praising God and we have entered upon an endless service. Even eternity cannot exhaust the reasons why God should be glorified.

Praise the Lord, or Hallelujah. Though the dead cannot, and the wicked will not, and the careless do not praise God, yet we will shout "Hallelujah" for ever and ever. Amen.

PSALM 116

SUBJECT. This is a continuation of the Paschal Hallel, and therefore must in some measure be interpreted in connection with the coming out of Egypt. It has all the appearance of being a personal song in which the believing soul, reminded by the Passover of its own bondage and deliverance, speaks thereof with gratitude, and praises the Lord accordingly. We can conceive the Israelite with a staff in his hand singing, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul, "as he remembered the going back of the house of Jacob to the land of their fathers; and then drinking
the cup at the feast using the words of Psalm 116:13, "I will take the cup of salvation." The pious man evidently remembers both his own deliverance and that of his people as he sings in the language of Psalm 116:16, "Thou hast loosed my bonds"; but he rises into sympathy with his nation as he thinks of the courts of the Lord's house and of the glorious city, and pledges himself to sing "in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem." Personal love fostered by a personal experience of redemption is the theme of this Psalm, and in it we see the redeemed answered when they pray, preserved in time of trouble, resting in their God, walking at large, sensible of their obligations, conscious that they are not their own but bought with a price, and joining with all the ransomed company to sing hallelujahs unto God.

Since our divine Master sang this hymn, we can hardly err in seeing here words to which he could set his seal,—words in a measure descriptive of his own experience; but upon this we will not enlarge, as in the notes we have indicated how the Psalm has been understood by those who love to find their Lord in every line.

DIVISION. David Dickson has a somewhat singular division of this Psalm, which strikes us as being exceedingly suggestive. He says, "This Psalm is a threefold engagement of the Psalmist unto thanksgiving unto God, for his mercy unto him, and in particular for some notable delivery of him from death, both bodily and spiritual. The first engagement is, that he shall out of love have recourse unto God by prayer, Psalm 116:1-2; the reasons and motives whereof are set down, because of his former deliverances, Psalm 116:3-8, the second engagement is to a holy conversation, Psalm 116:9, and the motives and reasons are given in Psalm 116:10-13; the third engagement is to continual praise and service, and specially to pay those vows before the church, which he had made in days of sorrow, the reasons whereof are given in Psalm 116:14-19."

1 ¶ I love the LORD, because he hath heard my voice and my supplications.

116: 1 I love the LORD. A blessed declaration: every believer ought to be able to declare without the slightest hesitation, "I love the Lord." It was required under the law, but was never produced in the heart of man except by the grace of God, and upon gospel principles. It is a great thing to say "I love the Lord"; for the sweetest of all graces and the surest of all evidences of salvation is love. It is great goodness on the part of God that he condescends to be loved by such poor creatures as we are, and it is a sure proof that he has been at work in our heart when we can say, "Thou knowest all things, thou knowest that I love thee."

Because he hath heard my voice and my supplications. The Psalmist not only knows that he loves God, but he knows why he does so. When love can justify itself with a reason, it is deep, strong, and abiding. They say that love is blind; but when we love God our affection has its eyes open and can sustain itself with the most rigid logic. We have reason, superabundant reason, for loving the Lord; and so because in this case principle and passion, reason and emotion go together, they make up an admirable state of mind. David's reason for his love was the love of God in hearing his prayers. The Psalmist had used his "voice" in prayer, and the habit of doing so is exceedingly helpful to devotion. If we can pray aloud without being overheard it is well to do so. Sometimes, however, when the Psalmist had lifted up his voice, his utterance had been so
broken and painful that he scarcely dared to call it prayer; words failed him, he could only produce a groaning sound, but the Lord heard his moaning voice. At other times his prayers were more regular and better formed; these he calls "supplications." David had praised as best he could, and when one form of devotion failed him he tried another. He had gone to the Lord again and again, hence he uses the plural and says "my supplications," but as often as he had gone, so often had he been welcome. Jehovah had heard, that is to say, accepted, and answered both his broken cries and his more composed and orderly supplications; hence he loved God with all his heart. Answered prayers are silken bonds which bind our hearts to God. When a man's prayers are answered, love is the natural result. According to Alexander, both verbs may be translated in the present, and the text may run thus, "I love because Jehovah hears my voice, my supplications." This also is true in the case of every pleading believer. Continual love flows out of daily answers to prayer.

2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me, therefore will I call upon him as long as I live.

**116: 2 Because he hath inclined his ear unto me:**—bowing down from his grandeur to attend to my prayer; the figure seems to be that of a tender physician or loving friend leaning over a sick man whose voice is faint and scarcely audible, so as to catch every accent and whisper. When our prayer is very feeble, so that we ourselves can scarcely hear it, and question whether we do pray or not, yet God bows a listening ear, and regards our supplications.

_Therefore will I call upon him as long as I live,_ or "in my days." Throughout all the days of my life I will address my prayer to God alone, and to him I will unceasingly pray. It is always wise to go where we are welcome and are well treated. The word "call" may imply praise as well as prayer: calling upon the name of the Lord is an expressive name for adoration of all kinds. When prayer is heard in our feebleness, and answered in the strength and greatness of God, we are strengthened in the habit of prayer, and confirmed in the resolve to make ceaseless intercession. We should not thank a beggar who informed us that because we had granted his request he would never cease to beg of us, and yet doubtless it is acceptable to God that his petitioners should form the resolution to continue in prayer: this shows the greatness of his goodness, and the abundance of his patience. In all days let us pray and praise the Ancient of days. He promises that as our days our strength shall be; let us resolve that as our days our devotion shall be.

3 The sorrows of death compassed me, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me: I found trouble and sorrow.

**116: 3** The Psalmist now goes on to describe his condition at the time when he prayed unto God.

_The sorrows of death compassed me._ As hunters surround a stag with dogs and men, so that no way of escape is left, so was David enclosed in a ring of deadly griefs. The bands of sorrow, weakness, and terror with which death is accustomed to bind men ere he drags them away to their long captivity were all around him. Nor were these things around him in a distant circle, they had come close home, for he adds, and the pains of hell gat hold upon me. Horrors such as those which torment the lost seized me, grasped me, found me out, searched me through and through, and held me a prisoner.
and the pains of hell gat hold upon me. He means by the pains of hell those pangs which belong to death, those terrors which are connected with the grave; these were so closely upon him that they fixed their teeth in him as hounds seize their prey.

I found trouble and sorrow—trouble was around me, and sorrow within me. His griefs were double, and as he searched into them they increased. A man rejoices when he finds a hid treasure; but what must be the anguish of a man who finds, where he least expected it, a vein of trouble and sorrow? The Psalmist was sought for by trouble and it found him out, and when he himself became a seeker he found no relief, but double distress.

4 Then called I upon the name of the LORD; O LORD, I beseech thee, deliver my soul.

116: 4 Then I called upon the name of the LORD. Prayer is never out of season, he prayed then, when things were at their worst. When the good man could not run to God, he called to him. In his extremity his faith came to the front: it was useless to call on man, and it may have seemed almost as useless to appeal to the Lord; but yet he did with his whole soul invoke all the attributes which make up the sacred name of Jehovah, and thus he proved the truth of his confidence. We can some of us remember certain very special times of trial of which we can now say, "then called I upon the name of the Lord." The Psalmist appealed to the Lord's mercy, truth, power, and faithfulness, and this was his prayer,—

O Lord, I beseech thee, deliver my soul. This form of petition is short, comprehensive, to the point, humble, and earnest. It were well if all our prayers were molded upon this model; perhaps they would be if we were in similar circumstances to those of the Psalmist, for real trouble produces real prayer. Here we have no multiplicity of words, and no fine arrangement of sentences; everything is simple and natural; there is not a redundant syllable, and yet there is not one lacking.

5 Gracious is the LORD, and righteous; yea, our God is merciful.

116:5 Gracious is the Lord, and righteous. In hearing prayer the grace and righteousness of Jehovah are both conspicuous. It is a great favour to hear a sinner's prayer, and yet since the Lord has promised to do so, he is not unrighteous to forget his promise and disregard the cries of his people. The combination of grace and righteousness in the dealings of God with his servants can only be explained by remembering the atoning sacrifice of our Lord Jesus Christ. At the cross we see how gracious is the Lord and righteous.

Yea, our God is merciful, or compassionate, tender, pitiful, full of mercy. We who have accepted him as ours have no doubt as to his mercy, for he would never have been our God if he had not been merciful. See how the attribute of righteousness seems to stand between two guards of love:—gracious, righteous, merciful. The sword of justice is scabbard in a jeweled sheath of grace.
6 The LORD preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me.

116:6 The LORD preserveth the simple. Those who have a great deal of wit may take care of themselves. Those who have no worldly craft and subtlety and guile, but simply trust in God, and do the right, may depend upon it that God's care shall be over them. The worldly wise with all their prudence shall be taken in their own craftiness, but those who walk in their integrity with single minded truthfulness before God shall be protected against the wiles of their enemies, and enabled to outlive their foes. Though the saints are like sheep in the midst of wolves, and comparatively defenseless, yet there are more sheep in the world than wolves, and it is highly probable that the sheep will feed in safety when not a single wolf is left upon the face of the earth: even so the meek shall inherit the earth when the wicked shall be no more.

I was brought low, and he helped me,—simple though I was, the Lord did not pass me by. Though reduced in circumstances, slandered in character, depressed in spirit, and sick in body, the Lord helped me. There are many ways in which the child of God may be brought low, but the help of God is as various as the need of his people: he supplies our necessities when impoverished, restores our character when maligned, raises up friends for us when deserted, comforts us when despairing, and heals our diseases when we are sick. There are thousands in the church of God at this time who can each one of them say for himself, "I was brought low, and he helped me." Whenever this can be said it should be said to the praise of the glory of his grace, and for the comforting of others who may pass through the like ordeal. Note how David after stating the general doctrine that the Lord preserveth the simple, proves and illustrates it from his own personal experience. The habit of taking home a general truth and testing the power of it in our own case is an exceedingly blessed one; it is the way in which the testimony of Christ is confirmed in us, and so we become witnesses unto the Lord our God.

7 Return unto thy rest, O my soul; for the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee.

116: 7 Return, unto thy rest, O my soul. He calls the rest still his own, and feels full liberty to return to it. What a mercy it is that even if our soul has left its rest for a while we can tell it—"it is thy rest still." The Psalmist had evidently been somewhat disturbed in mind, his troubles had ruffled his spirit but now with a sense of answered prayer upon him he quiets his soul. He had rested before, for he knew the blessed repose of faith, and therefore he returns to the God who had been the refuge of his soul in former days. Even as a bird flies to its nest, so does his soul fly to his God. Whenever a child of God even for a moment loses his peace of mind, he should be concerned to find it again, not by seeking it in the world or in his own experience, but in the Lord alone. When the believer prays, and the Lord inclines his ear, the road to the old rest is before him, let him not be slow to follow it.

For the LORD hath dealt bountifully with thee. Thou hast served a good God, and built upon a sure foundation; go not about to find any other rest, but come back to him who in former days
hath condescended to enrich thee by his love. What a text is this! and what an exposition of it is furnished by the biography of every believing man and woman! The Lord hath dealt bountifully with us, for he hath given us his Son, and in him he hath given us all things: he hath sent us his Spirit, and by him he conveys to us all spiritual blessings. God dealeth with us like a God; he lays his fullness open to us, and of that fullness have all we received, and grace for grace. We have sat at no niggard's table, we have been clothed by no penurious hand, we have been equipped by no grudging provider; let us come back to him who has treated us with such exceeding kindness. More arguments follow.

8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling.

116: 8 For thou hast delivered my soul from death, mine eyes from tears, and my feet from falling. The triune God has given us a trinity of deliverances: our life has been spared from the grave, our heart has been uplifted from its griefs, and our course in life has been preserved from dishonour. We ought not to be satisfied unless we are conscious of all three of these deliverance. If our soul has been saved from death, why do we weep? What cause for sorrow remains? Whence those tears? And if our tears have been wiped away, can we endure to fall again into sin? Let us not rest unless with steady feet we pursue the path of the upright, escaping every snare and shunning every stumbling block. Salvation, joy, and holiness must go together, and they are all provided for us in the covenant of grace. Death is vanquished, tears are dried, and fears are banished when the Lord is near. Thus has the Psalmist explained the reasons of his resolution to call upon God as long as he lived, and none can question but that he had come to a most justifiable resolve. When from so great a depth he had been uplifted by so special an interposition of God, he was undoubtedly bound to be for ever the hearty worshipper of Jehovah, to whom he owed so much. Do we not all feel the force of the reasoning, and will we not carry out the conclusion? May God the Holy Spirit help us so to pray without ceasing and in everything to give thanks, for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning us.

9 I will walk before the LORD in the land of the living.

116: 9 I will walk before the Lord in the land of the living. This is the Psalmist's second resolution, to live as in the sight of God in the midst of the sons of men. By a man's walk is understood his way of life: some men live only as in the sight of their fellow men, having regard to human judgment and opinion; but the truly gracious man considers the presence of God, and acts under the influence of his all observing eye. "Thou God seeest me" is a far better influence than "My master sees me." The life of faith, hope, holy fear, and true holiness is produced by a sense of living and walking before the Lord, and he who has been favored with divine deliverances in answer to prayer finds his own experience the best reason for a holy life, and the best assistance to his endeavors. We know that God in a special manner is nigh unto his people: what manner of persons ought we to be in all holy conversation and godliness?

10 ¶ I believed, therefore have I spoken: I was greatly afflicted:
I believed, therefore have I spoken. I could not have spoken thus if it had not been for my faith: I should never have spoken unto God in prayer, nor have been able now to speak to my fellow men in testimony if it had not been that faith kept me alive, and brought me a deliverance, whereof I have good reason to boast. Concerning the things of God no man should speak unless he believes; the speech of the waverer is mischievous, but the tongue of the believer is profitable; the most powerful speech which has ever been uttered by the lip of man has emanated from a heart fully persuaded of the truth of God. Not only the Psalmist, but such men as Martin Luther, and John Calvin, and other great witnesses for the faith could each one most heartily say, "I believed, therefore have I spoken."

I was greatly afflicted. There was no mistake about that; the affliction was as bitter and as terrible as it well could be, and since I have been delivered from it, I am sure that the deliverance is no fanatical delusion, but a self evident fact; therefore am I the more resolved to speak to the honour of God. Though greatly afflicted, the Psalmist had not ceased to believe: his faith was tried but not destroyed.

1 I said in my haste, All men are liars.

1 I said in my haste, All men are liars. In a modified sense the expression will bear justification, even though hastily uttered, for all men will prove to be liars if we unduly trust in them; some from want of truthfulness, and others from want of power. But from the expression, "I said in my haste, "it is clear that the Psalmist did not justify his own language, but considered it as the ebullition of a hasty temper. In the sense in which he spoke his language was unjustifiable. He had no right to distrust all men, for many of them are honest, truthful, and conscientious; there are faithful friends and loyal adherents yet alive; and if sometimes they disappoint us, we ought not to call them liars for failing when the failure arises entirely from want of power, and not from lack of will. Under great affliction our temptation will be to form hasty judgments of our fellow men, and knowing this to be the case we ought carefully to watch our spirit, and to keep the door of our lips. The Psalmist had believed, and therefore he spoke; he had doubted, and therefore he spoke in haste. He believed, and therefore he rightly prayed to God; he disbelieved, and therefore he wrongfully accused mankind. Speaking is as ill in some cases as it is good in others. Speaking in haste is generally followed by bitter repentance. It is much better to be quiet when our spirit is disturbed and hasty, for it is so much easier to say than to unsay; we may repent of our words, but we cannot so recall them as to undo the mischief they have done. If even David had to eat his own words, when he spoke in a hurry, none of us can trust our tongue without a bridle.

12 What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me?

12 What shall I render unto the LORD for all his benefits toward me? He wisely leaves off fretting about man's falsehood and his own ill humor, and directs himself to his God. It is of little use to be harping on the string of man's imperfection and deceitfulness; it is infinitely better to praise the perfection and faithfulness of God. The question of the verse is a very proper one: the Lord has rendered so much mercy to us that we ought to look about us, and look within us,
and see what can be done by us to manifest our gratitude. We ought not only to do what is plainly before us, but also with holy ingenuity to search out various ways by which we may render fresh praises unto our God. His benefits are so many that we cannot number them, and our ways of acknowledging his bestowments ought to be varied and numerous in proportion. Each person should have his own peculiar mode of expressing gratitude. The Lord sends each one a special benefit, let each one enquire, "What shall I render? What form of service would be most becoming in me?"

13 I will take the cup of salvation, and call upon the name of the LORD.

116: 13 I will take the cup of salvation. "I will take" is a strange answer to the question, "What shall I render?" and yet it is the wisest reply that could possibly be given.

"The best return for one like me,
So wretched and so poor,
Is from his gifts to draw a plea
And ask him still for more."

To take the cup of salvation was in itself an act of worship, and it was accompanied with other forms of adoration, hence the Psalmist says,

and call upon the name of the LORD. He means that he will utter blessings and thanksgivings and prayers, and then drink of the cup which the Lord had filled with his saving grace. What a cup this is! Upon the table of infinite love stands the cup full of blessing; it is ours by faith to take it in our hand, make it our own, and partake of it, and then with joyful hearts to laud and magnify the gracious One who has filled it for our sakes that we may drink and be refreshed. What a cup this is! Upon the table of infinite love stands the cup full of blessing; it is ours by faith to take it in our hand, make it our own, and partake of it, and then with joyful hearts to laud and magnify the gracious One who has filled it for our sakes that we may drink and be refreshed. We can do this figuratively at the sacramental table, we can do it spiritually every time we grasp the golden chalice of the covenant, realizing the fullness of blessing which it contains, and by faith receiving its divine contents into our inmost soul. Beloved reader, let us pause here and take a long and deep draught from the cup which Jesus filled, and then with devout hearts let us worship God.

14 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people.

116: 14 I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. The Psalmist has already stated his third resolution, to devote himself to the worship of God evermore, and here he commences the performance of that resolve. The vows which he had made in anguish, he now determines to fulfill: "I will pay my vows unto the Lord." He does so at once, "now, "and that publicly, "in the presence of all his people." Good resolutions cannot be carried out too speedily; vows become debts, and debts should be paid. It is well to have witnesses to the payment of just debts, and we need not be ashamed to have witnesses to the fulfilling of holy vows, for this will show that we are not ashamed of our Lord, and it may be a great benefit to those who look on and hear us publicly sounding forth the praises of our prayer hearing God. How can those do this who have never with their mouth confessed their Saviour? O secret disciples, what say you to this verse! Be encouraged to come into the light and own your
Redeemer. If, indeed, you have been saved, come forward and declare it in his own appointed way.

15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints.

116: 15 Precious in the sight of the LORD is the death of his saints, and therefore he did not suffer the Psalmist to die, but delivered his soul from death. This seems to indicate that the song was meant to remind Jewish families of the mercies received by any one of the household, supposing him to have been sore sick and to have been restored to health, for the Lord values the lives of his saints, and often spares them where others perish. They shall not die prematurely; they shall be immortal till their work is done; and when their time shall come to die, then their deaths shall be precious. The Lord watches over their dying beds, smooths their pillows, sustains their hearts, and receives their souls. Those who are redeemed with precious blood are so dear to God that even their deaths are precious to him. The deathbeds of saints are very precious to the church, she often learns much from them; they are very precious to all believers, who delight to treasure up the last words of the departed; but they are most precious to the Lord Jehovah himself, who views the triumphant deaths of his gracious ones with sacred delight. If we have walked before him in the land of the living, we need not fear to die before him when the hour of our departure is at hand.

16 O LORD, truly I am thy servant; I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid: thou hast loosed my bonds.

116: 16 The man of God in paying his vows rededicates himself unto God; the offering which he brings is himself, as he cries,

O LORD, truly I am thy servant, rightly, really, heartily, constantly, I own that I am thine, for thou hast delivered and redeemed me.

I am thy servant, and the son of thine handmaid, a servant born in thy house, born of a servant and so born a servant, and therefore doubly thine. My mother was thine handmaid, and I, her son, confess that I am altogether thine by claims arising out of my birth. O that children of godly parents would thus judge; but, alas, there are many who are the sons of the Lord's handmaids, but they are not themselves his servants. They give sad proof that grace does not run in the blood. David's mother was evidently a gracious woman, and he is glad to remember that fact, and to see in it a fresh obligation to devote himself to God.

Thou hast loosed my bonds, freedom from bondage binds me to thy service. He who is loosed from the bonds of sin, death, and hell should rejoice to wear the easy yoke of the great Deliverer. Note how the sweet singer delights to dwell upon his belonging to the Lord; it is evidently his glory, a thing of which he is proud, a matter which causes him intense satisfaction. Verily, it ought to create rapture in our souls if we are able to call Jesus Master, and are acknowledged by him as his servants.
17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving, and will call upon the name of the LORD.

116: 17 I will offer to thee the sacrifice of thanksgiving. Being thy servant, I am bound to sacrifice to thee, and having received spiritual blessings at thy hands I will not bring bullock or goat, but I will bring that which is more suitable, namely, the thanksgiving of my heart. My inmost soul shall adore thee in gratitude.

And will call upon the name of the Lord, that is to say, I will bow before thee reverently, lift up my heart in love to thee, think upon thy character, and adore thee as thou dost reveal thyself. He is fond of this occupation, and several times in this Psalm declares that "he will call upon the name of the Lord," while at the same time he rejoices that he had done so many a time before. Good feelings and actions bear repeating: the more of hearty callings upon God the better.

18 I will pay my vows unto the LORD now in the presence of all his people,

116: 18 I will pay my vows unto the Lord now in the presence of all his people. He repeats the declaration. A good thing is worth saying twice. He thus stirs himself up to greater heartiness, earnestness, and diligence in keeping his vow,—really paying it at the very moment that he is declaring his resolution to do so. The mercy came in secret, but the praise is rendered in public; the company was, however, select; he did not cast his pearls before swine, but delivered his testimony before those who could understand and appreciate it.

19 In the courts of the LORD'S house, in the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.

116: 19 In the courts of the LORD'S house: in the proper place, where God had ordained that he should be worshipped. See how he is stirred up at the remembrance of the house of the Lord, and must needs speak of the holy city with a note of joyful exclamation—

In the midst of thee, O Jerusalem. The very thought of the beloved Zion touched his heart, and he writes as if he were actually addressing Jerusalem, whose name was dear to him. There would he pay his vows, in the abode of fellowship, in the very heart of Judea, in the place to which the tribes went up, the tribes of the Lord. There is nothing like witnessing for Jesus, where the report thereof will be carried into a thousand homes. God's praise is not to be confined to a closet, nor his name to be whispered in holes and corners, as if we were afraid that men should hear us; but in the thick of the throng, and in the very centre of assemblies, we should lift up heart and voice unto the Lord, and invite others to join with us in adoring him, saying,

Praise ye the LORD, or Hallelujah. This was a very fit conclusion of a song to be sung when all the people were gathered together at Jerusalem to keep the feast. God's Spirit moved the writers of these Psalms to give them a fitness and suitability which was more evident in their own day than now; but enough is perceptible to convince us that every line and word had a peculiar adaptation to the occasions for which the sacred sonnets were composed. When we worship the Lord we ought with great care to select the words of prayer and praise, and not to trust to the
opening of a hymn book, or to the unconsidered extemporizing of the moment. Let all things be
done decently and in order, and let all things begin and end with Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord.

PSALM 117

SUBJECT. This Psalm, which is very little in its letter, is exceedingly large in its spirit; for,
bursting beyond all bounds of race or nationality, it calls upon all mankind to praise the name of
the Lord. In all probability it was frequently used as a brief hymn suitable for almost every
occasion, and especially when the time for worship was short. Perhaps it was also sung at the
commencement or at the close of other Psalms, just as we now use the doxology. It would have
served either to open a service or to conclude it. It is both short and sweet. The same divine
Spirit which expatiates in the 119th, here condenses his utterances into two short verses, but yet
the same infinite fullness is present and perceptible. It may be worth noting that this is at once
the shortest chapter of the Scriptures and the central portion of the whole Bible.

1 ¶ O praise the LORD, all ye nations: praise him, all ye people.

117: 1 O praise the LORD, all ye nations. This is an exhortation to the Gentiles to glorify
Jehovah, and a clear proof that the Old Testament spirit differed widely from that narrow and
contracted national bigotry with which the Jews of our Lord's day became so inveterately diseased. The nations could not be expected to join in the praise of Jehovah unless they were also to be partakers of the benefits which Israel enjoyed; and hence the Psalm was an intimation to Israel that the grace and mercy of their God were not to be confined to one nation, but would in happier days be extended to all the race of man, even as Moses had prophesied when he said,

"Rejoice. O ye nations, his people" (Deuteronomy 32:43), for so the Hebrew has it. The nations were to be his people. He would call them a people that were not a people, and her beloved that was not beloved. We know and believe that no one tribe of men shall be unrepresented in the universal song which shall ascend unto the Lord of all. Individuals have already been gathered out of every kindred and people and tongue by the preaching of the gospel, and these have right heartily joined in magnifying the grace which sought them out, and brought them to know the Saviour. These are but the advance guard of a number which no man can number who will come ere long to worship the all glorious One.

Praise him, all ye people. Having done it once, do it again, and do it still more fervently, daily increasing in the reverence and zeal with which you extol the Most High. Not only praise him nationally by your rulers, but popularly in your masses. The multitude of the common folk shall bless the Lord. Inasmuch as the matter is spoken of twice, its certainty is confirmed, and the Gentiles must and shall extol Jehovah—all of them, without exception. Under the gospel dispensation we worship no new god, but the God of Abraham is our God for ever and ever; the God of the whole earth shall he be called.

2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us: and the truth of the LORD endureth for ever. Praise ye the LORD.

117: 2 For his merciful kindness is great toward us. By which is meant not only his great love toward the Jewish people, but towards the whole family of man. The Lord is kind to us as his creatures, and merciful to us as sinners, hence his merciful kindness to us as sinful creatures. This mercy has been very great, or powerful. The mighty grace of God has prevailed even as the waters of the flood prevailed over the earth: breaking over all bounds, it has flowed towards all portions of the multiplied race of man. In Christ Jesus, God has shown mercy mixed with kindness, and that to the very highest degree. We can all join in this grateful acknowledgment, and in the praise which is therefore due.

And the truth of the Lord endureth for ever. He has kept his covenant promise that in the seed of Abraham should all nations of the earth be blessed, and he will eternally keep every single promise of that covenant to all those who put their trust in him. This should be a cause of constant and grateful praise, wherefore the Psalm concludes as it began, with another Hallelujah. Praise ye the LORD.
PSALM 118

AUTHOR AND SUBJECT. In the book Ezra 3:10-11, we read that "when the builders laid the foundation of the temple of the Lord, they set the priests in their apparel with trumpets, and the Levites the sons of Asaph with cymbals, to praise he Lord, after the ordinance of David king of Israel. And they sang together by course in praising and giving thanks unto the Lord; because he is good, for his mercy endureth for ever toward Israel. And all the people shouted with a great shout, when they praised the Lord, because the foundation of the house of the Lord was laid."

Now the words mentioned in Ezra are the first and last sentences of this Psalm, and we therefore conclude that the people chanted the whole of this sublime song; and, moreover, that the use of this composition on such occasions was ordained by David, whom we conceive to be its author. The next step leads us to believe that he is its subject, at least in some degree; for it is clear that the writer is speaking concerning himself in the first place, though he may not have strictly confined himself to all the details of his our personal experience. That the Psalmist had a prophetic view of our Lord Jesus is very manifest; the frequent quotations from this song in the New Testament prove this beyond all questions; but at the same time it could not have been intended that every particular line and sentence should be read in reference to the Messiah, for
this requires very great ingenuity, and ingenious interpretations are seldom true. Certain devout expositors have managed to twist the expression of Psalm 118:17, "I shall not die, but live," so as to make it applicable to our Lord, who did actually die, and whose glory it is that he died; but we cannot bring our minds to do such violence to the words of holy writ.

The Psalm, seems to us to describe either David or some other man of God who was appointed by the divine choice to a high and honourable office in Israel. This elect champion found himself rejected by his friends and fellow countrymen, and at the same time violently opposed by his enemies. In faith in God he battles for his appointed place, and in due time he obtains it in such a way as greatly to display the power and goodness of the Lord. He then goes up to the house of the Lord to offer sacrifice, and to express his gratitude for the divine interposition, all the people blessing him, and wishing him abundant prosperity. This heroic personage, whom we cannot help thinking to be David himself, broadly typified our Lord, but not in such a manner that in all the minutiae of his struggles and prayers we are to hunt for parallels. The suggestion of Alexander that the speaker is a typical individual representing the nation, is exceedingly well worthy of attention, but it is not inconsistent with the idea that a personal leader may be intended, since that which describes the leader will be in a great measure true of his followers. The experience of the Head is that of the members, and both may be spoken of in much the same terms. Alexander thinks that the deliverance celebrated cannot be identified with any one so exactly as with that from the Babylonian exile; but we judge it best to refer it to no one incident in particular, but to regard it as a national song, adapted alike for the rise of a chosen here, and the building of a temple. Whether a nation is founded again by a conquering prince, or a temple founded by the laying of its cornerstone in joyful state, the Psalm is equally applicable.

DIVISION. We propose to divide this Psalm thus, from Psalm 118:1-4 the faithful are called upon to magnify the everlasting mercy of the Lord; from Psalm 118:5-18 the Psalmist gives forth a narrative of his experience, and an expression of his faith; in Psalm 118:19-21 he asks admittance into the house of the Lord, and begins the acknowledgment of the divine salvation. In Psalm 118:22-27 the priests and people recognize their ruler, magnify the Lord for him, declare him blessed, and bid him approach the altar with his sacrifice. In Psalm 118:28-29 the grateful hero himself exalts God the ever merciful.

1 ¶ O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: because his mercy endureth for ever.

118: 1 O give thanks unto the LORD. The grateful hero feels that he cannot himself alone sufficiently express his thankfulness, and therefore he calls in the aid of others. Grateful hearts are greedy of men's tongues, and would monopolize them all for God's glory. The whole nation was concerned in David's triumphant accession, and therefore it was right that they should unite in his adoring song of praise. The thanks were to be rendered unto Jehovah alone, and not to the patience or valour of the hero himself. It is always well to trace our mercies to him who bestows them, and if we cannot give him anything else, let us at any rate give him our thanks. We must not stop short at the second agent, but rise at once to the first cause, and render all our praises unto the Lord himself. Have we been of a forgetful or murmuring spirit? Let us hear the lively language of the text, and allow it to speak to our hearts: "Cease your complaining, cease from all self glorification, and give thanks unto the Lord."
For he is good. This is reason enough for giving him thanks; goodness is his essence and nature, and therefore he is always to be praised whether we are receiving anything from him or not. Those who only praise God because he does them good should rise to a higher note and give thanks to him because he is good. In the truest sense he alone is good, "There is none good but one, that is God"; therefore in all gratitude the Lord should have the royal portion. If others seem to be good, he is good. If others are good in a measure, he is good beyond measure. When others behave badly to us, it should only stir us up the more heartily to give thanks unto the Lord because he is good; and when we ourselves are conscious that we are far from being good, we should only the more reverently bless him that "he is good." We must never tolerate an instant's unbelief as to the goodness of the Lord; whatever else may be questionable, this is absolutely certain, that Jehovah is good; his dispensations may vary, but his nature is always the same, and always good. It is not only that he was good, and will be good, but he is good; let his providence be what it may. Therefore let us even at this present moment, though the skies be dark with clouds, yet give thanks unto his name.

Because his mercy endureth for ever. Mercy is a great part of his goodness, and one which more concerns us than any other, for we are sinners and have need of his mercy. Angels may say that he is good, but they need not his mercy and cannot therefore take an equal delight in it; inanimate creation declares that he is good, but it cannot feel his mercy, for it has never transgressed; but man, deeply guilty and graciously forgiven, beholds mercy as the very focus and centre of the goodness of the Lord. The endurance of the divine mercy is a special subject for song: notwithstanding our sins, our trials, our fears, his mercy endureth for ever. The best of earthly joys pass away, and even the world itself grows old and hastens to decay, but there is no change in the mercy of God; he was faithful to our forefathers, he is merciful to us, and will be gracious to our children and our children's children. It is to be hoped that the philosophical interpreters who endeavor to clip the word "for ever", into a mere period of time will have the goodness to let this passage alone. However, whether they do or not, we shall believe in endless mercy—mercy to eternity. The Lord Jesus Christ, who is the grand incarnation of the mercy of God, calls upon us at every remembrance of him to give thanks unto the Lord, for "he is good."

2 Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever.

118: 2 Let Israel now say, that his mercy endureth for ever. God had made a covenant with their forefathers, a covenant of mercy and love, and to that covenant he was faithful evermore. Israel sinned in Egypt, provoked the Lord in the wilderness, went astray again and again under the judges, and transgressed at all times; and yet the Lord continued to regard them as his people, to favour them with his oracles, and to forgive their sins. He speedily ceased from the chastisements which they so richly deserved, because he had a favour towards them. He put his rod away the moment they repented, because his heart was full of compassion. "His mercy endureth for ever" was Israel's national hymn, which, as a people, they had been called upon to sing upon many former occasions; and now their leader, who had at last gained the place for which Jehovah had destined him, calls upon the whole nation to join with him in extolling, in this particular instance of the divine goodness, the eternal mercy of the Lord. David's success was mercy to Israel, as well as mercy to himself. If Israel does not sing, who will? If Israel does
not sing of mercy, who can? If Israel does not sing when the Son of David ascends the throne, the very stones will cry out.

3 Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy **endureth** for ever.

| 118: 3 **Let the house of Aaron now say, that his mercy endureth for ever.** The sons of Aaron were specially set apart to come nearest to God, and it was only because of his mercy that they were enabled to live in the presence of the thrice holy Jehovah, who is a consuming fire. Every time the morning and evening lamb was sacrificed, the priests saw the continual mercy of the Lord, and in all the holy vessels of the sanctuary, and all its services from hour to hour, they had renewed witness of the goodness of the Most High. When the high priest went in unto the holy place and came forth accepted, he might, above all men, sing of the eternal mercy. If this Psalm refers to David, the priests had special reason for thankfulness on his coming to the throne, for Saul had made a great slaughter among them, and had at various times interfered with their sacred office. A man had now come to the throne who for their Master's sake would esteem them, give them their dues, and preserve them safe from all harm. Our Lord Jesus, having made all his people priests unto God, may well call upon them in that capacity to magnify the everlasting mercy of the Most High. Can any one of the royal priesthood be silent? |

4 Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy **endureth** for ever.

| 118: 4 **Let them now that fear the LORD say, that his mercy endureth for ever.** If there were any throughout the world who did not belong to Israel after the flesh, but nevertheless had a holy fear and lowly reverence of God, the Psalmist calls upon them to unite with him in his thanksgiving, and to do it especially on the occasion of his exaltation to the throne; and this is no more than they would cheerfully agree to do, since every good man in the world is benefited when a true servant of God is placed in a position of honour and influence. The prosperity of Israel through the reign of David was a blessing to all who feared Jehovah. A truly God fearing man will have his eye much upon God's mercy, because he is deeply conscious of his need of it, and because that attribute excites in him a deep feeling of reverential awe. "There is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared." In the three exhortations, to Israel, to the house of Aaron, and to them that fear the Lord, there is a repetition of the exhortation to say, "*that his mercy endureth for ever.*" We are not only to believe, but to declare the goodness of God; truth is not to be hushed up, but proclaimed. God would have his people act as witnesses, and not stand silent in the day when his honour is impugned.

Specially is it our joy to speak out to the honour and glory of God when we think up, in the exaltation of his dear Son. We should shout "*Hosanna,*" and sing loud "*Hallelujahs*" when we behold the stone which the builders rejected lifted into its proper place. In each of the three exhortations notice carefully the word "*now.*" There is no time like time present for telling out the praises of God. The present exaltation of the Son of David now demands from all who are the subjects of his kingdom continual songs of thanksgiving to him who hath set him on high in the midst of Zion. **Now** with us should mean always.

When would it be right to cease from praising God, whose mercy never ceases? The fourfold testimonies to the everlasting mercy of God which are now before us speak like four evangelists,
each one declaring the very pith and marrow of the gospel; and they stand like four angels at the
four corners of the earth holding the winds in their hands, restraining the plagues of the latter
days that the mercy and long suffering of God may endure towards the sons of men. Here are
four cords to bind the sacrifice to the four horns of the altar, and four trumpets with which to
proclaim the year of jubilee to every quarter of the world. Let not the reader pass on to the
consideration of the rest of the Psalm until he has with all his might lifted up both heart and
voice to praise the Lord, "for his mercy endureth for ever."

"Let us with a gladsome mind
Praise the Lord, for he is kind;
For his mercies shall endure
Ever faithful, ever sure."

5 I called upon the LORD in distress: the LORD answered me, and set me in a large place.

118: 5 I called upon the LORD in distress, or, "out of anguish I invoked Jah." Nothing was left
him but prayer, his agony was too great for aught beside; but having the heart and the privilege
to pray he possessed all things. Prayers which come out of distress generally come out of the
heart, and therefore they go to the heart of God. It is sweet to recollect our prayers, and often
profitable to tell others of them after they are heard. Prayer may be bitter in the offering, but it
will be sweet in the answering. The man of God had called upon the Lord when he was not in
distress, and therefore he found it natural and easy to call upon him
when he was in distress. He worshipped he praised, he prayed: for all this is included in calling
upon God, even when he was in a straitened condition. Some read the original "a narrow gorge";
and therefore it was the more joy to him when he could say

The Lord answered me, and set me in a large place. He passed out of the defile of distress into
the well watered plain of delight. He says, "Jah heard me in a wide place, "for God is never shut
up, or straitened. In God's case hearing means answering, hence the translators rightly put, "The
Lord answered me, "though the original word is "heard." The answer was appropriate to the
prayer, for he brought him out of his narrow and confined condition into a place of liberty where
he could walk at large, free from obstruction and oppression. Many of us can join with the
Psalmist in the declarations of this verse; deep was our distress on account of sin, and we were
shut up as in a prison under the law, but in answer to the prayer of faith we obtained the liberty
of full justification wherewith Christ makes men free, and we are free indeed. It was the Lord
who did it, and unto his name we ascribe all the glory; we had no merits, no strength, no wisdom,
all we could do was to call upon him, and even that was his gift; but the mercy which is to
eternity came to our rescue, we were brought out of bondage, and we were made to delight
ourselves in the length and breadth of a boundless inheritance. What a large place is that in
which the great God has placed us! All things are ours, all times are ours, all places are ours, for
God himself is ours; we have earth to lodge in and heaven to dwell in,—what larger place can be
imagined? We need all Israel, the whole house of Aaron, and all them that fear the Lord, to assist
us in the expression of our gratitude; and when they have aided us to the utmost, and we
ourselves have done our
best, all will fall short of the praises that are due to our gracious Lord.

6 The LORD is on my side; I will not fear: what can man do unto me?

118: 6. The LORD is on my side. or, he is "for me." Once his justice was against me, but now he is my reconciled God, and engaged on my behalf. The Psalmist naturally rejoiced in the divine help; all men turned against him, but God was his defender and advocate, accomplishing the divine purposes of his grace. The expression may also be translated "to me," that is to say, Jehovah belongs to me, and is mine. What infinite wealth is here! If we do not magnify the Lord we are of all men most brutish.

I will not fear. He does not say that he should not suffer, but that he would not fear: the favour of God infinitely outweighed the hatred of men, therefore setting the one against the other he felt that he had no reason to be afraid. He was calm and confident, though surrounded with enemies, and so let all believers be, for thus they honour God.

What can man do unto me? He can do nothing more than God permits; at the very uttermost he can only kill the body, but he hath no more that he can do. God having purposed to set his servant upon the throne, the whole race of mankind could do nothing to thwart the divine decree: the settled purpose of Jehovah's heart could not be turned aside, nor its accomplishment delayed, much less prevented, by the most rancorous hostility of the most powerful of men. Saul sought to slay David, but David outlived Saul, and sat upon his throne. Scribe and Pharisee, priest and Herodian, united in opposing the Christ of God, but he is exalted on high none the less because of their enmity. The mightiest man is a puny thing when he stands in opposition to God, yea, he shrinks into utter nothingness. It were a pity to be afraid of such a pitiful, miserable, despicable object as a man opposed to the almighty God. The Psalmist here speaks like a champion throwing down the gauntlet to all comers, defying the universe in arms; a true Bayard, without fear and without reproach, he enjoys God's favour, and he defies every foe.

7 The LORD taketh my part with them that help me: therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me.

118: 7 The LORD taketh my part with them that help me. Jehovah condescended to be in alliance with the good man and his comrades; his God was not content to look on, but he took part in the struggle. What a consolatory fact it is that the Lord takes our part, and that when he raises up friends for us he does not leave them to fight for us alone, but he himself as our chief defender deigns to come into the battle and wage war on our behalf. David mentioned those that helped him, he was not unmindful of his followers; there is a long record of David's mighty men in the book of Chronicles, and this teaches us that we are not to disdain or think little of the generous friends who rally around us; but still our great dependence and our grand confidence must be fixed upon the Lord alone. Without him the strong helpers fail; indeed, apart from him in the sons of men there is no help; but when our gracious Jehovah is pleased to support and strengthen those who aid us, they become substantial helpers to us.
Therefore shall I see my desire upon them that hate me. The words, "my desire, "are added by the translators; the Psalmist said,

"I shall look upon my haters: I shall look upon them in the face, I shall make them cease from their contempt, I shall myself look down upon them instead of their looking down upon me. I shall see their defeat, I shall see the end of them." Our Lord Jesus does at this moment look down upon his adversaries, his enemies are his footstool; he shall look upon them at his second coming, and at the glance of his eyes they shall flee before him, not being able to endure that look with which he shall read them through and through.

8 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man.

118: 8 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in man. It is better in all ways, for first of all it is wiser: God is infinitely more able to help, and more likely to help, than man, and therefore prudence suggests that we put our confidence in him above all others. It is also morally better to do so, for it is the duty of the creature to trust in the Creator. God has a claim upon his creatures' faith, he deserves to be trusted; and to place our reliance upon another rather than upon himself, is a direct insult to his faithfulness. It is better in the sense of safer, since we can never be sure of our ground if we rely upon mortal man, but we are always secure in the hands of our God. It is better in its effect upon ourselves: to trust in man tends to make us mean, crouching, dependent; but confidence in God elevates, produces a sacred quiet of spirit, and sanctifies the soul. It is, moreover, much better to trust in God, as far as the result is concerned; for in many cases the human object of our trust fails from want of ability, from want of generosity, from want of affection, or from want of memory; but the Lord, so far from falling, does for us exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think. This verse is written out of the experience of many who have first of all found the broken reeds of the creature break under them, and have afterwards joyfully found the Lord to be a solid pillar sustaining all their weight.

9 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes.

118: 9 It is better to trust in the LORD than to put confidence in princes. These should be the noblest of men, chivalrous in character, and true to the core. The royal word should be unquestionable. They are noblest in rank and mightiest in power, and yet as a rule princes are not one whit more reliable than the rest of mankind. A gilded vane turns with the wind as readily as a meaner weathercock. Princes are but men, and the best of men are poor creatures. In many troubles they cannot help us in the least degree: for instance, in sickness, bereavement, or death; neither can they assist us one jot in reference to our eternal state. In eternity a prince's smile goes for nothing; heaven and hell pay no homage to royal authority. The favour of princes is proverbially fickle, the testimonies of worldlings to this effect are abundant. All of us remember the words put by the world's great poet into the lips of the dying Wolsey; their power lies in their truth:

"O how wretched
Is that poor man that
Yet a prince's smile has a strange witchery to many hearts, few are proof against that tuft hunting which is the index of a weak mind. Principle has been forgotten and character has been sacrificed to maintain position at court; yea, the manliness which the meanest slave retains has been basely bartered for the stars and garters of a profligate monarch. He who puts his confidence in God, the great King, is thereby made mentally and spiritually stronger, and rises to the highest dignity of manhood; in fact, the more he trusts the more is he free, but the fawning sycophant of greatness is meaner than the dirt he treads upon. For this reason and a thousand others it is infinitely better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in princes.

Note

Wolsey. Thomas Cardinal Wolsey, (circa March 1471-1475), was born Thomas Wulcy in Ipswich, Suffolk, England. He was an important English statesman and a cardinal of the Roman Catholic Church. A cardinal is a senior ecclsiastical (church) official in the Roman Catholic Church and a member of the College of Cardinals, ranking just below the Pope and appointed by him during a consistory (lit. sitting together) of his equals. S.E.M.

10 All nations compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them.

118: 10 *All nations compassed me about.* The hero of the Psalm, while he had no earthly friend upon whom he could thoroughly rely, was surrounded by innumerable enemies, who heartily hated him. He was hemmed in by his adversaries, and scarce could find a loophole of escape from the bands which made a ring around him. As if by common consent all sorts of people set themselves against him, and yet he was more than a match for them all, because he was trusting in the name of the Lord. Therefore does he joyfully accept the battle, and grasp the victory, crying,

*but in the name of the LORD will I destroy them,* or "cut them in pieces." They thought to destroy him, but he was sure of destroying them; they meant to blot out his name, but he expected to render not only his own name but the name of the Lord his God more illustrious in the hearts of men. It takes grand faith to be calm in the day of actual battle, and especially when that battle waxes hot; but our hero was as calm as if no fight was raging. Napoleon said that God was always on the side of the biggest battalions, but the Psalmist warrior found that the Lord of hosts was with the solitary champion, and that in his name the battalions were cut to pieces. There is a grand touch of the *ego* in the last sentence, but it is so overshadowed with the name of
the Lord that there is none too much of it. He recognized his own individuality, and asserted it: he did not sit still supinely and leave the work to be done by God by some mysterious means; but he resolved with his own trusty sword to set about the enterprise, and so become in God's hand the instrument of his own deliverance. He did all in the name of the Lord, but he did not ignore his own responsibility, nor screen himself from personal conflict, for he cried, "I will destroy them." Observe that he does not speak of merely escaping from

them like a bird out of the snare of the fowler, but he vows that he will carry the war into his enemies' ranks, and overthrow them so thoroughly that there should be no fear of their rising up a second time.

11 They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about: but in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

118: 11 They compassed me about; yea, they compassed me about. He had such a vivid recollection of his danger that his enemies seem to live again in his verses. We see their fierce array, and their cruel combination of forces. They made a double ring, they surrounded him in a circle of many ranks, they not only talked of doing so, but they actually shut him up and enclosed him as within a wall. His heart had vividly realized his position of peril at the time, and now he delights to call it again to mind in order that he may the more ardently adore the mercy which made him strong in the hour of conflict, so that he broke through a troop, yea, swept a host to destruction.

But in the name of the LORD will I destroy them. I will subdue them, get them under my feet, and break their power in pieces. He is as certain about the destruction of his enemies as he was assured of their having compassed him about. They made the circle three and four times deep, but for all that he felt confident of victory. It is grand to hear a man speak in this fashion when it is not boasting, but the calm declaration of his heartfelt trust in God.

12 They compassed me about like bees; they are quenched as the fire of thorns: for in the name of the LORD I will destroy them.

118: 12 They compassed me about like bees. They seemed to be everywhere, like a swarm of bees, attacking him at every point; nimbly flying from place to place, stinging him meanwhile, and inflicting grievous pain. They threatened at first to baffle him: what weapon could he use against them? They were so numerous, so inveterate; so contemptible, yet so audacious; so insignificant and yet so capable of inflicting agony, that to the eye of reason there appeared no possibility of doing anything with them. Like the swarm of flies Egypt, there was no standing against them; they threatened to sting a man to death with their incessant malice, their base insinuations, their dastardly falsehoods. He was in an evil case, but even there faith availed. All powerful faith adapts itself to all circumstances, it can cast out devils, and it can drive out bees. Surely, if it outlives the sting of death, it will not die from the sting of a bee.

They are quenched as the fire of thorns. Their fierce attacks soon came to an end, the bees lost their stings and the buzz of the swarm subsided; like thorns which blaze with fierce crackling and abundant flame, but die out in a handful of ashes very speedily, so did the nations which surrounded our hero soon cease their clamor and come to an inglorious end. They were soon hot
and soon cold, their attack was as short as it was sharp. He had no need to crush the bees, for like crackling thorns they died out of themselves. For a third time he adds,

*for in the name of the Lord will I destroy them*, or "cut them down," as men cut down thorns with a scythe or reaping hook. What wonders have been wrought in the name of the Lord! It is the battle cry of faith, before which its adversaries fly apace.

"*The sword of the Lord and of Gideon*" brings instant terror into the midst of the foe. The name of the Lord is the one weapon which never fails in the day of battle: he who knows how to use it may chase a thousand with his single arm. Alas! we too often go to work and to conflict in our own name, and the enemy knows it not, but scornfully asks, "Who are ye?" Let us take care never to venture into the presence of the foe without first of all arming ourselves with this impenetrable mail. If we knew this name better, and trusted it more, our life would be more fruitful and sublime.

"*Jesus, the name high over all,*

*In hell, or earth, or sky,*

*Angels and men before it fall,*

*And devils fear and fly.*"

13 Thou hast thrust sore at me that I might fall: but the LORD helped me.

118: 13 *Thou hast thrust sore at me.* "Thrusting, thou hast thrust at me." It is a vigorous apostrophe, in which the enemy is described as concentrating all his thrusting power into the thrusts which he gave to the man of God. He thrust again and again with the keenest point, even as bees thrust their stings into their victim. The foe had exhibited intense exasperation, and fearful determination, nor had he been without a measure of success; wounds had been given and received, and these smarted much, and were exceeding sore. Now, this is true of many a tried child of God who has been wounded by Satan, by the world, by temptation, by affliction; the sword has entered into his bones, and left its mark.

That I might fall. This was the object of the thrusting: to throw him down, to wound him in such a way that he would no longer be able to keep his place, to make him depart from his integrity, and lose his confidence in God. If our adversaries can do this they will have succeeded to their heart's content: if we fall into grievous sin they will be better pleased than even if they had sent the bullet of the assassin into our heart, for a moral death is worse than a physical one. If they can dishonour us, and God in us, their victory will be complete. "Better death than false of faith" is the motto of one of our noble houses, and it may well be ours. It is to compass our fall that they compass us; they fill us with their venom that they may fill us with their sin. But the Lord helped me; a blessed "but." This is the saving clause. Other helpers were unable to chase away the angry nations, much less to destroy all the noxious swarms; but when the Lord came to the rescue the hero's single arm was strong enough to vanquish all his adversaries. How sweetly can many of us repeat in the retrospect of our past tribulations this delightful sentence,
But the Lord helped me. I was assailed by innumerable doubts and fears, but the Lord helped me; my natural unbelief was terribly inflamed by the insinuations of Satan, but the Lord helped me; multiplied trial were rendered more intense by the cruel assaults of men, and I knew not what to do, but the Lord helped me. Doubtless, when we land on the hither shore of Jordan, this will be one of our songs, "Flesh and heart were failing me, and the adversaries of my soul surrounded me in the swellings of Jordan, but the Lord helped me. Glory be unto his name."

14 The LORD is my strength and song, and is become my salvation.

118: 14 The LORD my strength and song, my strength while I was in the conflict, my song now that it is ended; my strength against the strong, and my song over their defeat. He is far from boasting of his own valour; he ascribes his victory to its real source, he has no song concerning his own exploits, but all his peons are unto Jehovah Victor, the Lord whose right hand and holy arm had given him the victory.

And is become my salvation. The poet warrior knew that he was saved, and he not only ascribed that salvation unto God, but he declared God himself to be his salvation. It is an all comprehending expression, signifying that from beginning to end, in the whole and in the details of it, he owed his deliverance entirely to the Lord. Thus can all the Lord's redeemed say, "Salvation is of the Lord." We cannot endure any doctrine which puts the drown upon the wrong head and defrauds the glorious King of his revenue of praise. Jehovah has done it all; yea; in Christ Jesus he is all, and therefore in our praises let him alone be extolled. It is a happy circumstance for us when we can praise God as alike our strength, song, and salvation; for God sometimes gives a secret strength to his people, and yet they question their own salvation, and cannot, therefore, sing of it. Many are, no doubt, truly saved, but at times they have so little strength, that they are ready to faint, and therefore they cannot sing: when strength is imparted and salvation is realized then the song is clear and full.

15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

118: 15 The voice of rejoicing and salvation is in the tabernacles of the righteous. They sympathized in the delight of their leader and they abode in their tents in peace, rejoicing that one had been raised up who, in the name of the Lord, would protect them from their adversaries. The families of believers are happy, and they should take pains to give their happiness a voice by their family devotion. The dwelling place of saved men should be the temple of praise; it is but righteous that the righteous should praise the righteous God, who is their righteousness. The struggling hero knew that the voice of woe and lamentation was heard in the tents of his adversaries, for they had suffered severe defeat at his hands; but he was delighted by the remembrance that the nation for whom he had struggled would rejoice from one end of the land to the other at the deliverance which God had wrought by his means. That hero of heroes, the conquering Saviour, gives to all the families of his people abundant reasons for incessant song now that he has led captivity captive and ascended up on high. Let none of us be silent in our
households: if we have salvation let us have joy, and if we have joy let us give it a tongue wherewith it may magnify the Lord. If we hearken carefully to the music which comes from Israel's tents, we shall catch a stanza to this effect,

the right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly: Jehovah has manifested his strength, given victory to his chosen champion, and overthrown all the armies of the foe. "The Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name." When he comes to blows, woe to his mightiest opponent.

16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted: the right hand of the LORD doeth valiantly.

118: 16 The right hand of the LORD is exalted, lifted up to smite the enemy, or extolled and magnified in the eyes of his people. It is the Lord's right hand, the hand of his skill, the hand of his greatest power, the hand which is accustomed to defend his saints. When that is lifted up, it lifts up all who trust in him, and it casts down all who resist him.

The right hand of the Lord doeth valiantly. The Psalmist speaks in triplets, for he is praising the triune God, his heart is warm and he loves to dwell upon the note; he is not content with the praise he has rendered, he endeavors to utter it each time more fervently and more jubilantly than before. He had dwelt upon the sentence, "they compassed me about," for his peril from encircling armies was fully realized; and now he dwells upon the valour of Jehovah's right hand, for he has as vivid a sense of the presence and majesty of the Lord. How seldom is this the case: the Lord's mercy is forgotten and only the trial is remembered.

17 I shall not die, but live, and declare the works of the LORD.

118: 17 I shall not die, but live. His enemies hoped that he would die, and perhaps he himself feared he should perish at their hand: the news of his death may have been spread among his people, for the tongue of rumor is ever ready with ill news, the false intelligence would naturally cause great sorrow and despondency, but he proclaims himself as yet alive and as confident that he shall not fall by the hand of the destroyer. He is cheerfully assured that no arrow could carry death between the joints of his harness, and no weapon of any sort could end his career. His time had not yet come, he felt immortality beating within his bosom. Perhaps he had been sick, and brought to death's door, but he had a presentiment that the sickness was not unto death, but to the glory of God. At any rate, he knew that he should not so die as to give victory to the enemies of God; for the honour of God and the good of his people were both wrapped up in his continued success. Feeling that he would live he devoted himself to the noblest of purposes: he resolved to bear witness to the divine faithfulness,

and declare the works of the LORD. He determined to recount the works of Jah; and he does so in this Psalm, wherein he dwells with love and admiration upon the splendor of Jehovah's prowess in the midst of the fight. While there is a testimony for God to be borne by us to any one, it is certain that we shall not be hurried from the land of the living. The Lord's prophets shall live on in the midst of famine, and war, and plague, and persecution, till they have uttered all the words of their prophecy; his priests shall stand at the altar unharmed till their last sacrifice has
been presented before him. No bullet will find its billet in our hearts till we have finished our allotted period of activity,

"Plagues and deaths around me fly,
Till he please I cannot die:
Not a single shaft can hit,
Till the God of love sees fit."

18 The LORD hath chastened me sore: but he hath not given me over unto death.

118: 18 The LORD hath chastened me sore. This is faith's version of the former passage, "Thou hast thrust sore at me; "for the attacks of the enemy are chastisements from the hand of God. The devil tormented Job for his own purposes, but in reality the sorrows of the patriarch were chastisements from the Lord. "Chastening, Jah hath chastened me, "says our poet: as much as to say that the Lord had smitten him very severely, and made him sorrowfully to know the full weight of his rod. The Lord frequently appears to save his heaviest blows for his best beloved ones; if any one affliction be more painful than another it falls to, the lot of those whom he most distinguishes in his service. The gardener prunes his best roses with most care. Chastisement is sent to keep successful saints humble, to make them tender towards others, and to enable them to bear the high honours which their heavenly Friend puts upon them.

But he hath not given me over unto death. This verse, like the thirteenth, concludes with a blessed "but, "which constitutes a saving clause. The Psalmist felt as if he had been beaten within an inch of his life, but yet death did not actually ensue. There is always a merciful limit to the scourging of the sons of God. Forty stripes save one were all that an Israelite might receive, and the Lord will never allow that one, that killing stroke, to fall upon his children. They are "chastened, but not killed"; their pains are for their instruction, not for their destruction. By these things the ungodly die, but gracious Hezekiah could say, "By these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit." No, blessed be the name of God, he may chastise us, but he will not condemn us; we must feel the smarting rod, but we shall not feel the killing sword. He does not give us over unto death at any time, and we may be quite sure that he has not done so while he condescends to chasten us, for if he intended our final rejection he would not take the pains to place us under his fatherly discipline. It may seem hard to be under the afflicting rod, but it would be a far more dreadful thing if the Lord were to say, "He is given unto idols, let him alone." Even from our griefs we may distil consolation, and gather sweet flowers from the garden in which the Lord has planted salutary rue and wormwood. It is a cheering fact that if we endure chastening God dealeth with us as with sons, and we may well be satisfied with the common lot of his beloved family. The hero, restored to health, and rescued from the dangers of battle, now lifts up his own song unto the Lord, and asks all Israel, led on by the goodly fellowship of the priests, to assist him in chanting a joyful Te Deum.

19 ¶ Open to me the gates of righteousness: I will go into them, and I will praise the LORD:
This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter.

118: 20 This gate of the LORD, into which the righteous shall enter. Psalmist loves the house of God so well that he admires the very gate thereof, and pauses beneath its arch to express his affection for it. He loved it because it was the gate of the Lord, he loved it because it was the gate of righteousness, because so many godly people had already entered it, and because in all future ages such persons will continue to pass through its portals. If the gate of the Lord's house on earth is so pleasant to us, how greatly shall we rejoice when we pass that gate of pearl, to which none but the righteous shall ever approach, but through which all the just shall in due time enter to eternal felicity. The Lord Jesus has passed that way, and not only set the gate wide open, but secured an entrance for all those who are made righteous in his righteousness: all the righteous must and shall enter there, whoever may oppose them. Under another aspect our Lord is himself that gate, and through him, as the new and living Way, all the righteous delight to approach unto the Lord. Whenever we draw near to praise the Lord we must come by this gate; acceptable praise never climbs over the wall, or enters by any other way, but comes to God in Christ Jesus; as it is written, "no man cometh unto the Father but by me." Blessed, for ever blessed, be this wondrous gate of the person of our Lord.

I will praise thee: for thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation.

118: 21 Having entered, the champion exclaims, I will praise thee, not "I will praise the Lord, "for now he vividly realizes the divine presence, and addresses himself directly to Jehovah, whom his faith sensibly discerns. How well it is in all our songs of praise to let the heart have direct and distinct communion with God himself! The Psalmist's song was personal praise too:— "I will praise thee"; resolute praise, for he firmly resolved to offer it; spontaneous praise, for he voluntarily and cheerfully rendered it, and continuous praise, for he did not intend soon to have done with it. It was a life long vow to which there would never come a close, "I will praise thee." For thou hast heard me, and art become my salvation. He praises God by mentioning his favors, weaving his song out of the divine goodness which he had experienced. In these words he gives the reason for his praise,—his answered prayer, and the deliverance which he had received in consequence. How fondly he dwells upon the personal interposition of God!

Thou hast heard me. How heartily he ascribes the whole of his victory over his enemies to God; nay, he sees God himself to be the whole of it: Thou art become my salvation. It is well to go directly to God himself, and not to stay even in his mercy, or in the acts of his grace. Answered prayers bring God very near to us; realized salvation enables us to realize the immediate presence of God. Considering the extreme distress through which the worshipper had passed, it is not at all wonderful that he should feel his heart full of gratitude at the great salvation which God had wrought for him, and should at his first entrance into the temple lift up his voice in thankful praise for personal favors so great, so needful, so perfect. This passage (Psalm 118:22-27) will appear to be a mixture of the expressions of the people and of the hero himself.

The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner.
118: 22 The stone which the builders refused is become the head stone of the corner. Here the people magnify God for bringing his chosen servant into the honourable office, which had been allotted to him by divine decree. A wise king and valiant leader is a stone by which the national fabric is built up. David had been rejected by those in authority, but God had placed him in a position of the highest honour and the greatest usefulness, making him the chief corner stone of the state. In the case of many others whose early life has been spent in conflict, the Lord has been pleased to accomplish his divine purposes in like manner; but to none is this text so applicable as to the Lord Jesus himself: he is the living stone, the tried stone, elect, precious, which God himself appointed from of old. The Jewish builders, scribe, priest, Pharisee, and Herodian, rejected him with disdain. They could see no excellence in him that they should build upon him; he could not be made to fit in with their ideal of a national church, he was a stone of another quarry from themselves, and not after their mind nor according to their taste; therefore they cast him away and poured contempt upon him, even as Peter said, "This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders"; they reckoned him to be as nothing, though he is Lord of all. In raising him from the dead the Lord God exalted him to be the head of his church, the very pinnacle of her glory and beauty. Since then he has become the confidence of the Gentiles, even of them that are afar off upon the sea, and thus he has joined the two walls of Jew and Gentile into one stately temple, and is seen to be the binding corner stone, making both one. This is a delightful subject for contemplation. Jesus in all things hath the preeminence, he is the principal stone of the whole house of God. We are accustomed to lay some one stone of a public building with solemn ceremony, and to deposit in it any precious things which may have been selected as a memorial of the occasion: henceforth that cornerstone is looked upon as peculiarly honourable, and joyful memories are associated with it. All this is in a very emphatic sense true of our blessed Lord, "The Shepherd, the Stone of Israel." God himself laid him where he is, and hid within him all the precious things of the eternal covenant; and there he shall for ever remain, the foundation of all our hopes, the glory of all our joys, the united bond of all our fellowship. He is "the head over all things to the church," and by him the church is fitly framed together, and growth unto a holy temple in the Lord. Still do the builders refuse him: even to this day the professional teachers of the gospel are far too apt to fly to any and every new philosophy sooner than maintain the simple gospel, which is the essence of Christ: nevertheless, he holds his true position amongst his people, and the foolish builders shall see to their utter confusion that his truth shall be exalted over all. Those who reject the chosen stone will stumble against him to their own hurt, and ere long will come his second advent, when he will fall upon them from the heights of heaven, and grind them to powder.

23 This is the LORD'S doing; it is marvelous in our eyes.

118: 23 This is the LORD'S doing. The exalted position of Christ in his church is not the work of man, and does not depend for its continuation upon any builders or ministers; God himself has wrought the exaltation of our Lord Jesus. Considering the opposition which comes from the wisdom, the power, and the authority of this world, it is manifest that if the kingdom of Christ be indeed set up and maintained in the world it must be by supernatural power. Indeed, it is so even in the smallest detail. Every grain of true faith in this world is a divine creation, and every hour in which the true church subsists is a prolonged miracle. It is not the goodness of human nature,
nor the force of reasoning, which exalts Christ, and builds up the church, but a power from above. This staggers the adversary, for he cannot understand what it is which baffles him: of the Holy Ghost He knows nothing.

It is marvelous in our eyes. We actually see it; it is not in our thoughts and hopes and prayers alone, but the astonishing work is actually before our eyes. Jesus reigns, his power is felt, and we perceive that it is so. Faith sees our great Master, far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come; she sees and marvels. It never ceases to astonish us, as we see, even here below, God by means of weakness defeating power, by the simplicity of his word baffling the craft of men, and by the invisible influence of his Spirit exalting his Son in human hearts in the teeth of open and determined opposition. It is indeed "marvelous in our eyes, "as all God's works must be if men care to study them. In the Hebrew the passage reads, "It is wonderfully done": not only is the exaltation of Jesus of Nazareth itself wonderful, but the way in which it is brought about is marvelous: it is wonderfully done. The more we study the history of Christ and his church the more fully shall we agree with this declaration.

24 This is the day which the LORD hath made; we will rejoice and be glad in it.

118: 24 This is the day which the LORD hath made. A new era has commenced. The day of David's enthronement was the beginning of better times for Israel; and in a far higher sense the day of our Lord's resurrection is a new day of God's own making, for it is the dawn of a blessed dispensation. No doubt the Israelitish nation celebrated the victory of its champion with a day of feasting, music and song; and surely it is but meet that we should reverently keep the feast of the triumph of the Son of David. We observe the Lord's day as henceforth our true Sabbath, a day made and ordained of God, for the perpetual remembrance of the achievements of our Redeemer. Whenever the soft Sabbath light of the first day of the week breaks upon the earth, let us sing,

"This is the day the Lord hath made,  
He calls the hours his own;  
Let heaven rejoice, let earth be glad,  
And praise surround the throne."

We by no means wish to confine the reference of the passage to the Sabbath, for the whole gospel day is the day of God's making, and its blessings come to us through our Lord's being placed as the head of the corner.

We will rejoice and be glad in it. What else can we do? Having obtained so great a deliverance through our illustrious leader, and having seen the eternal mercy of God so brilliantly displayed, it would ill become us to mourn and murmur. Rather will we exhibit a double joy, rejoice in heart and be glad in face, rejoice in secret and be glad in public, for we have more than a double reason for being glad in the Lord. We ought to be specially joyous on the Sabbath: it is the queen of days, and its hours should be clad in royal apparel of delight. George Herbert says of it:
"Thou art a day of mirth,  
And where the weekdays trail on ground,  
Thy flight is higher as thy birth."

Entering into the midst of the church of God, and beholding the Lord Jesus as all in all in the assemblies of his people, we are bound to overflow with joy. Is it not written, "then were the disciples glad when they saw the Lord"? When the King makes the house of prayer to be a banqueting house, and we have grace to enjoy fellowship with him, both in his sufferings and in his triumphs, we feel an intense delight, and we are glad to express it with the rest of his people.

25 Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD: O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity.

118: 25 Save now, I beseech thee, O LORD. Hosanna! God save our king! Let David reign! Or as we who live in these latter days interpret it,—Let the Son of David live for ever, let his saving help go forth throughout all nations.
This was the peculiar shout of the feast of tabernacles; and so long as we dwell here below in these tabernacles of clay we cannot do better than use the same cry. Perpetually let us pray that our glorious King may work salvation in the midst of the earth. We plead also for ourselves that the Lord would save us, deliver us, and continue to sanctify us. This we ask with great earnestness, beseeching it of Jehovah. Prayer should always be an entreating and beseeching.

O LORD, I beseech thee, send now prosperity. Let the church be built up: through the salvation of sinners may the number of the saints be increased; through the preservation of saints may the church be strengthened, continued, beautified, perfected. Our Lord Jesus himself pleads for the salvation and the prosperity of his chosen; as our Intercessor before the throne he asks that the heavenly Father would save and keep those who were of old committed to his charge, and cause them to be one through the indwelling Spirit. Salvation had been given, and therefore it is asked for. Strange though it may seem, he who cries for salvation is already in a measure saved. None can so truly cry, "Save, I beseech thee," as those who have already participated in salvation; and the most prosperous church is that which most imploringly seeks prosperity. It may seem strange that, returning from victory, flushed with triumph, the hero should still ask for salvation; but so it is, and it could not be otherwise. When all our Savior's work and warfare were ended, his intercession became even more prominently a feature of his life; after he had conquered all his foes he made intercession for the transgressors. What is true of him is true of his church also, for whenever she obtains the largest measure of spiritual blessing she is then most inclined to plead for more. She never pants so eagerly for prosperity as when she sees the Lord's doings in her midst, and marvels at them. Then, encouraged by the gracious visitation, she sets apart her solemn days of prayer, and cries with passionate desire, "Save now, "and "Send now prosperity." She would fain take the tide at the flood, and make the most of the day of which the Lord has already made so much.

26 Blessed be he that cometh in the name of the LORD: we have blessed you out of the house of the LORD.
Blessed is he that cometh in the name of the LORD. The champion had done everything "in the name of the Lord": in that name he had routed all his adversaries, and had risen to the throne, and in that name he had now entered the temple to pay his vows. We know who it is that cometh in the name of the Lord beyond all others. In the Psalmist's days he was The Coming One, and he is still The Coming One, though he hath already come. We are ready with our hosannas both for his first and second advent; our inmost souls thankfully adore and bless him and upon his head unspeakable joys. "Prayer also shall be made for him continually: and daily shall he be praised." For his sake everybody is blessed to us who comes in the name of the Lord, we welcome all such to our hearts and our homes; but chiefly, and beyond all others, we welcome himself when he deigns to enter in and sup with us and we with him. O sacred bliss, fit ante-past of heaven! Perhaps this sentence is intended to be the benediction of the priests upon the valiant servant of the Lord, and if so, it is appropriately added,

We have blessed you out of the house of the LORD. The priests whose business it was to bless the people, in a sevenfold degree blessed the people's deliverer, the one chosen out of the people whom the Lord had exalted. All those whose high privilege it is to dwell in the house of the Lord for ever, because they are made priests unto God in Christ Jesus, can truly say that they bless the Christ who has made them what they are, and placed them where they are. Whenever we feel ourselves at home with God, and feel the spirit of adoption, whereby we cry, "Abba Father," the first thought of our hearts should be to bless the elder Brother, through whom the privilege of sonship has descended to such unworthy ones. In looking back upon our past lives we can remember many delightful occasions in which with joy unutterable we have in the fullness of our heart blessed our Saviour and our King; and all these memorable seasons are so many foretastes and pledges of the time when in the house of our great Father above we shall for ever sing, "Worthy is the Lamb that was slain," and with rapture bless the Redeemer's name.

27 God is the LORD, which hath shewed us light: bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar.
Bind the sacrifice with cords, even unto the horns of the altar. Some think that by this we are taught that the king offered so many sacrifices that the whole area of the court was filled, and the sacrifices were bound even up to the altar; but we are inclined to keep to our own version, and to believe that sometimes restive bullocks were bound to the altar before they were slain, in which case Richard Mant’s [February 12, 1776-1848; an English churchman and writer] verse is correct:

"He, Jehovah, is our Lord:
He, our God, on us hath shined:
Bind the sacrifice with cord,
To the horned altar bind."

The word rendered "cords" carries with it the idea of wreaths and boughs, so that it was not a cord of hard, rough rope, but a decorated band; even as in our case, though we are bound to the altar of God, it is with the cords of love and the bands of a man, and not by a compulsion which destroys the freedom of the will. The sacrifice which we would present in honour of the victories of our Lord Jesus Christ is the living sacrifice of our spirit, soul, and body. We bring ourselves to his altar, and desire to offer him all that we have and are. There remains a tendency in our nature to start aside from this; it is not fond of the sacrificial knife. In the warmth of our love we come willingly to the altar, but we need constraining power to keep us there in the entirety of our being throughout the whole of life. Happily there is a cord which, twisted around the atonement, or, better still, around the person of our Lord Jesus Christ, who is our only Altar, can hold us, and does hold us: "For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then all died; and that he died for all, that they that live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again." We are bound to the doctrine of atonement; we are bound to Christ himself, who is both altar and sacrifice; we desire to be more bound to him than ever, our soul finds her liberty in being tethered fast to the altar of the Lord. The American Board of Missions has for its seal an ox, with an altar on one side and a plough on the other, and the motto "Ready for either,"—ready to live and labour, or ready to suffer and die. We would gladly spend ourselves for the Lord actively, or be spent by him passively, whichever may be his will; but since we know the rebellion of our corrupt nature we earnestly pray that we may be kept in this consecrated mind, and that we may never, under discouragements, or through the temptations of the world, be permitted to leave the altar, to which it is our intense desire to be for ever fastened. Such consecration as this, and such desires for its perpetuity, well beseech that day of gladness which the Lord hath made so bright by the glorious triumph of his Son, our covenant head, our well beloved. Now comes the closing song of the champion, and of each one of his admirers.

28 Thou art my God, and I will praise thee: thou art my God, I will exalt thee.
Thou art my God, I will exalt thee. Thou hast exalted me, and as far as my praises can do it, I will exalt thy name. Jesus is magnified, and he magnifies the Father according to his prayer, "Father, the hour is come; glorify thy Son, that thy Son also may glorify thee." God hath given us grace and promised us glory, and we are constrained to ascribe all grace to him, and all the glory of it also. The repetition indicates a double determination, and sets forth the firmness of the resolution, the heartiness of the affection, the intensity of the gratitude. Our Lord Jesus himself saith, "I will praise thee"; and well may each one of us, humbly and with confidence in divine grace, add, on his own account, the same declaration, "I will praise thee." However others may blaspheme thee, I will exalt thee; however dull and cold I may sometimes feel myself, yet will I rouse up my nature, and determine that as long as I have any being that being shall be spent to thy praise. For ever thou art my God, and for ever I will give thee thanks.

29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

118: 29 O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever. The Psalm concludes as it began, making a complete circle of joyful adoration. We can well suppose that the notes at the close of the loud hallelujah were more swift, more sweet, more loud than at the beginning. To the sound of trumpet and harp, Israel, the house of Aaron, and all that feared the Lord, forgetting their distinctions, joined in one common hymn, testifying again to their deep gratitude to the Lord's goodness, and to the mercy which is unto eternity. What better close could there be to this right royal song? The Psalmist would have risen to something higher, so as to end with a climax, but nothing loftier remained. He had reached the height of his grandest argument, and there he paused. The music ceased, the song was suspended, the great Hallel was all chanted, and the people went every one to his own home, quietly and happily musing upon the goodness of the Lord, whose mercy fills eternity.
Psalm 119

Preface

At length I am able to present to the Christian public another part of "The Treasury of David." It has demanded longer labour than its predecessors, but that labour has been freely given to it; and to the utmost of my ability I have kept the volume up to the level of those which have gone before. In the production of this exposition I had far rather be long than lax; for I know by experience the disappointment which comes to readers when, after a promising beginning, they see a serious declension towards the end. The general acceptance given to this Commentary has placed me under a heavy obligation to do my best even to the end. Towards that end I am still proceeding with all possible diligence, and it is with great pleasure that I look forward to the speedy issue of the seventh and last volume of the work. Many labours distract me from this favorite employment, but I hope to press on with more speed than of late, if my life be spared. It would be imprudent to make too sure of that, for the most fragile Venice glass is not more brittle than human life:

"The spider's most attenuated thread
Is cord, is cable, to the tender film
Which holds our soul in life."

I have been all the longer over this portion of my task because I have been bewildered in the expanse of the One Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm, which makes up the bulk of this volume. Its dimensions and its depth alike overcame me. It spread itself out before me like a vast, rolling prairie, to which I could see no bound, and this alone created a feeling of dismay. Its expanse was unbroken by a bluff or headland, and hence it threatened a monotonous task, although the fear has not been realized. This marvelous poem seemed to me a great sea of holy teaching, moving, in its many verses, wave upon wave; altogether without an island of special and remarkable statement to break it up. I confess I hesitated to launch upon it. Other psalms have
been mere lakes, but this is the main ocean. It is a continent of sacred thought, every inch of which is fertile as the garden of the Lord: it is an amazing level of abundance, a mighty stretch of harvest fields. I have now crossed the great plain for myself, but not without persevering, and, I will add, pleasurable, toil. Several great authors have traversed this region and left their tracks behind them, and so far the journey has been all the easier for me; but yet to me and to my helpers it has been no mean feat of patient authorship and research. This great Psalm is a book in itself: instead of being one among many psalms, it is worthy to be set forth by itself as a poem of surpassing excellence. Those who have never studied it may pronounce it commonplace, and complain of its repetitions; but to the thoughtful student it is like the great deep, full, so as never to be measured; and varied, so as never to weary the eye. Its depth is as great as its length; it is mystery, not set forth as mystery, but concealed beneath the simplest statements; may I say that it is experience allowed to prattle, to preach, to praise, and to pray like a child prophet in his own father's house?

My venerable friend, Mr. Rogers, has been spared to help me with his admirable suggestions; but Mr. Gibson, who so industriously translated from the Latin authors, has fallen asleep, leaving behind him copious notes upon the rest of the psalms. Aid in the homiletical department has been given me by several of the ministers who were educated at the Pastors' College, and their names are duly appended to the hints and skeletons which they have supplied. In this department the present volume is believed to be superior to the former ones. May it prove to be really useful to my brethren, and my desire is fulfilled. I know so well the use of a homiletic hint when the mind is in search for a subject that I have felt peculiar pleasure in supplying my readers with a full measure of such helps.

In hunting up rare authors, and making extracts from them, Mr. Keys has rendered me great assistance, and I am also a debtor to others who have cheerfully rendered me service when I have sought it. Burdened with the care of many institutions, and the oversight of a singularly large church, I cannot do such justice to my theme as I could wish. Learned leisure would be far more accurate than my busy pen can ever hope to be. If I had nothing else to think of, I would have thought of nothing else, and undivided energies could have accomplished what spare strength can never perform. Hence, I am glad of help; so glad, that I am happy to acknowledge it. Not in this thing only, but in all other labours, I owe in the first place all to God, and secondarily, very, very much to those generous friends who find a delight in making my efforts successful.

Above all, I trust that the Holy Spirit has been with me in writing and compiling these volumes, and therefore I expect that he will bless them both to the conversion of the unrenewed and to the edification of believers. The writing of this book has been a means of grace to my own heart; I have enjoyed for myself what I have prepared for my readers.

The Book of Psalms has been a royal banquet to me, and in feasting upon its contents I have seemed to eat angels' food. It is no wonder that old writers should call it, -- the school of patience, the soul's soliloquies, the little Bible, the anatomy of conscience, the rose garden, the pearl island, and the like. It is the Paradise of devotion, the Holy Land of poesy, the heart of Scripture, the map of experience, and the tongue of saints. It is the spokesman of feelings which else had found no utterance. Does it not say just what we wished to say? Are not its prayers and praises exactly such as our hearts delight in? No man needs better company than the Psalms; therein he may read and commune with friends human and divine; friends who know the heart of
man towards God, and the heart of God towards man; friends who perfectly sympathize with us and our sorrows, friends who never betray or forsake. Oh, to be shut up in a cave with David, with no other occupation but to hear him sing, and to sing with him! Well might a Christian monarch lay aside his crown for such enjoyment, and a believing pauper find a crown in such felicity.

It is to be feared that the Psalms are by no means so prized as in earlier ages of the Church. Time was when the Psalms were not only rehearsed in all the churches from day to day, but they were so universally sung that the common people knew them, even if they did not know the letters in which they were written. Time was when bishops would ordain no man to the ministry unless he knew “David” from end to end, and could repeat each psalm correctly; even Councils of the Church have decreed that none should hold ecclesiastical office unless they knew the whole Psalter by heart. Other practices of those ages had better be forgotten, but to this memory accords an honourable record.

Then, as Jerome tells us, the laborer, while he held the plough, sang Hallelujah; the tired reaper refreshed himself with the psalms, and the vinedresser, while trimming the vines with his curved hook, sang something of David. He tells us that in his part of the world, psalms were the Christian's ballads; could they have had better? They were the love songs of the people of God; could any others be so pure and heavenly? These sacred hymns express all modes of holy feeling; they are fit both for childhood and old age: they furnish maxims for the entrance of life, and serve as watchwords at the gates of death. The battle of life, the repose of the Sabbath, the ward of the hospital, the guest chamber of the mansion, the church, the oratory, yea, even heaven itself may be entered with psalms.

My next portion will continue the Pilgrim Psalms, of which we have five in the present volume. I have been sorry to make a break in these golden steps. I would rather have presented the glittering ascent as a whole, that all might see at a glance "the stairs of the City of David at the ascent of the wall;" but as the books must divide somewhere, and there was no more convenient place, I have been compelled to separate these Songs of the Steps, or "Songs on the high key", as Martin Luther calls them. It was impossible to cut the great psalm in two, and it is a far less evil to separate the members of a group. I hope the arrangement will not cause serious inconvenience to anyone; nor prevent the student’s meditating upon each Song of Degrees, not only as it sparkles as a separate star, but as it shines in its own constellation.

Finally, when I reach the last psalm, it is my firm conviction that I shall find no truer closing words for myself than those of Bishop Horne, which I take liberty here to quote, using them as if they were my own, since they admirably express my present feelings and past experiences: --

"And now, could the author flatter himself that anyone would take half the pleasure in reading the following exposition which he hath taken in writing it, he would not fear the loss of his labour. The employment detached him from the bustle and hurry of life, the din of politics, and the noise of folly. Vanity and vexation flew for a season, care and disquietude came not near his dwelling. He arose fresh as the morning to his task; the silence of the night invited him to pursue it; and he can truly say, that food and rest were not preferred before it. Every psalm improved infinitely upon his acquaintance with it, and no one gave him uneasiness but the last; for then he grieved that his work was done. Happier hours than those which have been spent on these
meditations on the songs of Zion he never expects to see in this world. Very pleasantly did they pass, and they moved smoothly and swiftly along; for when thus engaged, he counted no time. The meditations are gone, but have left a relish and a fragrance upon the mind, and the remembrance of them is sweet."

Reader,

I am,
Thine to serve,
for Christ's sake,
C.H. Spurgeon.
WESTWOOD, September, 1882.

Psalm 119

Overview

Title. There is no title to this Psalm, neither is any author's name mentioned. It is THE LONGEST PSALM, and this is a sufficiently distinctive name for it. It equals in bulk twenty-two psalms of the average length of the Songs of Degrees. Nor is it long only; for it equally excels in breadth of thought, depth of meaning, and height of fervor. It is like the celestial city which lieth four square, and the height and the breadth of it are equal. Many superficial readers have imagined that it harps upon one string, and abounds in pious repetitions and redundancies; but this arises from the shallowness of the reader's own mind: those who have studied this divine hymn, and carefully noted each line of it, are amazed at the variety and profundity of the thought. Using only a few words, the writer has produced permutations and combinations of meaning which display his holy familiarity with his subject, and the sanctified ingenuity of his mind.

He never repeats himself; for if the same sentiment recurs it is placed in a fresh connection, and so exhibits another interesting shade of meaning. The more one studies it the fresher it becomes. As those who drink the Nile water like it better every time they take a draught, so does this Psalm become the more full and fascinating the oftener you turn to it. It contains no idle word; the grapes of this cluster are almost to bursting full with the new wine of the kingdom. The more you look into this mirror of a gracious heart the more you will see in it. Placid on the surface as the sea of glass before the eternal throne, it yet contains within its depths an ocean of fire, and those who devoutly gaze into it shall not only see the brightness, but feel the glow of the sacred flame. It is loaded with holy sense, and is as weighty as it is bulky. Again and again have we cried while studying it, "Oh the depths!" Yet these depths are hidden beneath an apparent simplicity, as Augustine has well and wisely said, and this makes the exposition all the more difficult. Its obscurity is hidden beneath a veil of light, and hence only those discover it who are in thorough earnest, not only to look on the word, but, like the angels, to look into it.

The Psalm is alphabetical. Eight stanzas commence with one letter, and then another eight with the next letter, and so the whole Psalm proceeds by octonaries [eight verses in each section] quite through the twenty-two letters of the Hebrew alphabet. Besides which, there are multitudes of
appositions of sense, and others of those structural formalities with which the oriental mind is
pleased, -- formalities very similar to those in which our older poets indulged. The Holy Spirit
thus deigned to speak to men in forms which were attractive to the attention and helpful to the
memory. He is often plain or elegant in his manner, but he does not disdain to be quaint or
formal if thereby his design of instruction can be the more surely reached. He does not despise
even contracted and artificial modes of speech, if by their use he can fix his teaching upon the
mind. Isaac Taylor has worthily set forth the lesson of this fact: -- "In the strictest sense this
composition is conditioned; nevertheless in the highest sense is it an utterance of spiritual life;
and in thus finding these seemingly opposed elements, intimated commingled as they are
throughout this Psalm, a lesson full of meaning is silently conveyed to those who shall receive it
that the conveyance of the things of God to the human spirit is in no way damaged or impeded,
much less is it deflected or ciliated by its subjugation to loose modes of utterance which most of
all bespeak their adaptation to the infancy and the childlike capacity of the recipient."

AUTHOR. The fashion among modern writers is, as far as possible, to take ever? Psalm from
David. As the critics of this school are usually unsound in doctrine and unspiritual in tone, we
gravitate in the opposite direction, from a natural suspicion of everything which comes from so
unsatisfactory a quarter. We believe that David wrote this Psalm. It is Davidic in tone and
expression, and it tallies with David's experience in many interesting points. In our youth our
teacher called it "David's pocket book", and we incline to the opinion then expressed that here we
have the royal diary written at various times throughout a long life. No, we cannot give up this
Psalm to the enemy. "This is David's spoil". After long reading an author one gets to know his
style, and a measure of discernment is acquired by which his composition is detected even if his
name be concealed; we feel a kind of critical certainty that the hand of David is in this thing, yea,
that it is altogether his own.

Subject. The one theme is the word of the Lord. The Psalmist sets his subject in many lights, and
treats of it in divers ways, but he seldom omits to mention the word of the Lord in each verse
under some one or other of the many names by which he knows it; and even if the name be not
there, the subject is still heartily pursued in every stanza. He who wrote this wonderful song was
saturated with those books of Scripture which he possessed. Andrew Bonar tells of a simple
Christian in a farmhouse who had meditated the Bible through three times. This is precisely what
this Psalmist had done, -- he had gone past reading into meditation. Like Martin Luther, David
had shaken every fruit tree in God's garden, and gathered golden fruit therefrom.

"The most," says Martin Boos, "read their Bibles like cows that stand in the thick grass, and
trample under their feet the finest flowers and herbs." It is to be feared that we too often do the
like. This is a miserable way of treating the pages of inspiration. May the Lord prevent us from
repeating that sin while reading this priceless Psalm.

There is an evident growth in the subject matter. The earlier verses are of such a character as to
lend themselves to the hypothesis that the author was a young man, while many of the later
passages could only have suggested themselves to age and wisdom. In every portion, however, it
is the fruit of deep experience, careful observation, and earnest meditation. If David did not write
in there must have lived another believer of exactly the same order of mind as David, and he
must have addicted himself to Psalmody with equal ardor, and have been an equally hearty lover
of Holy Writ. Our best improvement of this sacred composition will come through getting our
minds into intense sympathy with its subject. In order to this, we might do well to commit it to memory. Philip Henry's daughter wrote in her diary,

"I have of late taken some pains to learn by heart Psalm 119, and have made some progress therein." She was a sensible, godly woman. Having done this, we should consider the fullness, certainty, clearness, and sweetness of the word of God, since by such reflections we are likely to be stirred up to a warm affection for it. What favored beings are those to whom the Eternal God has written a letter in his own hand and style. What ardor of devotion, what diligence of composition can produce a worthy eulogium for the divine testimonies? If ever one such has fallen from the pen of man it is this 119th Psalm, which might well be called the holy soul's soliloquy before an open Bible.

This sacred ode is a little Bible, the Scriptures condensed, a mass of Bibline, Holy Writ rewritten in holy emotions and actions. Blessed are they who can read and understand these saintly aphorisms [concise statements]; they shall find golden apples in this true Hesperides [far away island in Greece], and come to reckon that this Psalm, like the whole Scripture which it praises, is a pearl island, or, better still, a garden of sweet flowers.

NOTES RELATING TO THE PSALM AS A WHOLE

Eulogium upon the whole Psalm

Note

A “eulogy” refers to a commendatory oration or writing. S.E.M

This Psalm shines and shows itself a star in the firmament of the Psalms, of the first and greatest magnitude. This will readily appear if you consider either the manner it is composed in, or the matter it is composed of. The manner it is composed in is very elegant. The matter it is composed of is very excellent.

The manner it is composed in is very elegant; full of art, rule, method theological matter in a logical manner, a spiritual alphabet framed and formed according to the Hebrew alphabet.

The matter it is composed of is very excellent; full of rare sublimities, deep mysteries, gracious activities, yea, glorious ecstasies. The Psalm is made up of three things: prayers, praises,
protestations. Prayers to God; praises of God; protestations unto God (Rev. W. Simmons, in a sermon in the "Morning Exercises, 1661).

Eulogium

This Psalm is called the Alphabet of Divine Love, the Paradise of all the Doctrines, the Storehouse of the Holy Spirit, the School of Truth, also the deep mystery of the Scriptures, where the whole moral discipline of all the virtues shines brightly. And as all moral instruction is delightsome, therefore this Psalm, because excelling in this kind of instruction, should be called delightsome, inasmuch as it surpasses the rest. The other Psalms, truly, as lesser stars shine somewhat; but this burns with the meridian heat of its full brightness, and is wholly resplendent with moral loveliness (Johannes Paulus Palanterius, 1600).

Eulogium

In our German version it has the appropriate inscription, "The Christian's golden A B C of the praise, love, power, and use of the Word of God" (Franz Delitzsch, 1871).

Eulogium

It is recorded of the celebrated St. Augustine, who among his voluminous works left a Comment on the Book of Psalms, that he delayed to comment on this one till he had finished the whole Psalter; and then yielded only to the long and vehement urgency of his friends, "because", he says,

"as often as I essayed to think thereon, it always exceeded the powers of my intent thought and the utmost grasp of my faculties". While one ancient father {2} entitles this Psalm "the perfection of teaching and instruction"; another {3} says that "it applies an all containing medicine to the varied spiritual diseases of men -- sufficing to perfect those who long for perfect virtue, to rouse the slothful, to refresh the dispirited, and to set in order the relaxed"; to which might be added many like testimonies of ancient and modern commentators on it (William De Burgh, 1860).

Eulogium

In proportion as this Psalm seemeth more open, so much the more deep doth it appear to me; so that I cannot show how deep it is. For in others, which are understood with difficulty, although the sense lies hid in obscurity yet the obscurity itself appeareth; but in this, not even this is the case; since it is superficially such, that it seemeth not to need an expositor, but only a reader and listener (Augustine, 354-480).

Eulogium

In Matthew Henry's "Account of the Life and Death of his father, Philip Henry," he says:
"Once, pressing the study of the Scriptures, he advised us to take a verse of this Psalm every morning to meditate upon, and so go over the Psalm twice in the year; and that, saith he, will bring you to be in love with all the rest of the Scriptures." He often said,

"All grace grows as love to the word of God grows."

- And like the moon, the feeblest shines among, “Conspicuous shines” (Horace).
- St. Hilary
- Theodoret.

**Special Note.**

**Horace.** Quintus Horatius Flaccus, (December 8, 65 BC – November 27, 8 BC). He was the most prominent Roman lyric poet the reign time of the emperor Augustus.

**St. Hilary.** (c. 300-367) was the bishop of Pictavium (Poitiers, located in west central France) and considered an eminent “doctor” of the Western Christian Church. He was sometimes referred to as the *malleus Arianorum* (“hammer against Arianism”) and the “Athanasius of the West”. His name comes from the Greek word for happy or cheerful, the same root as English "hilarious". His special saint’s day is observed by faithful Cathlocis January 13th.

**Theodoret** (393 – c. 457) was an author and Christian bishop of Cyrrhus, a city in Syria, founded by Seleucus Nicator, one of Alexander the Great’s generals (423-457). S.E.M.

**Eulogium**

It is strange that of all the pieces of the Bible which my mother taught me, that which cost me most to learn, and which was to my child's mind most repulsive -- the 119th Psalm -- has now become of all the most precious to me in its overflowing and glorious passion of love for the law of God [John Ruskin, in "Fors Clavigera", the name given by the British author John Ruskin to a series of letters to workmen, written during 1871–1884].

**Eulogium**

This Psalm is a prolonged meditation upon the excellence of the word of God, upon its effects, and the strength and happiness which it gives to a man in every position. These reflections are interspersed with petitions, in which the Psalmist, deeply feeling his natural infirmity, implores the help of God for assistance to walk in the way mapped out for him in the divine oracles. In order to be able to understand and to enjoy this remarkable Psalm, and that we may not be repelled by its length and by its repetitions, we must have had, in some measure at least, the same experiences as its author, and, like him, have learned to love and practice the sacred word. Moreover, this Psalm is in some sort a touchstone for the spiritual life of those who read it. The
sentiments expressed in it perfectly harmonize with what the historical books and other Psalms teach concerning David's obedience and his zeal for God's glory. There are, however, within it words which breathe so elevated a piety, that they can have their full sense and perfect truthfulness only in the mouth of Him of whom the prophet king was the type. (From the French of Armand de Mestral, 1856).

Eulogium

The 119th Psalm has been spoken of by a most distinguished living rationalistic critic (Professor Reuss) as "not poetry at all, but simply a litany -- a species of chaplet." Such does not seem to be the opinion of the angels of God, and of the redeemed spirits, when that very poem supplies with the language of praise – the paean of victory,

"Just and true are thy ways" (Rev. 15:3); the cry of the angel of the waters,

"Thou art righteous, O Lord!" (Rev. 16:5); the voice of much people in heaven,

"True and righteous are his judgments" (Rev. 19:2); what is this but the exclamation of him, whoever he may have been, who wrote the Psalm –

"Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments" (Psalm 119:137) (William Alexander, in "The Quiver", 1880).

Incident

In the midst of a London season; in the stir and turmoil of a political crisis, 1819; William Wilberforce writes in his Diary -- "Walked from Hyde Park Corner repeating the 119th Psalm in great comfort" (William Alexander, in "The Witness of the Psalms". 1877).

Incident

George Wishart, the chaplain and biographer of "the great Marquis of Montrose," as he was called, would have shared the fate of his illustrious patron but for the following singular expedient. When upon the scaffold, he availed himself of the custom of the times, which permitted the condemned to choose a Psalm to be sung. He selected the 119th Psalm, and before two thirds of the Psalm had been sung, a pardon arrived, and his life was preserved. It may not be out of place to add that the George Wishart, Bishop of Edinburgh, above referred to, has been too often confounded with the godly martyr of the same name who lived and died a century previously. We only mention the incident because it has often been quoted as a singular instance of the providential escape of a saintly personage; whereas it was the very ingenious device of a person who, according to Woodrow, was more renowned for shrewdness than for sanctity. The length of this Psalm was sagaciously employed as the means of gaining time, and, happily, the expedient succeeded (C.H.S.).

Alphabetical Arrangement
It is observed that the 119th Psalm is disposed according to the letters of the Hebrew alphabet, perhaps to intimate that children, when they begin to learn their alphabet, should learn that Psalm. (Nathanael Hardy, 1618-1670).

Alphabetical Arrangement

True it is that the verses indeed begin not either with the English or yet the Latin letters, but with the Hebrew, wherein David made and wrote this Psalm. The will and purpose of the Holy Ghost is to make us to feel and understand that the doctrine herein contained is not only set down for great clerks which have gone to school for ten or twenty years; but also for the most simple; to the end none should pretend any excuse of ignorance. (From Calvin's Twenty-two Sermons upon the 119th Psalm, 1580).

Alphabetical Arrangement

There may be something more than fancy in the remark, that Christ's name, "the Alpha and Omega" – equivalent to declaring him all that which every letter of the alphabet could express – may have had a reference to the peculiarity of this Psalm, a Psalm in which (with the exception of Psalm 119:84, 122) exceptions that make the rule more marked) every verse speaks of God's revelation of himself to man (Andrew A. Bonar, 1859).

Alphabetical Arrangement

Origen says it is alphabetical because it contains the elements or principles of all knowledge and wisdom; and that it repeats each letter eight times, because eight is the number of perfection.

Alphabetical Arrangement

That the unlearned reader may understand what is meant by the Psalm being alphabetical, we append the following specimen upon the section Aleph:

“A blessing is on them that are undefiled in the way and walk in the law of Jehovah;

A blessing is on them that keep his testimonies, and seek him with their whole heart;

Also on them that do no wickedness, but walk in his ways.

A law hast thou given unto us, that we should diligently keep thy commandments.
Ah! Lord, that my ways
were made so direct
that I might keep thy statutes!
And then shall I not be confounded.

While I have respect unto
all thy commandments.

As for me, I will thank thee with an unfeigned heart,
when I shall have learned
thy righteous judgments.

An eye will I have unto thy ceremonies,
O forsake me not utterly.”

(The Psalms Chronologically Arranged By Four Friends, 1867)

ALEPH

1 ¶ Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the LORD.  
2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart.

119: 2 Blessed are they that keep his testimonies. What! A second blessing? Yes, they are doubly blessed whose outward life is supported by an inward zeal for God's glory. In the first verse we had an undefiled way, and it was taken for granted that the purity in the way was not mere surface work, but was attended by the inward truth and life which comes of divine grace. Here that which was implied is expressed. Blessedness is ascribed to those who treasure up the testimonies of the Lord: in which is implied that they search the Scriptures, that they come to an understanding of them, that they love them, and then that they continue in the practice of them. We must first get a thing before we can keep it. In order to keep it well we must get a firm grip of it: we cannot keep in the heart that which we have not heartily embraced by the affections. God's word is his witness or testimony to grand and important truths which concern himself and our relation to him: this we should desire to know; knowing it, we should believe it; believing it, we should love it; and loving it, we should hold it fast against all comers. There is a doctrinal keeping of the word when we are ready to die for its defense, and a practical keeping of it when we actually live under its power. Revealed truth is precious as diamonds, and should be kept or treasured up in the memory and in the heart as jewels in a casket, or as the law was kept in the ark; this however is not enough, for it is meant for practical use, and therefore it must be kept or followed, as men keep to a path, or to a line of business. If we keep God's testimonies they will keep us; they will keep us right in opinion, comfortable in spirit, holy in conversation, and hopeful in expectation. If they were ever worth having, and no thoughtful person will question that, then they are worth keeping; their designed effect does not come through a temporary seizure of them, but by a persevering keeping of them: "in keeping of them there is great
We are bound to keep with all care the word of God, because it is his testimonies. He gave them to us, but they are still his own. We are to keep them as a watchman guards his master's house, as a steward husbands his lord's goods, as a shepherd keeps his employer's flock. We shall have to give an account, for we are put in trust with the gospel, and woe to us if we be found unfaithful. We cannot fight a good fight, nor finish our course, unless we keep the faith. To this end the Lord must keep us: only those who are kept by the power of God unto salvation will ever be able to keep his testimonies. What a blessedness is therefore evidenced and testified by a careful belief in God's word, and a continual obedience thereunto. God has blessed them, is blessing them, and will bless them for ever. That blessedness which David saw in others he realized for himself, for in Psalm 119:168 he says, "I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies," and in Psalm 119:54-56 he traces his joyful songs and happy memories to this same keeping of the law, and he confesses, "This I had because I kept thy precepts." Doctrines which we teach to others we should experience for ourselves. And that seek him with the whole heart. Those who keep the Lord's testimonies are sure to seek after himself. If his word is precious we may be sure that he himself is still more so. Personal dealing with a personal God is the longing of all those who have allowed the word of the Lord to have its full effect upon them. If we once really know the power of the gospel we must seek the God of the gospel. "O that I knew where I might find HIM," will be our wholehearted cry. See the growth which these sentences indicate first, in the way, then walking in it, then finding and keeping the treasure of truth, and to crown all, seeking after the Lord of the way himself. Note also that the further a soul advances in grace the more spiritual and divine are its longings: an outward walk does not content the gracious soul, nor even the treasured testimonies; it reaches out in due time after God himself, and when it in a measure finds him, still yearns for more of him, and seeks him still. Seeking after God signifies a desire to commune with him more closely, to follow him more fully, to enter into more perfect union with his mind and will, to promote his glory, and to realize completely all that he is to holy hearts. The blessed man has God already, and for this reason he seeks him. This may seem a contradiction: it is only a paradox. God is not truly sought by the cold researches of the brain: we must seek him with the heart. Love reveals itself to love: God manifests his heart to the heart of his people. It is in vain that we endeavor to comprehend him by reason; we must apprehend him by affection. But the heart must not be divided with many objects if the Lord is to be sought by us. God is one, and we shall not know him till our heart is one. A broken heart need not be distressed at this, for no heart is so whole in its seeking after God as a heart which is broken, whereof every fragment sighs and cries after the great Father's face. It is the divided heart which the doctrine of the text censures, and strange to say, in scriptural phraseology, a heart may be divided and not broken, and it may be broken but not divided; and yet again it may be broken and be whole, and it never can be whole until it is broken. When our whole heart seeks the holy God in Christ Jesus it has come to him of whom it is written, "as many as touched Him were made perfectly whole." That which the Psalmist admires in this verse he claims in the tenth, where he says, "With my whole heart have I sought thee." It is well when admiration of a virtue leads to the attainment of it. Those who do not believe in the blessedness of seeking the Lord will not be likely to arouse their hearts to the pursuit, but he who calls another blessed because of the grace which he sees in him is on the way to gaining the same grace for himself. If those who seek the Lord are blessed, what shall be said of those who actually dwell with him and know that he is theirs?
"To those who fall, how kind thou art!
How good to those who seek I
But what to those who find? Ah! this
Nor tongue nor pen can show:
The love of Jesus -- what it is,
None but his loved ones know."

3 They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways.

119: 3 They also do no iniquity. Blessed indeed would those men be of whom this could be asserted without reserve and without explanation: we shall have reached the region of pure blessedness when we altogether cease from sin. Those who follow the word of God do no iniquity, the rule is perfect, and if it be constantly followed no fault will arise. Life, to the outward observer, at any rate, lies much in doing, and he who in his doings never swerves from equity, both towards God and man, has hit upon the way of perfection, and we may be sure that his heart is right. See how a whole heart leads to the avoidance of evil, for the Psalmist says, That seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity." We fear that no man can claim to be absolutely without sin, and yet we trust there are many who do not designedly, willfully, knowingly, and continuously do anything that is wicked, ungodly, or unjust. Grace keeps the life righteous as to act even when the Christian has to bemoan the transgressions of the heart. Judged as men should be judged by their fellows, according to such just rules as men make for men, the true people of God do no iniquity: they are honest, upright, and chaste, and touching justice and morality they are blameless. Therefore are they happy.

They walk in his ways. They attend not only to the great main highway of the law, but to the smaller paths of the particular precepts. As they will perpetrate no sin of commission, so do they labour to be free from every sin of omission. It is not enough to them to be blameless, they wish also to be actively righteous. A hermit may escape into solitude that he may do no iniquity, but a saint lives in society that he may serve his God by walking in his ways. We must be positively as well as negatively right: we shall not long keep the second unless we attend to the first, for men will be walking one way or another, and if they do not follow the path of God's law they will soon do iniquity. The surest way to abstain from evil is to be fully occupied in doing good. This verse describes believers as they exist among us: although they have their faults and infirmities, yet they hate evil, and will not permit themselves to do it; they love the ways of truth, right and true godliness, and habitually they walk therein. They do not claim to be absolutely perfect except in their desires, and there they are pure indeed, for they pant to be kept from all sin, and to be led into all holiness.

4 ¶ Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently.
119: 4 Thou hast commanded us to keep thy precepts diligently. So that when we have done all we are unprofitable servants, we have done only that which it was our duty to have done, seeing we have our Lord's command for it. God's precepts require careful obedience: there is no keeping them by accident. Some give to God a careless service, a sort of hit or miss obedience, but the Lord has not commanded such service, nor will he accept it. His law demands the love of all our heart, soul, mind, and strength; and a careless religion has none of these. We are also called to zealous obedience. We are to keep the precepts abundantly: the vessels of obedience should be filled to the brim, and the command carried out to the full of its meaning. As a man diligent in business arouses himself to do as much trade as he can, so must we be eager to serve the Lord as much as possible. Nor must we spare pains to do so, for a diligent obedience will also be laborious and self-denying. Those who are diligent in business rise up early and sit up late, and deny themselves much of comfort and repose. They are not soon tired, or if they are they persevere even with aching brow and weary eye. So should we serve the Lord. Such a Master deserves diligent servants; such service he demands, and will be content with nothing less. How seldom do men render it, and hence many through their negligence miss the double blessing spoken of in this Psalm. Some are diligent in superstition and will worship; be it ours to be diligent in keeping God's precepts. It is of no use traveling fast if we are not in the right road. Men have been diligent in a losing business, and the more they have traded the more they have lost: this is bad enough in commerce, we cannot afford to have it so in our religion. God has not commanded us to be diligent in making precepts, but in keeping them. Some bind yokes upon their own necks, and make bonds and rules for others: but the wise course is to be satisfied with the rules of holy Scripture, and to strive to keep them all, in all places, towards all men, and in all respects. If we do not this, we may become eminent in our own religion, but we shall not have kept the command of God; nor shall we be accepted of him. The Psalmist began with the third person: he is now coming near home, and has already reached the first person plural, according to our version; we shall soon hear him crying out personally and for himself. As the heart glows with love to holiness, we long to have a personal interest in it. The word of God is a heart affecting book, and when we begin to sing its praises it soon comes home to us, and sets us praying to be ourselves conformed to its teachings.

5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes!

119: 5 O that my ways were directed to keep thy statutes! Divine commands should direct us in the subject of our prayers. We cannot of ourselves keep God's statutes as he would have them kept, and yet we long to do so: what resort have we but prayer? We must ask the Lord to work our works in us, or we shall never work out his commandments. This verse is a sigh of regret because the Psalmist feels that he has not kept the precepts diligently, it is a cry of weakness appealing for help to one who can aid, it is a request of bewilderment from one who has lost his way and would fain be directed in it, and it is a petition of faith from one who loves God and trusts in him for grace. Our ways are by nature opposed to the way of God, and must be turned by the Lord's direction in another direction from that which they originally take or they will lead us down to destruction. God can direct the mind and will without violating our free agency, and he will do so in answer to prayer; in fact, he has begun the work already in those who are heartily praying after the fashion of this verse. It is for present holiness that the desire arises in the heart. O that it were so now with me: but future persevering holiness is also meant, for he longs for
grace to keep henceforth and for ever the statutes of the Lord. The sigh of the text is really a prayer, though it does not exactly take that form. Desires and longings are of the essence of supplication, and it little matters what shape they take. "O that" is as acceptable a prayer as "Our Father." One would hardly have expected a prayer for direction; rather should we have looked for a petition for enabling. Can we not direct ourselves? What if we cannot row, we can steer. The Psalmist herein confesses that even for the smallest part of his duty he felt unable without grace. He longed for the Lord to influence his will, as well as to strengthen his hands. We want a rod to point out the way as much as a staff to support us in it. The longing of the text is prompted by admiration of the blessedness of holiness, by a contemplation of the righteous man's beauty of character, and by a reverent awe of the command of God. It is a personal application to the writer's own case of the truths which he had been considering. "O that my ways," etc. It were well if all who hear and read the word would copy this example and turn all that they hear into prayer. We should have more keepers of the statutes if we had more who sighed and cried after the grace to do so.

6 Then shall I not be ashamed, when I have respect unto all thy commandments.

119: 6 Then shall I not be ashamed. He had known shame, and here he rejoices in the prospect of being freed from it. Sin brings shame, and when sin is gone, the reason for being ashamed is banished. What a deliverance this is, for to some men death is preferable to shame!

When I have respect unto all thy commandments. When he respects God he shall respect himself and be respected. Whenever we err we prepare ourselves for confusion of face and sinking of heart: if no one else is ashamed of me I shall be ashamed of myself if I do iniquity. Our first parents never knew shame till they made the acquaintance of the old serpent, and it never left them till their gracious God had covered them with sacrificial skins. Disobedience made them naked and ashamed. We, ourselves, will always have cause for shame till every sin is vanquished, and every duty is observed. When we pay a continual and universal respect to the will of the Lord, then we shall be able to look ourselves in the face in the looking glass of the law, and we shall not blush at the sight of men or devils, however eager their malice may be to lay somewhat to our charge. Many suffer from excessive diffidence, and this verse suggests a cure. An abiding sense of duty will make us bold, we shall be afraid to be afraid. No shame in the presence of man will hinder us when the fear of God has taken full possession of our minds. When we are on the king's highway by daylight, and are engaged upon royal business, we need ask no man's leave. It would be a dishonour to a king to be ashamed of his livery and his service; no such shame should ever crimson the cheek of a Christian, nor will it if he has due reverence for the Lord his God. There is nothing to be ashamed of in a holy life; a man may be ashamed of his pride, ashamed of his wealth, ashamed of his own children, but he will never be ashamed of having in all things regarded the will of the Lord his God. It is worthy of remark that David promises himself no immunity from shame till he has carefully paid homage to all the precepts. Mind that word "all," and leave not one command out of your respect. Partial obedience still leaves us liable to be called to account for those commands which we have neglected. A man may have a thousand virtues, and yet a single failing may cover him with shame. To a poor sinner who is buried in despair, it may seem a very unlikely thing that he should ever be delivered from shame. He blushes, and is confounded, and feels that he can never lift up his face again. Let him read these words: "Then shall I not be
David is not dreaming, nor picturing an impossible case. Be assured, dear friend, that the Holy Spirit can renew in you the image of God, so that you shall yet look up without fear. O for sanctification to direct us in God's way, for then shall we have boldness both towards God and his people, and shall no more crimson with confusion.

7 ¶ I will praise thee with uprightness of heart, when I shall have learned thy righteous judgments.

119: 7 I will praise thee. From prayer to praise is here, a long or a difficult journey. Be sure that he who prays for holiness will one day praise for happiness. Shame having vanished, silence is broken, and the formerly silent man declares, "I will praise thee." He cannot but promise praise while he seeks sanctification. Mark how well he knows upon what head to set the crown. "I will praise thee." He would himself be praiseworthy, but he counts God alone worthy of praise. By the sorrow and shame of sin he measures his obligations to the Lord who would teach him the art of living so that he should clean escape from his former misery.

With up righteous of heart. His heart would be upright if the Lord would teach him, and then it should praise its teacher. There is such a thing as false and feigned praise, and this the Lord abhors; but there is no music like that which comes from a pure soul which standeth in its integrity. Heart praise is required, uprightness in that heart, and teaching to make the heart upright. An upright heart is sure to bless the Lord, for grateful adoration is a part of its uprightness; no man can be right unless he is upright towards God, and this involves the rendering to him the praise which is his due.

When I shall have learned thy righteous judgments. We must learn to praise, learn that we may praise, and praise when we have learned. If we are ever to learn, the Lord must teach us, and especially upon such a subject as his judgments, for they are a great deep. While these are passing before our eyes, and we are learning from them, we ought to praise God, for the original is not, "when I have learned," but, "in my learning." While yet I am a scholar I will be a chorister: my upright heart shall praise thine uprightness, my purified judgment shall admire thy judgments. God's providence is a book full of teaching, and to those whose hearts are right it is a music book, out of which they chant to Jehovah's praise. God's word is full of the record of his righteous providence, and as we read it we feel compelled to burst forth into expressions of holy delight and ardent praise. When we both read of God's judgments and become joyful partakers in them, we are doubly moved to song – song in which there is neither formality, nor hypocrisy, nor lukewarmness, for the heart is upright in the presentation of its praise.

8 I will keep thy statutes: O forsake me not utterly.

119: 8 I will keep thy statutes. A calm resolve. When praise calms down into solid resolution it is well with the soul. Zeal which spends itself in singing, and leaves no practical residuum of holy living, is little worth: "I will praise" should be coupled with "I will keep." This firm resolve is by no means boastful, like Peter's "though I should die with thee, yet will I not forsake thee," for it is followed by a humble prayer for divine help,
O forsake me not utterly. Feeling his own incapacity, he trembles lest he should be left to himself, and this fear is increased by the horror which he has of falling into sin. The "I will keep" sounds lightly enough now that the humble cry is heard with it. This is a happy amalgam: resolution and dependence. We meet with those who to all appearance humbly pray, but there is no force of character, no decision in them, and consequently the pleading of the closet is not embodied in the life: on the other hand, we meet with abundance of resolve attended with an entire absence of dependence upon God, and this makes as poor a character as the former. The Lord grant us to have such a blending of excellences that we may be "perfect and entire, wanting nothing." This prayer is one which is certain to be heard, for assuredly it must be highly pleasing to God to see a man set upon obeying his will, and therefore it must be most agreeable to him to be present with such a person, and to help him in his endeavors. How can he forsake one who does not forsake his law? The peculiar dread which tinges this prayer with a somber hue is the fear of utter forsaking. Well may the soul cry out against such a calamity. To be left, that we may discover our weakness, is a sufficient trial: To be altogether forsaken would be ruin and death. Hiding the face in a little wrath for a moment brings us very low: an absolute desertion would land us ultimately in the lowest hell. But the Lord never has utterly forsaken his servants, and he never will, blessed be his name. If we long to keep his statutes he will keep us; yea, his grace will keep us keeping his law. There is rather a descent from the mount of benediction with which the first verse began to the almost wail of this eighth verse, yet this is spiritually a growth, for from admiration of goodness we have come to a burning longing after God and communion with him, and an intense horror lest it should not be enjoyed. The sigh of Psalm 119:5 is now supplanted by an actual prayer from the depths of a heart conscious of its undesert, and its entire dependence upon divine love. The two, "I wills" needed to be seasoned with some such lowly petition, or it might have been thought that the good man's dependence was in some degree fixed upon his own determination. He presents his resolutions like a sacrifice, but he cries to heaven for the fire.

BETH

9 ¶ Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? By taking heed thereto according to thy word.

119: 9 Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his way? How shall he become and remain practically holy? He is but a young man, full of hot passions, and poor in knowledge and experience; how shall he get right, and keep right? Never was there a more important question for any man; never was there a fitter time for asking it than at the commencement of life. It is by no means an easy task which the prudent young man sets before him. He wishes to choose a clean way, to be himself clean in it, to cleanse it of any foulness which may arise in the future, and to end by showing a clear course from the first step to the last; but, alas, his way is already unclean by actual sin which he has already committed, and he himself has within his nature a tendency towards that which defileth. Here, then, is the difficulty, first of beginning aright, next of being always able to know and choose the right, and of continuing in the right till perfection is ultimately reached: this is hard for any man, how shall a youth accomplish it? The way, or life, of the man has to be cleansed from the sins of his youth behind him, and kept clear of the sins which temptation will place before him: this is the work, this is the difficulty. No nobler
ambition can lie before a youth, none to which he is called by so sure a calling; but none in which greater difficulties can be found. Let him not, however, shrink from the glorious enterprise of living a pure and gracious life; rather let him enquire the way by which all obstacles may be overcome. Let him not think that he knows the road to easy victory, nor dream that he can keep himself by his own wisdom; he will do well to follow the Psalmist, and become an earnest enquirer asking how he may cleanse his way. Let him become a practical disciple of the holy God, who alone can teach him how to overcome the world, the flesh, and the devil, that trinity of defilers by whom many a hopeful life has been spoiled. He is young and unaccustomed to the road, let him not be ashamed often to enquire his way of him who is so ready and so able to instruct him in it. Our "way" is a subject which concerns us deeply, and it is far better to enquire about it than to speculate upon mysterious themes which rather puzzle than enlighten the mind. Among all the questions which a young man asks, and they are many, let this be the first and chief: "Wherewithal shall I cleanse my way?" This is a question suggested by common sense, and pressed home by daily occurrences; but it is not to be answered by unaided reason, nor, when answered, can the directions be carried out by unsupported human power. It is ours to ask the question, it is God's to give the answer and enable us to carry it out.

By taking heed thereto according to thy word. Young man, the Bible must be your chart, and you must exercise great watchfulness that your way may be according to its directions. You must take heed to your daily life as well as study your Bible, and you must study your Bible that you may take heed to your daily life. With the greatest care a man will go astray if his map misleads him; but with the most accurate map he will still lose his road if he does not take heed to it. The narrow way was never hit upon by chance, neither did any heedless man ever lead a holy life. We can sin without thought, we have only to neglect the great salvation and ruin our souls; but to obey the Lord and walk uprightly will need all our heart and soul and mind. Let the careless remember this. Yet the "word" is absolutely necessary; for, otherwise, care will darken into morbid anxiety, and conscientiousness may become superstition. A captain may watch from his deck all night; but if he knows nothing of the coast, and has no pilot on board, he may be carefully hastening on to shipwreck. It is not enough to desire to he right; for ignorance may make us think that we are doing God service when we are provoking him, and the fact of our ignorance will not reverse the character of our action, however much it may mitigate its criminality. Should a man carefully measure out what he believes to be a dose of useful medicine, he will die if it should turn out that he has taken up the wrong vial, and has poured out a deadly poison: the fact that he did it ignorantly will not alter the result. Even so, a young man may surround himself with ten thousand ills, by carefully using an unenlightened judgment, and refusing to receive instruction from the word of God. Willful ignorance is in itself willful sin, and the evil which comes of it is without excuse. Let each man, whether young or old, who desires to be holy have a holy watchfulness in his heart, and keep his Holy Bible before his open eye. There he will find every turn of the road marked down, every slough and miry place pointed out, with the way to go through unsoiled; and there, too, he will find light for his darkness, comfort for his weariness, and company for his loneliness, so that by its help he shall reach the benediction of the first verse of the Psalm, which suggested the Psalmist's enquiry, and awakened his desires. Note how the first section of eight verses has for its first verse, "Blessed are the undefiled in the way," and the second section runs parallel to it, with the question, "Wherewithal shall a young man cleanse his
The blessedness which is set before us in a conditional promise should be practically sought for in the way appointed. The Lord saith,
"For this will I be enquired of by the house of Israel to do it for them."

10 ¶ With my whole heart have I sought thee: O let me not wander from thy commandments.

119: 10 *With my whole heart have I sought thee.* His heart had gone after God himself: he had not only desired to obey his laws, but to commune with his person. This is a right royal search and pursuit, and well may it be followed with the whole heart. The surest mode of cleansing the way of our life is to seek after God himself, and to endeavor to abide in fellowship with him. Up to the good hour in which he was speaking to his Lord, the Psalmist had been an eager seeker after the Lord, and if faint, he was still pursuing. Had he not sought the Lord he would never have been so anxious to cleanse his way. It is pleasant to see how the writer's heart turns distinctly and directly to God. He had been considering an important truth in the preceding verse, but here he so powerfully feels the presence of his God that he speaks to him, and prays to him as to one who is near. A true heart cannot long live without fellowship with God. His petition is founded on his life's purpose: he is seeking the Lord, and he prays the Lord to prevent his going astray in or from his search. It is by obedience that we follow after God, hence the prayer,

*O let me not wander from thy commandments;* for if we leave the ways of God's appointment we certainly shall not find the God who appointed them. The more a man's whole heart is set upon holiness the more does he dread falling into sin; he is not so much fearful of deliberate transgression as of inadvertent wandering: he cannot endure a wandering look, or a rambling thought, which might stray beyond the pale of the precept. We are to be such wholehearted seekers that we have neither time nor will to be wanderers, and yet with all our wholeheartedness we are to cultivate a jealous fear lest even then we should wander from the path of holiness. Two things may be very like and yet altogether different: saints are "strangers" -- "I am a stranger in the earth" (Psalm 119:19), but they are not wanderers: they are passing through an enemy's country, but their route is direct; they are seeking their Lord while they traverse this foreign land. Their way is hidden from men; but yet they have not lost their way. The man of God exerts himself, but does not trust himself: his heart is in his walking with God: but he knows that even his whole strength is not enough to keep him right unless his King shall be his keeper, and he who made the commands shall make him constant in obeying them: hence the prayer,

*O let me not wander.* Still, this sense of need was never turned into an argument for idleness; for while he prayed to be kept in the right road he took care to run in it with his whole heart seeking the Lord. It is curious again to note how the second part of the Psalm keeps step with the first; for where Psalm 119:2 pronounces that man to be blessed who seeks the Lord with his whole heart, the present verse claims the blessing by pleading the character: With my whole heart have I sought thee.

11 ¶ Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee.
When a godly man sues for a favour from God he should carefully use every means for obtaining it, and accordingly, as the Psalmist had asked to be preserved from wandering, he here shows us the holy precaution which he had taken to prevent his falling into sin.

Thy word have I hid in mine heart. His heart would be kept by the word because he kept the word in his heart. All that he had of the word written, and all that had been revealed to him by the voice of God, - all, without exception, he had stored away in his affections, as a treasure to be preserved in a casket, or as a choice seed to be buried in a fruitful soil: what soil more fruitful than a renewed heart, wholly seeking the Lord? The word was God's own, and therefore precious to God's servant. He did not wear a text on his heart as a charm, but he hid it in his heart as a rule. He laid it up in the place of love and life, and it filled the chamber with sweetness and light. We must in this imitate David, copying his heart work as well as his outward character. First, we must mind that what we believe is truly God's word; that being done, we must hide or treasure it each man for himself; and we must see that this is done, not as a mere feat of the memory, but as the joyful act of the affections.

That I might not sin against thee. Here was the object aimed at. As one has well said, -- Here is the best thing -- "thy word"; hidden in the best place, -- "in my heart;" for the best of purposes, -- "that I might not sin against thee." This was done by the Psalmist with personal care, as a man carefully hides away his money when he fears thieves, -- in this case the thief dreaded was sin. Sinning "against God" is the believer's view of moral evil; other men care only when they offend against men. God's word is the best preventive against offending God, for it tells us his mind and will, and tends to bring our spirit into conformity with the divine Spirit. No cure for sin in the life is equal to the word in the seat of life, which is the heart. There is no hiding from sin unless we hide the truth in our souls. A very pleasant variety of meaning is obtained by laying stress upon the words "thy" and "thee."

He speaks to God, he loves the word because it is God's word, and he hates sin because it is sin against God himself. If he vexed others, he minded not so long as he did not offend his God. If we would not cause God displeasure we must treasure up his own word. The personal way in which the man of God did this is also noteworthy: "With my whole heart have I sought thee." Whatever others might choose to do he had already made his choice and placed the Word in his innermost soul as his dearest delight, and however others might transgress, his aim was after holiness: "That I might not sin against thee." This was not what he purposed to do, but what he had already done: many are great at promising, but the Psalmist had been true in performing: hence he hoped to see a sure result. When the word is hidden in the heart the life shall be hidden from sin. The parallelism between the second octave and the first is still continued. Psalm 119:3 speaks of doing no iniquity, while this verse treats of the method of not sinning. When we form an idea of a blessedly holy man (Psalm 119:3) it becomes us to make an earnest effort to attain unto the same sacred innocence and divine happiness, and this can only be through heart piety founded on the Scriptures.

12 ¶ Blessed art thou, O LORD: teach me thy statutes.
love, and depth of holy wonder. These are also words of perception uttered from a remembrance of the great Jehovah's infinite happiness within himself. The Lord is and must be blessed, for he is the perfection of holiness; and this is probably the reason why this is used as a plea in this place. It is as if David had said -- I see that in conformity to thyself my way to happiness must lie, for thou art supremely blessed; and if I am made in my measure like to thee in holiness, I shall also partake in thy blessedness. No sooner is the word in the heart than a desire arises to mark and learn it. When food is eaten, the next thing is to digest it; and when the word is received into the soul, the first prayer is -- Lord, teach me its meaning.

_Teach me thy statutes_; for thus only can I learn the way to be blessed. Thou art so blessed that I am sure thou wilt delight in blessing others, and this boon I crave of thee that. I may be instructed in thy commands. Happy men usually rejoice to make others happy, and surely the happy God will willingly impart the holiness which is the fountain of happiness. Faith prompted this prayer and based it, not upon anything in the praying man, but solely upon the perfection of the God to whom he made supplication. Lord, thou art blessed, therefore bless me by teaching me. We need to be disciples or learners -- "teach me;" but what an honour to have God himself for a teacher: how bold is David to beg the blessed God to teach him! Yet the Lord put the desire into his heart when the sacred word was hidden there, and so we may be sure that he was not too bold in expressing it. Who would not wish to enter the school of such a Master to learn of him the art of holy living? To this Instructor we must submit ourselves if we would practically keep the statutes of righteousness. The King who ordained the statutes knows best their meaning, and as they are the outcome of his own nature he can best inspire us with their spirit. The petition commends itself to all who wish to cleanse their way, since it is most practical, and asks for teaching, not upon reconclite lore, but upon statute law. If we know the Lord's statutes we have the most essential education. Let us each one say, "Teach me thy statutes." This is a sweet prayer for everyday use. It is a step above that of Psalm 119:10, "O let me not wander," as that was a rise beyond that of Psalm 119:8, "O forsake me not utterly." It finds its answer in Psalm 119:98-100: "Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies," etc.: but not till it had been repeated even to the third time in the "Teach me" of Psalm 119:33, 66 all of which I beg my reader to peruse. Even after this third pleading the prayer occurs again in so many words in Psalm119:124, 139, and the same longing conies out near the close of the Psalm in Psalm 119:171 – "My lips shall utter praise when thou hast taught me thy statutes."

13 ¶ With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth.

119: 13 _With my lips have I declared all the judgments of thy mouth._ The taught one of Psalm 119:12 is here a teacher himself. What we learn in secret we are to proclaim upon the housetops. So had the Psalmist done. As much as he had known he had spoken. God has revealed many of his judgments by his mouth, that is to say, by a plain and open revelation; these it is out duty to repeat, becoming, as it were, so many exact echoes of his one infallible voice. There are judgments of God which are a great deep, which he does not reveal, and with these it will be wise for us not to intermeddle. What the Lord has veiled it would be presumption for us to uncover; but, on the other hand, what the Lord has revealed it would be shameful for us to
conceal. It is a great comfort to a Christian in time of trouble when in looking back upon his past life he can claim to have done his duty by the word of God. To have been, like Noah, a preacher of righteousness, is a great joy when the floods are rising, and the ungodly world is about to be destroyed. Lips which have been used in proclaiming God's statutes are sure to be acceptable when pleading God's promises. If we have had such regard to that which cometh out of God's mouth that we have published it far and wide, we may rest quite as assured that God will have respect unto the prayers which come out of our mouths. It will be an effectual method of cleansing a young man's way if he addicts himself continually to preaching the gospel. He cannot go far wrong in judgment whose whole soul is occupied in setting forth the judgments of the Lord. By teaching we learn; by training the tongue to holy speech we master the whole body; by familiarity with the divine procedure we are made to delight in righteousness; and thus in a threefold manner our way is cleansed by our proclaiming the way of the Lord.

14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies, as much as in all riches.

119: 14 I have rejoiced in the way of thy testimonies. Delight in the word of God is a sure proof that it has taken effect upon the heart, and so is cleansing the life. The Psalmist not only says that he does rejoice, but that he has rejoiced. For years it had been his joy and bliss to give his soul to the teaching of the word. His rejoicing had not only arisen out of the word of God, but out of the practical characteristics of it. The Way was as dear to him as the Truth and the Life. There was no picking and choosing with David, or if indeed he did make a selection, he chose the most practical first.

As much as in all riches. He compared his intense satisfaction with God's will with that of a man who possesses large and varied estates, and the heart to enjoy them. David knew the riches that come of sovereignty and which grow out of conquest; he valued the wealth which proceeds from labour, or is gotten by inheritance: he knew "all riches." The gracious king had been glad to see the gold and silver poured into his treasury that he might devote vast masses of it to the building of the Temple of Jehovah upon Mount Zion. He rejoiced in all sorts of riches consecrated and laid up for the noblest uses, and yet the way of God's word had given him more pleasure than even these. Observe that his joy was personal, distinct, remembered, and abundant. Wonder not that in the previous verse he glories in having spoken much of that which he had so much enjoyed: a man may well talk of that which is his delight.

15 I will meditate in thy precepts, and have respect unto thy ways.

119: 15 I will meditate in thy precepts. He who has an inward delight in anything will not long withdraw his mind from it. As the miser often returns to look upon his treasure, so does the devout believer by frequent meditation turn over the priceless wealth which he has discovered in the book of the Lord. To some men meditation is a task; to the man of cleansed way it is a joy. He who has meditated will meditate; he who saith, "I have rejoiced," is the same who adds, "I will meditate." No spiritual exercise is more profitable to the soul than that of devout meditation; why are many of us so exceeding slack in it? It is worthy of observation that the preceptory part of God's word was David's special subject of meditation, and this was the more natural because the question was still upon his mind as to how a young man should cleanse his way. Practical godliness is vital godliness.
And have respect unto thy ways, that is to say, I will think much about them so as to know what thy ways are; and next; I will think much of them so as to have thy ways in great reverence and high esteem. I will see what thy ways are towards me that I may be filled with reverence, gratitude, and love; and then I will observe what are those ways which thou hast prescribed for me, thy ways in which thou wouldest have me follow thee; these I would watch carefully that I may become obedient, and prove myself to be a true servant of such a Master. Note how the verses grow more inward as they proceed: from the speech of Psalm 119:13 we advanced to the manifested joy of Psalm 119:14, and now we come to the secret meditation of the happy spirit. The richest graces are those which dwell deepest.

16 I will delight myself in thy statutes: I will not forget thy word.

119: 16 I will delight myself in thy statutes. In this verse delight follows meditation, of which it is the true flower and outgrowth. When we have no other solace, but are quite alone, it will be a glad thing for the heart to turn upon itself, and sweetly whisper, "I will delight myself. What if no minstrel sings in the hall, I will delight myself. If the time of the singing of birds has not yet arrived, and the voice of the turtle is not heard in our land, yet I will delight myself." This is the choicest and noblest of all rejoicing; in fact, it is the good part which can never be taken from us; but there is no delighting ourselves with anything below that which God intended to be the soul's eternal satisfaction. The statute book is intended to be the joy of every loyal subject. When the believer once peruses the sacred pages his soul burns within him as he turns first to one and then to another of the royal words of the great King, words full and firm, immutable and divine.

I will not forget thy word. Men do not readily forget that which they have treasured up, that which they have meditated on (Psalm 119:15), and that which they have often spoken of (Psalm 119:13). Yet since we have treacherous memories it is well to bind them well with the knotted cord of

I will not forget. Note how two "I wills" follow upon two "I haves." We may not promise for the future if we have altogether failed in the past; but where grace has enabled us to accomplish something, we may hopefully expect that it will enable us to do more. It is curious to observe how this verse is molded upon Psalm 119:8 the changes are rung on the same words, but the meaning is quite different, and there is no suspicion of a vain repetition. The same thought is never given over again in this Psalm; they are dullards who think so. Something in the position of each verse affects its meaning, so that even where its words are almost identical with those of another the sense is delightfully varied. If we do not see an infinite variety of fine shades of thought in this Psalm we may conclude that we are color blind; if we do not hear many sweet harmonies, we may judge our ears to be dull of hearing, but we may not suspect the Spirit of God of monotony.

GIMEL

17 Deal bountifully with thy servant, that I may live, and keep thy word.

In this section the trials of the way appear to be manifest to the Psalmist's mind, and he prays accordingly for the help which will meet his case. As in the last eight verses he prayed as a youth newly come into the world, so here he pleads as a servant and a pilgrim, who growingly finds himself to be a stranger in an enemy's country. His appeal is to God alone, and his prayer is specially direct and personal. He speaks with the Lord as a man speaketh with his friend.

119: 17. **Deal bountifully with thy servant.** He takes pleasure in owning his duty to God, and counts it the joy of his heart to be in the service of his God. Out of his condition he makes a plea, for a servant has some hold upon a master; but in this case the wording of the plea shuts out the idea of legal claim, since he seeks bounty rather than reward. Let my wage be according to thy goodness, and not according to my merit. Reward me according to the largeness of thy liberality, and not according to the scantiness of my service. The hired servants of our Father have all of them bread enough and to spare, and he will not leave one of his household to perish with hunger. If the Lord will only treat us as he treats the least of his servants we may be well content, for all his true servants are sons, princes of the blood, heirs of life eternal. David felt that his great needs required a bountiful provision, and that his little desert would never earn such a supply; hence he must throw himself upon God's grace, and look for the great things he needed from the great goodness of the Lord. He begs for a liberality of grace, after the fashion of one who prayed, "O Lord, thou must give me great mercy or no mercy, for little mercy will not serve my turn."

**That I may live.** Without abundant mercy he could not live. It takes great grace to keep a saint alive. Even life is a gift of divine bounty to such undeserving ones as we are. Only the Lord can keep us in being, and it is mighty grace which preserves to us the life which we have forfeited by our sin. It is right to desire to live, it is meet to pray to live, it is just to ascribe prolonged life to the favour of God. Spiritual life, without which this natural life is mere existence, is also to be sought of the Lord's bounty, for it is the noblest work of divine grace, and in it the bounty of God is gloriously displayed. The Lord's servants cannot serve him in their own strength, for they cannot even live unless his grace abounds towards them.

**And keep thy word.** This should be the rule, the object, and the joy of our life. We may not wish to live and sin; but we may pray to live and keep God's word. Being is a poor thing if it be not well being. Life is only worth keeping while we can keep God's word; indeed, there is no life in the highest sense apart from holiness: life while we break the law is but a name to live. The prayer of this verse shows that it is only through divine bounty or grace that we can live as faithful servants of God, and manifest obedience to his commands. If we give God service it must be because he gives us grace. We work for him because he works in us. Thus we may make a chain out of the opening verses of the three first octaves of this Psalm: (Psalm 119:1) blesses the holy man, (Psalm 119:9) asks how we can attain to such holiness, and (Psalm 119:17) traces such holiness to its secret source, and shows us how to seek the blessing. The more a man prizes holiness and the more earnestly he strives after it, the more will he be driven towards God for
help therein, for he will plainly perceive that his own strength is insufficient, and that he cannot even so much as live without the bounteous assistance of the Lord his God.

18 ¶ Open thou mine eyes, that I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.

**119: 18 Open thou mine eyes.** This is a part of the bountiful dealing which he has asked for; no bounty is greater than that which benefits our person, our soul, our mind, and benefits it in so important an organ as the eye. It is far better to have the eyes opened than to be placed in the midst of the noblest prospects and remain blind to their beauty.

*That I may behold wondrous things out of thy law.* Some men can perceive no wonders in the gospel, but David felt sure that there were glorious things in the law: he had not half the Bible, but he prized it more than some men prize the whole. He felt that God had laid up great bounties in his word, and he begs for power to perceive, appreciate, and enjoy the same. We need not so much that God should give us more benefits, as the ability to see what he has given. The prayer implies a conscious darkness, a dimness of spiritual vision, a powerlessness to remove that defect, and a full assurance that God can remove it. It shows also that the writer knew that there were vast treasures in the word which he had not yet fully seen, marvels which he had not yet beheld, mysteries which he had scarcely believed. The Scriptures teem with marvels; the Bible is wonder land; it not only relates miracles, but it is itself a world of wonders. Yet what are these to closed eyes? And what man can open his own eyes, since he is born blind? God himself must reveal revelation to each heart. Scripture needs opening, but not one half so much as our eyes do: the veil is not on the book, but on our hearts. What perfect precepts, what precious promises, what priceless privileges are neglected by us because we wander among them like blind men among the beauties of nature, and they are to us as a landscape shrouded in darkness! The Psalmist had a measure of spiritual perception, or he would never have known that there were wondrous things to be seen, nor would he have prayed, "open thou mine eyes"; but what he had seen made him long for a clearer and wider sight. This longing proved the genuineness of what he possessed, for it is a test mark of the true knowledge of God that it causes its possessor to thirst for deeper knowledge. David's prayer in this verse is a good sequel to Psalm 119:10, which corresponds to it in position in its octave: there he said, "O let me not wander," and who so apt to wander as a blind man? and there, too, he declared, "with my whole heart have I sought thee," and hence the desire to see the object of his search. Very singular are the interlacings of the boughs of the huge tree of this Psalm, which has many wonders even within itself if we have opened eyes to mark them.

19 ¶ I am a stranger in the earth: hide not thy commandments from me.

**119: 19 I am a stranger in the earth.** This is meant for a plea. By divine command men are bound to be kind to strangers, and what God commands in others he will exemplify in himself. The Psalmist was a stranger for God's sake, else had he been as much at home as worldlings are: he was not a stranger to God, but a stranger to the world, a banished man so long as he was out of heaven. Therefore he pleads,
Hide not thy commandments from me. If these are gone, what have I else? Since nothing around me is mine, what can I do if I lose thy word? Since none around me know or care to know the way to thyself, what shall I do if I fail to see thy commands, by which alone I can guide my steps to the land where thou dwellest? David implies that God's commands were his solace in his exile: they reminded him of home, and they showed him the way thither, and therefore he begged that they might never be hidden from him, by his being unable either to understand them or to obey them. If spiritual light be withdrawn the command is hidden, and this a gracious heart greatly deprecates. What would be the use of opened eyes if the best object of sight were hidden from their view? While we wander here we can endure all the ills of this foreign land with patience if the word of God is applied to our hearts by the Spirit of God; but if the heavenly things which make for our peace were hid from our eyes we should be in an evil case, -- in fact, we should be at sea without a compass, in a desert without a guide, in an enemy's country without a friend. This prayer is a supplement to "open thou mine eyes", and, as the one prays to see, the other deprecates the negative of seeing, namely, the command being hidden, and so out of sight. We do well to look at both sides of the blessing we are seeking, and to plead for it from every point of view. The prayers are appropriate to the characters mentioned: as he is a servant he asks for opened eyes that his eyes may ever be towards his Lord, as the eyes of a servant should be; as a stranger he begs that he may not be strange to the way in which he is to walk towards his home. In each case his entire dependence is upon God alone. Note how the third of the second octave (11) has the same keyword as this third of the third octave: "Thy word have I hid." "Hide not thy commandments from me." This invites a meditation upon the different senses of hiding in and hiding from.

20 ¶ My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times.

119: 20 My soul breaketh for the longing that it hath unto thy judgments at all times. True godliness lies very much in desires. As we are not what we shall be, so also we are not what we would be. The desires of gracious men after holiness are intense, -- they cause a wear of heart, a straining of the mind, till it feels ready to snap with the heavenly pull. A high value of the Lord's commandment leads to a pressing desire to know and to do it, and this so weighs upon the soul that it is ready to break in pieces under the crush of its own longings. What a blessing it is when all our desires are after the things of God. We may well long for such longings. God's judgments are his decisions upon points which else had been in dispute. Every precept is a judgment of the highest court upon a point of action, an infallible and immutable decision upon a moral or spiritual question. The word of God is a code of justice from which there is no appeal. "This is the Judge which ends the strife. Where wit and reason fail; Our guide through devious paths of life, Our shield when doubts assail" (Watts). David had such reverence for the word, and such a desire to know it, and to be conformed to it, that his longings caused him a sort of heart break, which he here pleads before God. Longing is the soul of praying, and when the soul longs till it breaks, it cannot be long before the blessing will be granted. The most intimate communion between the soul and its God is carried on by the process described in the text. God reveals his will, and our heart longs to be conformed thereto. God judges, and our heart rejoices in the verdict. This is fellowship of heart most real and thorough. Note well that our desire after the mind of God should be constant; we should feel holy
longings "at all times." Desires which can be put off and on like our garments are at best but mere wishes, and possibly they are hardly true enough to be called by that name, -- they are temporary emotions born of excitement, and doomed to die when the heat which created them has cooled down. He who always longs to know and do the right is the truly right man. His judgment is sound, for he loves all God's judgments, and follows them with constancy. His times shall be good, since he longs to be good and to do good at all times. Remark how this fourth of the third eight chimes with the fourth of the fourth eight. "My soul breaketh"; "my soul melteth." There is surely some recondite poetic art about all this, and it is well for us to be careful in studying what the psalmist was so careful in composing.

21 ¶ Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed, which do err from thy commandments.

119: 21 **Thou hast rebuked the proud that are cursed.** This is one of God's judgments: he is sure to deal out a terrible portion to men of lofty looks. God rebuked Pharaoh with sore plagues, and at the Red Sea "In the foundations of the world were discovered at thy rebuke, O Lord." In the person of the naughty Egyptian he taught all the proud that he will certainly abase them. Proud men are cursed men: nobody blesses them, and they soon become a burden to themselves. In itself, pride is a plague and torment. Even if no curse came from the law of God, there seems to be a law of nature that proud men should be unhappy men. This led David to abhor pride; he dreaded the rebuke of God and the curse of the law. The proud sinners of his day were his enemies, and he felt happy that God was in the quarrel as well as he.

**Which do err from thy commandments.** Only humble hearts are obedient, for they alone will yield to rule and government. Proud men's looks are high, too high to mark their own feet and keep the Lord's way. Pride lies at the root of all sin: if men were not arrogant they would not be disobedient. God rebukes pride even when the multitudes pay homage to it, for he sees in it rebellion against his own majesty, and the seeds of yet further rebellions. It is the sum of sin. Men talk of an honest pride; but if they were candid they would see that it is of all sins the least honest, and the least becoming in a creature, and especially in a fallen creature: yet so little do proud men know their own true condition under the curse of God, that they set up to censure the godly, and express contempt for them, as may be seen in the next verse. They are themselves contemptible, and yet they are contemptuous towards their betters. We may well love the judgments of God when we see them so decisively leveled against the haughty upstarts who would fain lord it over righteous men; and we may well be of good under the rebukes of the ungodly since their power to hurt us is destroyed by the Lord himself. "The Lord rebuke thee" is answer enough for all the accusations of men or devils. In the fifth of the former octave the Psalmist wrote, "I have declared all the judgments of thy mouth," and here he continues in the same strain, giving a particular instance of the Lord's judgments against haughty rebels. In the next two portions the fifth verses deal with lying and vanity, and pride is one of the most common forms of those evils.

22 ¶ Remove from me reproach and contempt; for I have kept thy testimonies.
Remove from me reproach and contempt. These are painful things to tender minds. David could bear them for righteousness sake, but they were a heavy yoke, and he longed to be free from them. To be slandered, and then to be despised in consequence of the vile accusation, is a grievous affliction. No one likes to be traduced, or even to be despised. He who says, "I care nothing for my reputation," is not a wise man, for in Solomon's esteem, "a good name is better than precious ointment." The best way to deal with slander is to pray about it: God will either remove it, or remove the sting from it. Our own attempts at clearing ourselves are usually failures; we are like the boy who wished to remove the blot from his copy, and by his bungling made it ten times worse. When we suffer from a libel it is better to pray about it than go to law over it, or even to demand an apology from the inventor. O ye who are reproached, take your matters before the highest court, and leave them with the Judge of all the earth. God will rebuke your proud accuser; be ye quiet and let your advocate plead your cause. For I have kept thy testimonies. Innocence may justly ask to be cleared from reproach. If there be truth in the charges alleged against us what can we urge with God? If, however, we are wrongfully accused our appeal has a locus standi in the court and cannot be refused. If through fear of reproach we forsake the divine testimony we shall deserve the coward's doom; our safety lies in sticking close to the true and to the right. God will keep those who keep his testimonies. A good conscience is the best security for a good name; reproach will not abide with those who abide with Christ, neither will contempt remain upon those who remain faithful to the ways of the Lord. This verse stands as a parallel both in sense and position to Psalm 119:6, and it has the catchword of "testimonies," by which it chimes with Psalm 119:14.

Princes also did sit and speak against me: but thy servant did meditate in thy statutes.

Princes also did sit and speak against me. David was high game, and the great ones of the earth went a hawking after him. Princes saw in him a greatness which they envied, and therefore they abused him. On their thrones they might have found something better to consider and speak about, but they turned the seat of judgment into the seat of the scoler. Most men covet a prince's good word, and to be spoken ill of by a great man is a great discouragement to them, but the Psalmist bore his trial with holy calmness. Many of the lordly ones were his enemies, and made it their business to speak ill of him: they held sittings for scandal, sessions for slander, parliaments of falsehood, and yet he survived all their attempts upon him.

But thy servant did meditate in thy statutes. This was brave indeed. He was God's servant, and therefore he attended to his Master's business; he was God's servant, and therefore felt sure that his Lord would defend him. He gave no heed to his princely slanderers, he did not even allow his thoughts to be disturbed by a knowledge of their plotting in conclave. Who were these malignants that they should rob God of his servant's attention, or deprive the Lord's chosen of a moment's devout communion. The rabble of princes were not worth five minutes' thought, if those five minutes had to be taken from holy meditation. It is very beautiful to see the two sittings: the princes sitting to reproach David, and David sitting with his God and his Bible, answering his traducers by never answering them at all. Those who feed upon the word grow strong and peaceful, and are by God's grace hidden from the strife of tongues. Note that in the close of the former octave he had said, "I will meditate,"
and here he shows how he had redeemed his promise, even under great provocation to forget it.
It is a praiseworthy thing when the resolve of our happy hours is duly carried out in our seasons
of affliction.

24 ¶ Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors.

119: 24 Thy testimonies also are my delight and my counsellors. They were not only themes for
meditation, but "also" sources of delight and means of guidance. While his enemies took counsel
with each other the holy man took counsel with the testimonies of God. The fowlers could not
drive the bird from its nest with all their noise. It was their delight to slander and his delight to
meditate. The words of the Lord serve us for many purposes; in our sorrows they are our delight,
and in our difficulties they are our guide; we derive joy from them and discover wisdom in them.
If we desire to find comfort in the Scriptures we must submit ourselves to their counsel, and
when we follow their counsel it must not be with reluctance but with delight. This is the safest
way of dealing with those who plot for our ruin; let us give more heed to the true testimonies of
the Lord than to the false witness of our foes. The best answer to accusing princes is the word of
the justifying King. In Psalm 119:16 David said, "I will delight in thy statutes," and here he says
"they are my delight": thus resolutions formed in God's strength come to fruit, and spiritual
desires ripen into actual attainments. O that it might be so with all the readers of these lines.

DALETH

25 ¶. My soul cleaveth unto the dust: quicken thou me according to thy word.

Psalm 119: 25-32

Here, it seems to me, we have the Psalmist in trouble bewailing the bondage to earthly things in
which he finds his mind to be held. His soul cleaves to the dust, melts for heaviness, and cries for
enlargement from its spiritual prison. In these verses we shall see the influence of the divine
word upon a heart which laments its downward tendencies, and is filled with mourning because
of its deadening surroundings. The word of the Lord evidently arouses prayer (Psalm 119:25-29),
confirms choice (Psalm 119:30), and inspires renewed resolve (Psalm 119:32): it is in all
tribulation whether of body: or mind the surest source of help. This portion has 'D' for its
alphabetical letter: it sings of Depression, in the spirit of Devotion, Determination, and
Dependence.

119: 25 My soul cleaveth unto the dust. He means in part that he was full of sorrow; for
mourners in the east cast dust on their heads, and sat in ashes, and the Psalmist felt as if these
ensigns of woe were glued to him, and his very soul was made to cleave to them because of his
powerlessness to rise above his grief. Does he not also mean that he felt ready to die? Did he not
feel his life absorbed and fast held by the grave's mould, half choked by the death dust? It may
not be straining the language if we conceive that he also felt and bemoaned his earthly
mindedness and spiritual deadness. There was a tendency in his soul to cling to earth which he
greatly bewailed. Whatever was the cause of his complaint, it was no surface evil, but an affair of
his inmost spirit; his soul cleaved to the dust; and it was not a casual and accidental falling into the dust, but a continuous and powerful tendency, or cleaving to the earth. But what a mercy that the good man could feel and deplore whatever there was of evil in the cleaving! The serpent's seed can find their meat in the dust, but never shall the seed of the woman be thus degraded. Many are of the earth earthy, and never lament it; only the heaven born and heaven soaring spirit pines at the thought of being fastened to this world, and bird limed by its sorrows or its pleasures.

Quicken thou me according to thy word. More life is the cure for all our ailments. Only the Lord can give it. He can bestow it, bestow it at once, and do it according to his word, without departing from the usual course of his grace, as we see it mapped out in the Scriptures. It is well to know what to pray for, -- David seeks quickening: one would have thought that he would have asked for comfort or upraising, but he knew that these would come out of increased life, and therefore he sought that blessing which is the root of the rest. When a person is depressed in spirit, weak, and bent towards the ground, the main thing is to increase his stamina and put more life into him; then his spirit revives, and his body becomes erect. In reviving the life, the whole man is renewed. Shaking off the dust is a little thing by itself, but when it follows upon quickening, it is a blessing of the greatest value; just as good spirits which flow from established health are among the choicest of our mercies. The phrase, "according to thy word," means -- according to thy revealed way of quickening thy saints. The word of God shows us that he who first made us must keep us alive, and it tells us of the Spirit of God who through the ordinances pours fresh life into our souls; we beg the Lord to act towards us in this his own regular method of grace. Perhaps David remembered the word of the Lord in Deuteronomy 32:39, where Jehovah claims both to kill and to make alive, and he beseeches the Lord to exercise that life giving power upon his almost expiring servant. Certainly, the man of God had not so many rich promises to rest upon as we have, but even a single word was enough for him, and he right earnestly urges "according to thy word." It is a grand thing to see a believer in the dust and yet pleading the promise, a man at the grave's mouth crying, "quicken me," and hoping that it shall be done. Note how this first verse of the 4th octonary tallies with the first of the "Quicken me." While in a happy third

That I may live"... "Quicken me." While in a happy state he begs for bountiful dealing, and when in a forlorn condition he prays for quickening. Life is in both cases the object of pursuit: that he may have life, and have it more abundantly.

26 ¶ I have declared my ways, and thou hearest me: teach me thy statutes.

119: 26 I have declared my ways. Open confession is good for the soul. Nothing brings more ease and more life to a man than a frank acknowledgment of the evil which has caused the sorrow and the lethargy. Such a declaration proves that the man knows his own condition, and is no longer blinded by pride. Our confessions are not meant to make God know our sins, but to make us know them.

And thou hearest me. His confession had been accepted; it was not lost labour; God had drawn near to him in it. We ought never to go from a duty till we have been accepted in it. Pardon follows upon penitent confession, and David felt that he had obtained it. It is God's way to forgive our sinful way when we from our hearts confess the wrong.
Teach me thy statutes. Being truly sorry for his fault, and having obtained full forgiveness, he is anxious to avoid offending again, and hence he begs to be taught obedience. He was not willing to sin through ignorance, he wished to know all the mind of God by being taught it by the best of teachers. He pined after holiness. Justified men always long to be sanctified. When God forgives our sins we are all the more fearful of sinning, again. Mercy, which pardons transgression, sets us longing for grace which prevents transgression. We may boldly ask for more when God has given us much; he who has washed out the past stain will not refuse that which will preserve us from present and future defilement. This cry for teaching is frequent in the Psalm; in Psalm 119:12 it followed a sight of God, here it follows from a sight of self. Every experience should lead us thus to plead with God.

27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts: so shall I talk of thy wondrous works.

119: 27 Make me to understand the way of thy precepts. Give me a deep insight into the practical meaning of thy word; let me get a clear idea of the tone and tenor of thy law. Blind obedience has but small beauty; God would have us follow him with our eyes open. To obey the letter of the word is all that the ignorant can hope for; if we wish to keep God's precepts in their spirit we must come to an understanding of them, and that can be gained nowhere but at the Lord's hands. Our understanding needs enlightenment and direction: he who made our understanding must also make us understand. The last sentence was, "teach me thy statutes," and the words, "make me to understand," are an instructive enlargement and exposition of that sentence: we need to be so taught that we understand what we learn. It is to be noted that the Psalmist is not anxious to understand the prophecies, but the precepts, and he is not concerned about the subtleties of the law, but the commonplaces and everyday rules of it, which are described as "the way of thy precepts."

So shall I talk of thy wondrous works. It is ill talking of what we do not understand. We must be taught of God till we understand, and then we may hope to communicate our knowledge to others with a hope of profiting them. Talk without intelligence is mere talk, and idle talk; but the words of the instructed are as pearls which adorn the ears of them that hear. When our heart has been opened to understand, our lips should be opened to impart knowledge; and we may hope to be taught ourselves when we feel in our hearts a willingness to teach the way of the Lord to those among whom we dwell. Thy wondrous works. Remark that the clearest understanding does not cause us to cease from wondering at the ways and works of God. The fact is that the more we know of God's doings the more we admire them, and the more ready we are to speak upon them. Half the wonder in the world is born of ignorance, but holy wonder is the child of understanding. When a man understands the way of the divine precepts he never talks of his own works, and as the tongue must have some theme to speak upon, he begins to extol the works of the all perfect Lord. Some in this place read "meditate" or "muse" instead of "talk"; it is singular that the words should be so near of kin, and yet it is right that they should be, for none but foolish people will talk without thinking. If we read the passage in this sense, we take it to mean that in proportion as David understood the word of God he would meditate upon it more and more. It is usually so; the thoughtless care not to know the inner
meaning of the Scriptures, while those who know them best are the very men who strive after a
greater familiarity with them, and therefore give themselves up to musing upon them. Observe the third verse of the last eight (19), and see how the sense is akin to this. There he was a stranger in the earth, and here he prays to know his way; there, too, he prayed that the word might not be hid from himself, and here he promises that he will not hide it from others.

28 ¶ My soul melteth for heaviness: strengthen thou me according unto thy word.

119: 28 My soul melteth for heaviness. He was dissolving away in tears. The solid strength of
his constitution was turning to liquid as if molten by the furnace heat of his afflictions. Heaviness of heart is a killing thing, and when it abounds it threatens to turn life into a long death, in which a man seems to drop away in a perpetual drip of grief. Tears are the distillation of the heart; when a man weeps he wastes away his soul. Some of us know what great heaviness means, for we have been brought under its power again and again, and often have we felt ourselves to be poured out like water, and near to being like water spilt upon the ground, never again to be gathered up. There is one good point in this downcast state, for it is better to be melted with grief than to be hardened by impenitence.

Strengthen thou me according unto thy word. He had found out an ancient promise that the saints shall be strengthened, and here he pleads it. His hope in his state of depression lies not in himself, but in his God; if he may be strengthened from on high he will yet shake off his heaviness and rise to joy again. Observe how he pleads the promise of the word, and asks for nothing more than to be dealt with after the recorded manner of the Lord of mercy. Had not Hannah sung, "He shall give strength unto his King, and exalt the horn of his anointed"? God strengthens us by infusing grace through his word: the word which creates can certainly sustain. Grace can enable us to bear the constant fret of an abiding sorrow, it can repair the decay caused by the perpetual tear drip, and give to the believer the garment of praise for the spirit of heaviness. Let us always resort to prayer in our desponding times, for it is the surest and shortest way out of the depths. In that prayer let us plead nothing but the word of God; for there is no plea like a promise, no argument like a word from our covenant God. Note how David records his inner soul life. In Psalm 119:20 he says,

"My soul breaketh;" in Psalm 119:25,

"My soul cleaveth to the dust;" and here,

"My soul melteth." Further on, in Psalm 119:81, he cries,

"My soul fainteth;" in Psalm 119:109,

"My soul is continually in my hand;" in Psalm 119:167,

"My soul hath kept thy testimonies;" and lastly, in Psalm 119:175,
"Let my soul live." Some people do not even know that they have a soul, and here is David all soul. What a difference there is between the spiritually living and the spiritually dead.

29 Remove from me the way of lying: and grant me thy law gracially.

119:29 Remove from me the way of lying. This is the way of sin, error, idolatry, folly, self righteousness, formalism, hypocrisy. David would not only be kept from that way, but have it kept from him; he cannot endure to have it near him, he would have it swept away from his sight. He desired to be right and upright, true and in the truth; but he feared that a measure of falsehood would cling to him unless the Lord took it away, and therefore he earnestly cried for its removal. False motives may at times sway us, and we may fall into mistaken notions of our own spiritual condition before God, which erroneous conceits may be kept up by a natural prejudice in our own layout, and so we may be confirmed in a delusion, and abide under error unless grace comes to the rescue. No true heart can rest in a false view of itself; it finds no anchorage, but is tossed to and fro till it gets into the truth and the truth into it. The true born child of heaven sighs out and cries against a lie, desiring to have it taken away as much as a man desires to be set at a distance from a venomous serpent or a raging lion.

And grant me thy law graciously. He is in a gracious state who looks upon the law itself as a gift of grace. David wishes to have the law opened up to his understanding, engraved upon his heart, and carried out in his life; for this he seeks the Lord, and pleads for it as a gracious grant. No doubt he viewed this as the only mode of deliverance from the power of falsehood: if the law be not in our hearts the lie will enter. David would seem to have remembered those times when, according to the eastern fashion, he had practiced deceit for his own preservation, and he saw that he had been weak and erring on that point; therefore he was bowed down in spirit and begged to be quickened and delivered from transgressing in that manner any more. Holy men cannot review their sins without tears, nor weep over them without entreating to be saved from further offending. There is an evident opposition between falsehood and the gracious power of God's law. The only way to expel the lie is to accept the truth. Grace also has a clear affinity to truth: no sooner do we meet with the sound of the word "graciously" than we hear the footfall of truth: "I have chosen the way of truth." Grace and truth are ever linked together, and a belief of the doctrines of grace is a grand preservative from deadly error. In the fifth of the preceding octave (Psalm 119:21) David cries out against pride, and here against lying -- these are much the same thing. Is not pride the greatest of all lies?

30 ¶ I have chosen the way of truth: thy judgments have I laid before me.

119:30 I have chosen the way of truth. As he abhorred the way of lying, so he chose the way of truth: a man must choose one or the other, for there cannot be any neutrality in the case. Men do not drop into the right way by chance; they must choose it, and continue to choose it, or they will soon wander from it. Those whom God has chosen in due time choose his way. There is a doctrinal way of truth which we ought to choose, rejecting every dogma of man's devising; there is a ceremonial way of truth which we should follow, detesting all the forms which apostate churches have invented; and then there is a practical way of truth, the way of holiness, to which we must adhere whatever may be our temptation to forsake it. Let our election be made, and made irrevocably. Let us answer to all seducers, "I have chosen, and what I have chosen I have
chosen." O Lord, by thy grace lead us with a hearty free will to choose to do thy will; thus shall thine eternal choice of us bring forth the end which it designs.

**Thy judgments have I laid before me** What he had chosen he kept in mind, laying it out before his mind's eye. Men do not become holy by a careless wish: there must be study, consideration, deliberation, and earnest enquiry, or the way of truth will be missed. The commands of God must be set before us as the mark to aim at, the model to work by, the road to walk in. If we put God's judgments into the background we shall soon find ourselves departing from them. Here again the sixth stanzas of the third and fourth octaves ring out a similar note.

"I have kept thy testimonies" (Psalm 119:22), and

"Thy judgments have I laid before me." This is a happy confession, and there is no wonder that it is repeated.

31 I have stuck unto thy testimonies: O LORD, put me not to shame.

32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

31 **I have stuck unto thy testimonies,** -- or I have cleaved, for the word is the same as in Psalm 119:25. Though cleaving to the dust of sorrow and of death, yet he kept fast hold of the divine word. This was his comfort, and his faith stuck to it, his love and his obedience held on to it, his heart and his mind abode in meditation upon it. His choice was so heartily and deliberately made that he stuck to it for life, and could not be removed from it by the reproaches of those who despised the way of the Lord. What could he have gained by quitting the sacred testimony? Say rather, what would he not have lost if he had ceased to cleave to the divine word? It is pleasant to look back upon past perseverance and to expect grace to continue equally steadfast in the future. He who has enabled us to stick to him will surely stick to us.

O LORD, put me not to shame. This would happen if God's promises were unfulfilled, and if the heart of God's servant were suffered to fail. This we have no reason to fear, since the Lord is faithful to his word. But it might also happen though the believer's acting in an inconsistent manner, as David had himself once done, when he fell into the way of lying, and pretended to be a madman. If we are not true to our profession we may be left to reap the fruit of our folly, and that will be the bitter thing called "shame." It is evident from this that a believer ought never to be ashamed, but act the part of a grave man who has done nothing to be ashamed of in believing his God, and does not mean to adopt a craven tone in the presence of the Lord's enemies. If we beseech the Lord not to put us to shame, surely we ought not ourselves to be ashamed without cause. The prayer of this verse is found in the parallel verse of the next section (Psalm 119:39): "Turn away my reproach which I fear." It is evidently a petition which was often on the Psalmist's heart. A brave heart is more wounded by shame than by any weapon which a soldier's hand can wield.

32 I will run the way of thy commandments, when thou shalt enlarge my heart.

32 **I will run the way of thy commandments.** With energy, promptitude, and zeal he would perform the will of God, but he needed more life and liberty from the hand of God.
When thou shalt enlarge my heart. Yes, the heart is the master; the feet soon run when the heart is free and energetic. Let the affections be aroused and eagerly set on divine things, and our actions will be full of force, swiftness, and delight. God must work in us first, and then we shall will and do according to his good pleasure. He must change the heart, unite the heart, encourage the heart, strengthen the heart, and enlarge the heart, and then the course of the life will be gracious, sincere, happy, and earnest; so that from our lowest up to our highest state in grace we must attribute all to the free favour of our God. We must run; for grace is not an overwhelming force which compels unwilling minds to move contrary to their will; our running is the spontaneous leaping forward of a mind which has been set free by the hand of God, and delights to show its freedom by its bounding speed. What a change from Psalm 119:25 to the present, from cleaving to the dust to running in the way. It is the excellence of holy sorrow that it works in us the quickening for which we seek, and then we show the sincerity of our grief and the reality of our revival by being zealous in the ways of the Lord. For the third time an octave closes with, "I will." These "I wills" of the Psalms are right worthy of being each one the subject of study and discourse. Note how the heart has been spoken of up to this point:

"whole heart" (119:2),
"uprightness of heart" (119:7),
"hid in mine heart" (119:11),
"enlarge my heart." There are many more allusions further on, and these all go to show what heart work David's religion was. It is one of the great lacks of our age that heads count for more than hearts, and men are far more ready to learn than to love, though they are by no means eager in either direction.

33 ¶ Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes; and I shall keep it unto the end.

Psalm 119: 33-40

A sense of dependence and a consciousness of extreme need pervade this section, which is all made up of prayer and plea. The former eight verses trembled with a sense of sin, quivering with a childlike sense of weakness and folly, which caused the man of God to cry out for the help by which alone his soul could be preserved from falling back into sin.

119: 33. Teach me, O LORD, the way of thy statutes. Child like, blessed words, from the lips of an old, experienced believer, and he a king, and a man inspired of God. Alas, for those who will never be taught. They dote upon their own wisdom; but their folly is apparent to all who rightly judge. The Psalmist will have the Lord for his teacher; for he feels that his heart will not learn of any less effectual instructor. A sense of great slowness to learn drives us to seek a great teacher. What condescension it is on our great Jehovah's part that he deigns to teach those who seek him. The lesson which is desired is thoroughly practical; the holy man would not only learn the
statutes, but the way of them, the daily use of them, their tenor, spirit, direction, habit, tendency. He would know that path of holiness which is hedged in by divine law, along which the commands of the Lord stand as sign posts of direction and mile stones of information, guiding and marking our progress. The very desire to learn this way is in itself an assurance that we shall be taught therein, for he who made us long to learn will be sure to gratify the desire.

*And I shall keep it unto the end.* Those who are taught of God never forget their lessons. When divine grace sets a man in the true way he will be true to it. Mere human wit and will have no such enduring influence: there is an end to all perfection of the flesh, but there is no end to heavenly grace except its own end, which is the perfecting of holiness in the fear of the Lord. Perseverance to the end is most certainly to be predicted of those whose beginning is in God, and with God, and by God; but those who commence without the Lord's teaching soon forget what they learn, and start aside from the way upon which they professed to have entered. No one may boast that he will hold on his way in his own strength, for that must depend upon the continual teaching of the Lord: we shall fall like Peter, if we presume on our own firmness as he did. If God keeps us we shall keep his way; and it is a great comfort to know that it is the way with God to keep the feet of his saints. Yet we are to watch as if our keeping of the way depended wholly on ourselves; for, according to this verse, our perseverance rests not on any force or compulsion, but on the teaching of the Lord, and assuredly teaching, whoever be the teacher, requires learning on the part of the taught one: no one can teach a man who refuses to learn. Earnestly, then, let us drink in divine instruction, that so we may hold fast our integrity, and to life's latest hour follow on in the path of uprightness! If we receive the living and incorruptible seed of the word of God we must live: apart from this we have no life eternal, but only a name to live. The "end" of which David speaks is the end of life, or the fullness of obedience. He trusted in grace to make him faithful to the utmost, never drawing a line and saying to obedience, "Hitherto shalt thou go, but no further." The end of our keeping the law will come only when we cease to breathe; no good man will think of marking a date and saying, "It is enough, I may now relax my watch, and live after the manner of men." As Christ loves us to the end, so must we serve him to the end. The end of divine teaching is that we may persevere to the end. The portions of eight show a relationship still.

GIMEL, begins with prayer for life, that he may keep the word (Psalm 119:17); DALETH cries for more life, according to that word (Psalm 119:25); and now HE opens with a prayer for teaching, that he may keep the way of God's statutes. If a keen eye is turned upon these verses a closer affinity will be discerned.

34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law; yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart.

**119: 34 Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law.** This is the same prayer enlarged, or rather it is a supplement which intensifies it. He not only needs teaching, but the power to learn: he requires not only to understand, but to obtain an understanding. How low has sin brought us; for we even lack the faculty to understand spiritual things, and are quite unable to know them till we are endowed with spiritual discernment. Will God in very deed give us understanding? This
is a miracle of grace. It will, however, never be wrought upon us till we know our need of it; and we shall not even discover that need till God gives us a measure of understanding to perceive it. We are in a state of complicated ruin, from which nothing but manifold grace can deliver us. Those who feel their folly are by the example of the Psalmist encouraged to pray for understanding: let each man by faith cry,
"Give me understanding." Others have had it, why may it not come to me? It was a gift to them; will not the Lord also freely bestow it upon me? We are not to seek this blessing that we may be famous for wisdom, but that we may be abundant in our love to the law of God. He who has understanding will learn, remember, treasure up, and obey the commandment of the Lord. The gospel gives us grace to keep the law; the free gift leads us to holy service; there is no way of reaching to holiness but by accepting the gift of God. If God gives, we keep; but we never keep the law in order to obtaining grace. The sure result of regeneration, or the bestowal of understanding, is a devout reverence for the law and a resolute keeping of it in the heart. The Spirit of God makes us to know the Lord and to understand somewhat of his love, wisdom, holiness, and majesty; and the result is that we honour the law and yield our hearts to the obedience of the faith.

Yea, I shall observe it with my whole heart. The understanding operates upon the affections; it convinces the heart of the beauty of the law, so that the soul loves it with all its powers; and then it reveals the majesty of the lawgiver, and the whole nature bows before his supreme will. An enlightened judgment heals the divisions of the heart, and bends the united affections to a strict and watchful observance of the one rule of life. He alone obeys God who can say, "My Lord, I would serve thee, and do it with all my heart"; and none can truly say this till they have received as a free grant the inward illumination of the Holy Ghost. To observe God's law with all our heart at all times is a great grace, and few there be that find it; yet it is to be had if we will consent to be taught of the Lord. Observe the parallel of Psalm 119:2 and Psalm 119:10 where the whole heart is spoken of in reference to seeking, and in Psalm 119:58 in pleading for mercy; these are all second verses in their octonaries. The frequent repetition of the phrase shows the importance of undivided love: the heart is never whole or holy till it is whole or united. The heart is never one with God till it is one within itself.

35 ¶ Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight.

119: 35 Make me to go in the path of thy commandments; for therein do I delight. "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which good I find not." Thou hast made me to love the way, now make me to move in it. It is a plain path, which others are treading through thy grace; I see it and admire it; cause me to travel in it. This is the cry of a child that longs to walk, but is too feeble; of a pilgrim who is exhausted, yet pants to be on the march; of a lame man who pines to be able to run. It is a blessed thing to delight in holiness, and surely he who gave us this delight will work in us the yet higher joy of possessing and practicing it. Here is our only hope; for we shall not go in the narrow path till we are made to do so by the Maker's own power. O thou who didst once make me, I pray thee make me again: thou hast made me to know; now make me to go. Certainly I shall never be happy till I do, for my sole delight lies in walking according to thy bidding. The Psalmist does not ask the Lord to do for him what he ought to do for himself: he wishes himself to "go" or tread in the path of the command. He asks not to be
carried while he lies passive; but to be made "to go." Grace does not treat us as stocks and stones, to be dragged by horses or engines, but as creatures endowed with life, reason, will, and active powers, who are willing and able to go of themselves if once made to do so. God worketh in us, but it is that we may both will and do according to his good pleasure. The holiness we seek after is not a forced compliance with command, but the indulgence of a whole hearted passion for goodness, such as shall conform our life to the will of the Lord. Can the reader say, "therein do I delight"? Is practical godliness the very jewel of your soul, the coveted prize of your mind? If so, the outward path of life, however rough, will be clean, and lead the soul upward to delight ineffable. He who delights in the law should not doubt but what he will be enabled to run in its ways, for where the heart already finds its joy the feet are sure to follow. Note that the corresponding verse in the former eight (Psalm119:35) was "Make me to understand," and here we have "Make me to go." Remark the order, first understanding and then going; for a clear understanding is a great assistance towards practical action. During the last few octaves the fourth has been the heart verse: see Psalm 119:20,28, and now Psalm 119:36. Indeed in all the preceding fourths great heartiness is observable. This also marks the care with which this sacred song was composed.

36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies, and not to covetousness.

### 119: 36 Incline my heart unto thy testimonies. Does not this prayer appear to be superfluous, since it is evident that the Psalmist's heart was set upon obedience? We are sure that there is never a word to spare in Scripture. After asking for active virtue it was meet that the man of God should beg that his heart might be in all that he did. What would his goings be if his heart did not go? It may be that David felt a wandering desire, an inordinate leaning of his soul to worldly gain, -- possibly it even intruded into his most devout meditations, and at once he cried out for more grace. The only way to cure a wrong leaning is to have the soul bent in the opposite direction. Holiness of heart is the cure for covetousness. What a blessing it is that we may ask the Lord even for an inclination. Our wills are free, and yet without violating their liberty, grace can incline us in the right direction. This can be done by enlightening the understanding as to the excellence of obedience, by strengthening our habits of virtue, by giving us an experience of the sweetness of piety, and by many other ways. If any one duty is irksome to us it behooves us to offer this player with special reference thereto: we are to love all the Lord's testimonies, and if we fail in any one point we must pay double attention to it. The learning of the heart is the way in which the life will lean: hence the force of the petition, "Incline my heart." Happy shall we be when we feel habitually inclined to all that is good. This is not the way in which a carnal heart ever leans; all its inclinations are in opposition to the divine testimonies.

And not to covetousness. This is the inclination of nature, and grace must put a negative upon it. This vice is as injurious as it is common; it is as mean as it is miserable. It is idolatry, and so it dethrones God; it is selfishness, and so it is cruel to all in its power; it is sordid greed, and so it would sell the Lord himself for pieces of silver. It is a degrading, groveling, hardening, deadening sin, which withers everything around it that is lovely and Christlike. He who is covetous is of the race of Judas, and will in all probability turn out to be himself a son of perdition. The crime of covetousness is common, but very few will confess it; for when a man heaps up gold in his heart, the dust of it blows into his eyes, and he cannot see his own fault. Our
hearts must have some object of desire, and the only way to keep out worldly gain is to put in its place the testimonies of the Lord. If we are inclined or bent one way, we shall be turned from the other: the negative virtue is most surely attained by making sure of the positive grace which inevitably produces it.

37 ¶ Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity; and quicken thou me in thy way.

119: 37 Turn away mine eyes from beholding vanity. He had prayed about his heart, and one would have thought that the eyes would so surely have been influenced by the heart that there was no need to make them the objects of a special petition; but our author is resolved to make assurance doubly sure. If the eyes do not see, perhaps the heart may not desire: at any rate, one door of temptation is closed when we do not even look at the painted bauble. Sin first entered man's mind by the eye, and it is still a favorite gate for the incoming of Satan's allurements: hence the need of a double watch upon that portal. The prayer is not so much that the eyes may be shut as "turned away"; for we need to have them open, but directed to right objects. Perhaps we are now gazing upon folly, we need to have our eyes turned away; and if we are beholding heavenly things we shall be wise to beg that our eyes may be kept away from vanity. Why should we look on vanity? -- it melts away as a vapor. Why not look upon things eternal? Sin is vanity, unjust gain is vanity, self conceit is vanity, and, indeed, all that is not of God comes under the same head. From all this we must turn away. It is a proof of the sense of weakness felt by the Psalmist and of his entire dependence upon God that he even asks to have his eyes turned for him; he meant not to make himself passive, but he intended to set forth his own utter helplessness apart from the grace of God. For fear he should forget himself and gaze with a lingering longing upon forbidden objects, he entreats the Lord speedily to make him turn away his eyes, hurrying him off from so dangerous a parley with iniquity. If we are kept from looking on vanity we shall be preserved from loving iniquity.

And quicken thou me in thy way. Give me so much life that dead vanity may have no power over me. Enable me to travel so swiftly in the road to heaven that I may not stop long enough within sight of vanity to be fascinated thereby. The prayer indicates our greatest need, -- more life in our obedience. It shows the preserving power of increased life to keep us from the evils which are around us, and it, also, tells us where that increased life must come from, namely, from the Lord alone. Vitality is the cure of vanity. When the heart is full of grace the eyes will be cleansed from impurity. On the other hand, if we would be full of life as to the things of God we must keep ourselves apart from sin and folly, or the eyes will soon captivate the mind, and, like Samson, who could slay his thousands, we may ourselves be overcome through the lusts which enter by the eye. This verse is parallel to Psalm 119:21, 29 in the previous eights: "rebuke," "remove," "turn away"; or "proud," "lying," "vanity."

38 ¶ Stablish thy word unto thy servant, who is devoted to thy fear.

119: 38 Stablish thy word unto thy servant. Make me sure of thy sure word: make it sure to me and make me sure of it. If we possess the spirit of service, and yet are troubled with skeptical thoughts we cannot do better than pray to be established in the truth. Times will arise when every doctrine and promise seems to be shaken, and our mind gets no rest: then we must appeal to God for establishment in the faith, for he would have all his servants to be well instructed.
and confirmed in his word. But we must mind that we are the Lord's servants, for else we shall not long be sound in his truth. Practical holiness is a great help towards doctrinal certainty: if we are God's servants he will confirm his word in our experience. "If any man will do his will, he shall know of the doctrine"; and so know it as to be fully assured of it. Atheism in the heart is a horrible plague to a God fearing man, it brings more torment with it than can well be described; and nothing but a visitation of grace can settle the soul after it has been violently assailed thereby. Vanity or falsehood is bad for the eyes, but it is even worse when it defiles the understanding and casts a doubt upon the word of the living God.

Who is devoted to thy fear, or simply -- "to thy fear." That is, make good thy word to godly fear: wherever it exists; strengthen the whole body of reverent men. Stablish thy word, not only to me, but to all the godly ones under the sun. Or, again, it may mean -- "Stablish thy word to thy fear," namely, that men may be led to fear thee; since a sure faith in the divine promise is the fountain and foundation of godly fear. Men will never worship a God in whom they do not believe. More faith will lead to more godly fear. We cannot look for the fulfillment of promises in our experience unless we live under the influence of the fear of the Lord: establishment in grace is the result of holy watchfulness and prayerful energy. We shall never be rooted and grounded in our belief unless we daily practice what we profess to believe. Full assurance is the reward of obedience. Answers to prayer are given to those whose hearts answer to the Lord's command. If we are devoted to God's fear we shall be delivered from all other fear. He has no fear as to the truth of the word who is filled with fear of the Author of the word.

Skepticism is both the parent and the child of impiety; but strong faith both begets piety and is begotten of it. We commend this whole verse to any devout man whose tendency is to skepticism: it will be an admirable prayer for use in seasons of unusually strong misgivings.

39 ¶ Turn away my reproach which I fear: for thy judgments are good.

119: 39 Turn away my reproach which I fear. He feared just reproach, trembling lest he should cause the enemy to blaspheme through any glaring inconsistency. We ought to fear this, and watch that we may avoid it. Persecution in the form of calumny may also be prayed against, for it is a sore trial, perhaps the sorest of trials to men of sensitive minds. Many would sooner bear burning at the stake than the trial of cruel mockings. David was quick tempered, and he probably had all the greater dread of slander because it raised his anger, and he could hardly tell what he might not do under great provocation. If God turns away our eyes from falsehood, we may also expect that he will turn away falsehood from injuring our good name. We shall be kept from lies if we keep from lies. For thy judgments are good. Therefore he is anxious that none may speak evil of the ways of God through hearing an ill report about himself. We mourn when we are slandered; because the shame is cast rather upon our religion than ourselves. If men would be content to attribute evil to us, and go no further, we might bear it, for we are evil; but our sorrow is that they cast a slur upon the word and character of God, who is so good, that there is none good in comparison with him. When men rail at God's government of the world it is our duty and privilege to stand up for him, and openly to declare before him,
"thy judgments are good"; and we should do the same when they assail the Bible, the gospel, the law, or the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. But we must take heed that they can bring no truthful accusation against us, or our testimony will be so much wasted breath. This prayer against reproach is parallel to Psalm 119:31, and in general to many other of the seventh verses in the octaves, which usually imply opposition from without and a sacred satisfaction within. Observe the things which are good:

"thy judgments are good;"

"thou art good and doest good" (Psalm 119:68);

"good for me to have been afflicted" (Psalm 119:71);

"teach me good judgment" (Psalm 119:66).

40 ¶ Behold, I have longed after thy precepts: quicken me in thy righteousness.

119: 40 Behold, I have longed after thy precepts. He can at least claim sincerity. He is deeply bowed down by a sense of his weakness and need of grace; but he does desire to be in all things conformed to the divine will. Where our longings are, there are we in the sight of God. If we have not attained perfection, it is something to have hungered after it. He who has given us to desire, will also grant us to obtain. The precepts are grievous to the ungodly, and therefore when we are so changed as to long for them we have clear evidence of conversion, and we may safely conclude that he who has begun the good work will carry it on.

Quicken me in thy righteousness. Give me more life wherewith to follow thy righteous law; or give me more life because thou hast promised to hear prayer, and it is according to thy righteousness to keep thy word. How often does David plead for quickening! But never once too often. We need quickening every hour of the day, for we are so sadly apt to become slow and languid in the ways of God. It is the Holy Spirit who can pour new life into us; let us not cease crying to him. Let the life we already possess show itself by longing for more. The last verses of the octaves have generally exhibited an onward look of resolve, hope, and prayer. Here past fruits of grace are made the plea for further blessing. Onward in the heavenly life is the cry of this verse.

VAU

41 ¶ Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD, even thy salvation, according to thy word.

Psalm 119:41- 48

In these verses holy fear is apparent and prominent. The man of God trembles lest in any way or degree the Lord should remove his favour from him. The eight verses are one continued pleading
for the abiding of grace in his soul, and it is supported by such holy arguments as would only suggest themselves to a spirit burning with love to God.

119: 41 Let thy mercies come also unto me, O LORD. He desires mercy as well as teaching, for he was guilty as well as ignorant. He needed much mercy and varied mercy, hence the request is in the plural. He needed mercy from God rather than from man, and so he asks for "thy mercies." The way sometimes seemed blocked, and therefore he begs that the mercies may have their way cleared by God, and may "come" to him. He who said, "Let there be light," can also say, "Let there be mercy." It may be that under a sense of unworthiness the writer feared lest mercy should be given to others, and not to himself; he therefore cries, "Bless me, even me also, O my Father." Viewed in this light the words are tantamount to our well known verse

"Lord, I hear of showers of blessing
Thou art scattering, full and free;
Showers, the thirsty land refreshing;
Let some droppings fall on me,
Even me."

Elizabeth Codner, 1860.

Lord, thine enemies come to me to reproach me, let thy mercies come to defend me; trials and troubles abound, and labours and sufferings not a few approach me; Lord, let thy mercies in great number enter by the same gate, and at the same hour; for art thou not the God of my mercy?

Even thy salvation. This is the sum and crown of all mercies -- deliverance from all evil, both now and for ever. Here is the first mention of salvation in the Psalm, and it is joined with mercy: "By grace are ye saved"... Salvation is styled "thy salvation," thus ascribing it wholly to the Lord: "He that is our God is the God of salvation." What a mass of mercies are heaped together in the one salvation of our Lord Jesus! It includes the mercies which spare us before our conversion, and lead up to it. Then comes calling mercy, regenerating mercy, converting mercy, justifying mercy, pardoning mercy. Nor can we exclude from complete salvation any of those many mercies which are needed to conduct the believer safe to glory. Salvation is an aggregate of mercies incalculable in number, priceless in value, incessant in application, eternal in endurance. To the God of our mercies be glory, world without end.

According to thy word. The way of salvation is described in the word, salvation itself is promised in the word, and its inward manifestation is wrought by the word; so that in all respects the salvation which is in Christ Jesus is in accordance with the word. David loved the Scriptures, but he longed experimentally to know the salvation contained in them: he was not satisfied to read the word, he longed to experience its inner sense. He valued the field of Scripture for the sake of the treasure which he had discovered in it. He was not to be contented with chapter and verse, he wanted mercies and salvation. Note that in the first verse of

HE (Psalm 119:33) the Psalmist prayed to be taught to keep God's word, and here in
he begs the Lord to keep his word. In the first case he longed to come to the God of mercies, and here he would have the Lord's mercies come to him: there he sought grace to persevere in faith, and here he seeks the end of his faith, even the salvation of the soul.

42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me: for I trust in thy word.

119: 42 So shall I have wherewith to answer him that reproacheth me. This is an unanswerable answer. When God, by granting us salvation, gives to our prayers an answer of peace, we are ready at once to answer the objections of the infidel, the quibbles of the skeptical, and the sneers of the contemptuous. It is most desirable that revilers should be answered, and hence we may expect the Lord to save his people in order that a weapon may be put into their hands with which to rout his adversaries. When those who reproach us are also reproaching God, we may ask him to help us to silence them by sure proofs of his mercy and faithfulness.

For I trust in thy word. His faith was seen by his being trustful while under trial, and he pleads it as a reason why he should be helped to beat back reproaches by a happy experience. Faith is our argument when we seek mercies and salvation; faith in the Lord who has spoken to us in his word. "I trust in thy word" is a declaration more worth the making than any other; for he who can truly make it has received power to become a child of God, and so to be the heir of unnumbered mercies. God hath more respect to a man's trust than to all else that is in him; for the Lord hath chosen faith to be the hand into which he will place his mercies and his salvation. If any reproach us for trusting in God, we reply to them with arguments the most conclusive when we show that God has kept his promises, heard our prayers, and supplied our needs. Even the most skeptical are forced to bow before the logic of facts. In this second verse of this eight the Psalmist makes a confession of faith, and a declaration of his belief and experience. Note that he does the same in the corresponding verses of the sections which follow. See Psalm 119:50,

"Thy word hath quickened me"; Psalm 119:58,

"I entreated thy favour"; Psalm 119:66,

"I have believed thy commandments"; Psalm 119:74,

"I have hoped in thy word." A wise preacher might find in these a series of experimental discourses.

43 ¶ And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in thy judgments.

119: 43 And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth. Do not prevent my pleading for thee by leaving me without deliverance; for how could I continue to proclaim thy word if I found it fail me? such would seem to be the run of the meaning. The word of truth cannot be a joy to our mouths unless we have an experience of it in our lives, and it may be wise for us to be silent
if we cannot support our testimonies by the verdict of our consciousness. This prayer may also refer to other modes by which we may be disabled from speaking in the name of the Lord: as, for instance, by our falling into open sin, by our becoming depressed and despairing, by our laboring under sickness or mental aberration, by our finding no door of utterance, or meeting with no willing audience. He who has once preached the gospel from his heart is filled with horror at the idea of being put out of the ministry; he will crave to be allowed a little share in the holy testimony, and will reckon his dumb Sabbaths to be days of banishment and punishment.

For I have hoped in thy judgments. He had expected God to appear and vindicate his cause, that so he might speak with confidence concerning his faithfulness. God is the author of our hopes, and we may most fittingly entreat him to fulfill them. The judgments of his providence are the outcome of his word; what he says in the Scriptures he actually performs in his government; we may therefore look for him to show himself strong on the behalf of his own threatenings and promises, and we shall not look in vain. God's ministers are sometimes silenced through the sins of their people, and it becomes them to plead against such a judgment; better far that they should suffer sickness or poverty than that the candle of the gospel should be put out among them, and that thus they should be left to perish without remedy. The Lord save us, who are his ministers, from being made the instruments of inflicting such a penalty. Let us exhibit a cheerful hopefulness in God, that we may plead it in prayer with him when he threatens to close our lips. In the close of this verse there is a declaration of what the Psalmist had done in reference to the word of the Lord, and in this the thirds of the octaves are often alike. See

Psalm 119:35, "therein do I delight";

Psalm 119:43, "I have hoped in thy judgments";

Psalm 119:51, "yet have I not declined from thy law";

Psalm 119:59, "I turned my feet to thy testimonies";

and Psalm 119:67, 83, 99, etc. These verses would furnish an admirable series of meditations.

44 So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever.

119: 44 So shall I keep thy law continually for ever and ever. Nothing more effectually binds a man to the way of the Lord than an experience of the truth of his word, embodied in the form of mercies and deliverances. Not only does the Lord's faithfulness open our mouths against his adversaries, but it also knits our hearts to his fear, and makes our union with him more and more intense. Great mercies lead us to feel an inexpressible gratitude which, falling to utter itself in time, promises to engross eternity with praises. To a heart on flame with thankfulness, the "always, unto eternity and perpetuity," of the text will not seem to be redundant; yea, the hyperbole of Addison in his famous verse will only appear to be solid sense:

"Through all eternity to thee
A joyful song I will raise;"
God's grace alone can enable us to keep his commandments without break and without end; eternal love must grant us eternal life, and out of this will come everlasting obedience. There is no other way to ensure our perseverance in holiness but by the word of truth abiding in us, as David prayed it might abide with him. The verse begins with "So," as did Psalm 119:42. When God grants his salvation we are so favored that we silence our worst enemy and glorify our best friend. Mercy answereth all things. If God doth but give us salvation we can conquer hell and commune with heaven, answering reproaches and keeping the law, and that to the end, world without end. We may not overlook another sense which suggests itself here. David prayed that the word of truth might not be taken out of his mouth, and so would he keep God's law: that is to say, by public testimony as well as by personal life, he would fulfill the divine will, and confirm the bonds which bound him to his Lord forever. Undoubtedly the grace which enables us to bear witness with the mouth is a great help to ourselves as well as to others: we feel that the vows of the Lord are upon us, and that we cannot run back.

45 ¶ And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts.

119: 45 And I will walk at liberty: for I seek thy precepts. Saints find no bondage in sanctity. The Spirit of holiness is a free spirit; he sets men at liberty and enables them to resist every effort to bring them under subjection. The way of holiness is not a track for slaves, but the King's highway for freemen, who are joyfully journeying from the Egypt of bandage to the Canaan of rest. God's mercies and his salvation, by teaching us to love the precepts of the word, set us at a happy rest; and the more we seek after the perfection of our obedience the more shall we enjoy complete emancipation from every form of spiritual slavery. David at one time of his life was in great bondage through having followed a crooked policy. He deceived Achish so persistently that he was driven to acts of ferocity to conceal it, and must have felt very unhappy in his unnatural position as an ally of Philistines, and captain of the body guard of their king. He must have feared lest through his falling into the crooked ways of falsehood the truth would no longer be on his tongue, and he therefore prayed God in some way to work his deliverance, and set him at liberty from such slavery. By terrible things in righteousness did the Lord answer him at Ziklag: the snare was broken, and he escaped. The verse is united to that which goes before, for it begins with the word "And," which acts as a hook to attach it to the preceding verses. It mentions another of the benefits expected from the coming of mercies from God. The man of God had mentioned the silencing of his enemies (Psalm 119:42), power to proceed in testimony (Psalm 119:42), and perseverance in holiness; now he dwells upon liberty, which next to life is dearest to all brave men. He says,

"I shall walk," indicating his daily progress through life; "at liberty," as one who is out of prison, unimpeded by adversaries, unencumbered by burdens, unshackled, allowed a wide range, and roaming without fear. Such liberty would be dangerous if a man were seeking himself or his own lusts; but when the one object sought after is the will of God, there can be no need to restrain the searcher. We need not circumscribe the man who can say,
"I seek thy precepts." Observe, in the preceding verse he said he would keep the law; but here he speaks of seeking it. Does he not mean that he will obey what he knows, and endeavor to know more? Is not this the way to the highest form of liberty, -- to be always laboring to know the mind of God and to be conformed to it? Those who keep the law are sure to seek it, and bestir themselves to keep it more and more.

46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed.

119: 46 I will speak of thy testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. This is part of his liberty; he is free from fear of the greatest, proudest, and most tyrannical of men. David was called to stand before kings when he was an exile; and afterwards, when he was himself a monarch, he knew the tendency of men to sacrifice their religion to pomp and statecraft; but it was his resolve to do nothing of the kind. He would sanctify politics, and make cabinets know that the Lord alone is governor among the nations. As a king he would speak to kings concerning the King of kings. He says, "I will speak": prudence might have suggested that his life and conduct would be enough, and that it would be better not to touch upon religion in the presence of royal personages who worshipped other gods, and claimed to be right in so doing. He had already most fittingly preceded this resolve by the declaration,

"I will walk," but he does not make his personal conduct an excuse for sinful silence, for he adds,

"I will speak." David claimed religious liberty, and took care to use it, for he spoke out what he believed, even when he was in the highest company. In what he said he took care to keep to God's own word, for he says,

"I will speak of thy testimonies." No theme is like this, and there is no way of handling that theme like keeping close to the book, and using its thought and language. The great hindrance to our speaking upon holy topics in all companies is shame, but the Psalmist will "not be ashamed"; there is nothing to be ashamed of, and there is no excuse for being ashamed, and yet many are as quiet as the dead for fear some creature like themselves should be offended. When God gives grace, cowardice soon vanishes. He who speaks for God in God's power, will not be ashamed when beginning to speak, nor while speaking, nor after speaking; for his theme is one which is fit for kings, needful to kings, and beneficial to kings. If kings object, we may well be ashamed of them, but never of our Master who sent us, or of his message, or of his design in sending it.

47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved.

119: 47 And I will delight myself in thy commandments, which I have loved. Next to liberty and courage comes delight. When we have done our duty, we find a great reward in it. If David had not spoken for his Master before kings, he would have been afraid to think of the law which he had neglected; but after speaking up for his Lord he feels a sweet serenity of heart when musing upon the word. Obey the command, and you will love it; carry the yoke, and it will be easy, and rest will come by it. After speaking of the law the Psalmist was not wearied of his
theme, but he retired to meditate upon it; he discoursed and then he delighted, he preached and then repaired to his study to renew his strength by feeding yet again upon the precious truth. Whether he delighted others or not when he was speaking, he never failed to delight himself when he was musing on the word of the Lord. He declares that he loved the Lord's commands, and by this avowal he unveils the reason for his delight in them: where our love is, there is our delight. David did not delight in the courts of kings, for there he found places of temptation to shame, but in the Scriptures he found himself at home; his heart was in them, and they yielded him supreme pleasure. No wonder that he spoke of keeping the law, which he loved; Jesus says, "If a man love me, he will keep my words." No wonder that he spoke of walking at liberty, and speaking boldly, for true love is ever free and fearless. Love is the fulfilling of the law; where love to the law of God reigns in the heart the life must be full of blessedness. Lord, let thy mercies come to us that we may love thy word and way, and find our whole delight therein. The 119: is in the future, and hence it sets forth, not only what David had done, but what he would do; he would in time to come delight in his Lord's command. He knew that they would neither alter, nor fail to yield him joy. He knew also that grace would keep him in the same condition of heart towards the precepts of the Lord, so that he should throughout his whole life take a supreme delight in holiness. His heart was so fixed in love to God's will that he was sure that grace would always hold him under its delightful influence. All the Psalm is fragrant with love to the word, but here for the first time love is expressly spoken of. It is here coupled with delight, and in Psalm 119:165 with "great peace." All the verses in which love declares itself in so many words are worthy of note. See Psalm 119: 47, 97, 113, 119, 127, 140, 159, 163, 165, 167.

48 My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in thy statutes.

119: 48. My hands also will I lift up unto thy commandments, which I have loved. He will stretch out towards perfection as far as he can, hoping to reach it one day; when his hands hang down he will cheer himself out of languor by the prospect of glorifying God by obedience; and he will give solemn sign of his hearty assent and consent to all that his God commands. The phrase "lift up my hands" is very full of meaning, and doubtless the sweet singer meant all that we can see in it, and a great deal more. Again he declares his love; for a true heart loves to express itself; it is a kind of fire which must send forth its flames. It was natural that he should reach out towards a law which he delighted in, even as a child holds out its hands to receive a gift which it longs for. When such a lovely object as holiness is set before us, we are bound to rise towards it with our whole nature, and till that is fully accomplished we should at least lift up our hands in prayer towards it.
Where holy hands and holy hearts go, the whole man will one day follow.

And I will meditate in thy statutes. He can never have enough of meditation upon the mind of God. Loving subjects wish to be familiar with their sovereign's statutes, for they are anxious that they may not offend through ignorance. Prayer with lifted hands, and meditation with upward glancing eyes will in happy union work out the best inward results. The prayer of Psalm 119:41 is already fulfilled in the man who is thus struggling upward and studying deeply. The whole of this verse is in the future, and may be viewed not only as a determination of David's mind, but as
a result which he knew would follow from the Lord's sending him his mercies and his salvation. When mercy comes down, our hands will be lifted up; when God in favour thinks upon us, we are sure to think of him. Happy is he who stands with hands uplifted both to receive the blessing and to obey the precept; he shall not wait upon the Lord in vain.

49 ¶. Remember the word unto thy servant, upon which thou hast caused me to hope.

Exposition

This octain deals with the comfort of the word. It begins by seeking the main consolation, namely, the Lord's fulfillment of his promise, and then it shows how the word sustains us under affliction, and makes us so impervious to ridicule that we are moved by the harsh conduct of the wicked rather to horror of their sin than to any submission to their temptations. We are then shown how the Scripture furnishes songs for pilgrims, and memories for night watchers; and the psalm concludes by the general statement that the whole of this happiness and comfort arises out of keeping the statutes of the Lord.

119: 49. Remember the word unto thy servant. He asks for no new promise, but to have the old word fulfilled. He is grateful that he has received so good a word, he embraces it with all his heart, and now entreats the Lord to deal with him according to it. He does not say, "remember my service to thee," but "thy word to me." The words of masters to servants are not always such that servants wish their lords to remember them; for they usually observe the faults and failings of the work done, in as much as it does not tally with the word of command. But we who serve the best of masters are not anxious to have one of his words fall to the ground, since the Lord will so kindly remember his word of command as to give us grace wherewith we may obey, and he will couple with it a remembrance of his word of promise, so that our hearts shall be comforted. If God's word to us as his servants is so precious, what shall we say of his word to us as his sons? The Psalmist does not fear a failure in the Lord's memory, but he makes use of the promise as a plea, and this is the form in which he speaks, after the manner of men when they plead with one another. When the Lord remembers the sins of his servant, and brings them before his conscience, the penitent cries, Lord, remember thy word of pardon, and therefore remember my sins and iniquities no more. There is a world of meaning in that word "remember," as it is addressed to God; it is used in Scripture in the most tender sense, and suits the sorrowing and the depressed. The Psalmist cried, "Lord, remember David, and all his afflictions": Job also prayed that the Lord would appoint him a set time, and remember him. In the present instance the prayer is as personal as the "Remember me" of the thief, for its essence lies in the words -- "unto thy servant."

It would be all in vain for us if the promise were remembered to all others if it did not come true to ourselves; but there is no fear, for the Lord has never forgotten a single promise to a single believer.

Upon which thou hast caused me to hope. The argument is that God, having given grace to hope in the promise, would surely never disappoint that hope. He cannot have caused us to hope without cause. If we hope upon his word we have a sure basis: our gracious Lord would never mock us by exciting false hopes. Hope deferred maketh the heart sick, hence the petition for immediate remembrance of the cheering word. Moreover, it the hope of a servant, and it is pot
possible that a great and good master would disappoint his dependent; if such a master's word were not kept could only be through an oversight, hence the anxious cry,

"Remember Our great Master will not forget his own servants, nor disappoint the expectation which he himself has raised: because we are the Lord's, and endeavor to remember his word by obeying it, we may be sure that he think upon his own servants, and remember his own promise by making good." This verse is the prayer of love fearing to be forgotten, of humility conscious of insignificance and anxious not to be overlooked, of trembling lest the evil of its sin should overshadow the promise, of a desire longing for the blessing, and of holy confidence which feels that that is wanted is comprehended in the word. Let but the Lord remember his promise, and the promised act is as good as done.

ZAIN

50 ¶ This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me.

119: 50. This is my comfort in my affliction: for thy word hath quickened me. He means, -- Thy word is my comfort, or the fact that thy word has brought quickening to me is my comfort. Or he means that the hope which had given him was his comfort, for God had quickened him thereby ever may be the exact sense, it is clear that the Psalmist had affliction -- affliction peculiar to himself, which he calls "my affliction"; that he had comfort in it, -- comfort specially his own, for he styles it "my comfort"; and that he knew what the comfort was, and where it came from, for exclaims –

"this is my comfort". The worldling clutches his money bag and says, "this is my comfort"; the spendthrift points to his gaiety, shouts,

"this is my comfort"; the drunkard lifts his glass, and sings,

"this is my comfort"; but the man whose hope comes from God feels the giving power of the word of the Lord, and he testifies,

"this is my fort." Paul said,

"I know whom I have believed." Comfort is desirable all times; but comfort in affliction is like a lamp in a dark place. Some unable to find comfort at such times; but it is not so with believers, their Savour has said to them,

"I will not leave you comfortless." have comfort and no affliction, others have affliction and no comfort; the saints have comfort in their affliction.

The word frequently comforts us by increasing the force of our inner "this is my comfort; thy word hath quickened me." To quicken the is to cheer the whole man. Often the near way to consolation is sanctification and invigoration. If we cannot clear away the fog, it may be to rise to a higher level, and so to get above it. Troubles which weigh down while we are half dead become mere trifles when we are full of Thus have we often been raised in spirit by quickening grace, and the thing will happen again, for the Comforter is still with us, the Consolation of Israel
ever liveth, and the very God of peace is evermore our Father. Looking back upon our past life there is one ground of comfort as to state -- the word of God has made us alive, and kept us so. We were but we are dead no longer. From this we gladly infer that if the had meant to destroy he would not have quickened us. If we were only hypocrites worthy of derision, as the proud ones say, he would not revived us by his grace. An experience of quickening is a fountain of cheer. See how this verse is turned into a prayer in Psalm 119:107. "Quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word." Experience teaches us how to pray, and furnishes arguments in prayer.

51 ¶ The proud have had me greatly in derision: yet have I not declined from thy law.

119: 51. The proud have had me greatly in derision. Proud men never love gracious men, and as they fear them they veil their fear under a pretended contempt. In this case their hatred revealed itself in ridicule, and that ridicule was loud and long. When they wanted sport they made sport of David because he was God's servant. Men must have strange eyes to be able to see a farce in faith, and a comedy in holiness; yet it is sadly the case that men who are short of wit can generally provoke a broad grin by jesting at a saint. Conceited sinners make footballs of godly men. They call it roaring fun to caricature a faithful member of "The Holy Club"; his methods of careful living are the material for their jokes about "the Methodist"; and his hatred of sin sets their tongues wagging at long faced Puritanism, and straitlaced hypocrisy. If David was greatly derided, we may not expect to escape the scorn of the ungodly. There are hosts of proud men still upon the lace of the earth, and if they find a believer in affliction they will be mean enough and cruel enough to make jests at his expense. It is the nature of the son of the bondwoman to mock the child of the promise.

Yet have I not declined from thy law. Thus the deriders missed their aim: they laughed, but they did not win. The godly man, so far from turning aside from the right way, did not even slacken his pace, or in any sense fall off from his holy habits. Many would have declined, many have declined, but David did not do so. It is paying too much honour to fools to yield half a point to them. Their unhallowed mirth will not harm us if dogs pay no attention to it, even as the moon suffers nothing from the dogs that bay at her. God's law is our highway of peace and safety, and those who would laugh us out of it wish us no good. From Psalm 119:61 we note that David was not overcome by the spoiling of his goods any more than by these cruel mockings. See also Psalm 119:157, where the multitude of persecutors and enemies were baffled in their attempts to make him decline from God's ways.

52 ¶ I remembered thy judgments of old, O LORD; and have comforted myself.

119: 52. I remembered thy judgments of old, O Lord; and have comforted myself. He had asked the Lord to remember, and here he remembers God and his judgments. When we see no present display of the divine power it is wise to fall back upon the records of former ages, since they are just as available as if the transactions were of yesterday, seeing the Lord is always the same. Our true comfort must be found in what our God works on behalf of truth and right, and as the histories of the olden times are full of divine interpositions it is well to be thoroughly acquainted with them. Moreover, if we are advanced in years we have the providence of our
early days to review, and these should by no means be forgotten or left out of our thoughts. The argument is good and solid: he who has shown himself strong on behalf of his believing people is the immutable God, and therefore we may expect deliverance at his hands. The grinning of the proud will not trouble us when we remember how the Lord dealt with their predecessors in by gone periods; he destroyed them at the deluge, he confounded them at Babel, he drowned them at the Red Sea, he drove them out of Canaan: he has in all ages bared his arm against the haughty, and broken them as potters' vessels. While in our own hearts we humbly drink of the mercy of God in quietude, we are not without comfort in seasons of turmoil and derision; for then we resort to God's justice, and remember how he scoffs at the scoffers: "He that sitteth in the heavens doth laugh, the Lord doth have them in derision." When he was greatly derided the Psalmist did not sit down in despair, but rallied his spirits He knew that comfort is needful for strength in service, and for the endurance of persecution, and therefore he comforted himself. In doing this he resorted not so much to the sweet as to the stern side of the Lord's dealings, and dwelt upon his judgments. If we can find sweetness in the divine justice, how much more shall we perceive it in divine love and grace. How thoroughly must that man be at peace with God who can find comfort, not only in his promises, but in his judgments. Even the terrible things of God are cheering to believers. They know that nothing is more to the advantage of all God's creatures than to be ruled by a strong hand which will deal out justice. The righteous man, has no fear of the ruler's sword, which is only a terror to evil doers. When the godly man is unjustly treated he finds comfort in the fact that there is a Judge of all the earth who will avenge his own elect, and redress the ills of these disordered times.

53 ¶ Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law.

119: 53. Horror hath taken hold upon me because of the wicked that forsake thy law. He was horrified at their action, at the pride which led them to it, and at the punishment which would be sure to fall upon them for it. When he thought upon the ancient judgments of God he was filled with terror at the fate of the godless; as well he might be. Their laughter had not distressed him, but he was distressed by a foresight of their overthrow. Truths which were amusement to them caused amazement to him. He saw them utterly turning away from the law of God, and leaving it as a path forsaken and over grown from want of traffic, and this forsaking of the law filled him with the most painful emotions: he was astonished at their wickedness, stunned by their presumption, alarmed by the expectation of their sudden overthrow, amazed by the terror of their certain doom. See Psalm 119:106, 158, and note the tenderness which combined with all this. Those who are the firmest believers in the eternal punishment of the wicked are the most grieved at their doom. It is no proof of tenderness to shut one's eyes to the awful doom of the ungodly. Compassion is far better shown in trying to save sinners than in trying to make things pleasant all round. Oh that we were all more distressed as we think of the portion of the ungodly in the lake of fire! The popular plan is to shut your eyes and forget all about it, or pretend to doubt it; but this is not the way of the faithful servant of God.

54 ¶ Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage.

119: 54. Thy statutes have been my songs in the house of my pilgrimage. Like others of God's servants, David knew that he was not at home in this world, but a pilgrim through it, seeking a
better country. He did not, however, sigh over this fact, but he sang about it. He tells us nothing about his pilgrim sighs, but speaks of his pilgrim songs. Even the palace in which he dwelt was but "the house of his pilgrimage," the inn at which he rested, the station at which he halted for a little while. Men are wont to sing when they come to their inn, and so did this godly sojourner; he sang the songs of Zion, the statutes of the great King. The commands of God were as well known to him as the ballads of his country, and they were pleasant to his taste and musical to his ear. Happy is the heart which finds its joy in the commands of God, and makes obedience its recreation. When religion is set to music it goes well. When we sing in the ways of the Lord it shows that our hearts are in them. Ours are pilgrim psalms, songs of degrees; but they are such as we may sing throughout eternity; for the statutes of the Lord are the psalmody of heaven itself. Saints find horror in sin, and harmony in holiness. The wicked shun the law, and the righteous sing of it.

In past days we have sung the Lord's statutes, and in this fact we may find comfort in present affliction. Since our songs are so very different from those of the proud, we may expect to join a very different choir at the last, and sing in a place far removed from their abode. Note how in the sixth verses of their respective octaves we often find resolves to bless God, or records of testimony. In Psalm 119:46 it is, "I will speak," and in Psalm 119:2, "I will give thanks," while here he speaks of songs.

55 ¶ I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night, and have kept thy law.

119: 55. I have remembered thy name, O LORD, in the night. When others slept I woke to think of thee, thy person, thy actions, thy covenant, thy name, under which last term he comprehends the divine character as far as it is revealed. He was so earnest after the living God that he woke up at dead of night to think upon him. These were David's Night Thoughts. If they were not Sunny Memories they were memories of the Sun of Righteousness. It is well when our memory furnishes us with consolation, so that we can say with the Psalmist, -- Having early been taught to know thee, I had only to remember the lessons of thy grace, and my heart was comforted. This verse shows not only that the man of God had remembered, but that he still remembered the Lord his God. We are to hallow the name of God, and we cannot do so if it slips from our memory.

And have kept thy law. He found sanctification through meditation; by the thoughts of the night he ruled the actions of the day. As the actions of the day often create the dreams of the night, so do the thoughts of the night produce the deeds of the day. If we do not keep the name of God in our memory we shall not keep the law of God in our conduct. Forgetfulness of mind leads up to forgetfulness of life. When we hear the night songs of revelers we have in them sure evidence that they do not keep God's law; but the quiet musings of gracious men are proof positive that the name of the Lord is dear to them. We may judge of nations by their songs, and so we may of men; and in the case of the righteous, their singing and their thinking are both indications of their love to God: whether they lift up their voices, or sit in silence, they are still the Lord's. Blessed are the men whose "night thoughts" are memories of the eternal light; they shall be remembered of their Lord when the night of death comes on. Reader, are your thoughts in the dark full of light, because full of God? Is his name the natural subject of your evening reflections? Then it will give a tone to your morning and noonday hours. Or do you give your whole mind to the fleeting cares and pleasures of this
world? If so, it is little wonder that you do not live as you ought to do, No man is holy by chance. If we have no memory for the name of Jehovah we are not likely to remember his commandments: if we do not think of him secretly we shall not obey him openly.

56 This I had, because I kept thy precepts.

119: 56. This I had, because I kept thy precepts. He had this comfort, this remembrance of God, this power to sing, this courage to face the enemy, this hope in the promise, because he had earnestly observed the commands of God, and striven to walk in them. We are not rewarded for our works, but there is a reward in them. Many a comfort is obtainable only by careful living: we can surely say of such consolations,

"This I had because I kept thy precepts." How can we defy ridicule if we are living inconsistently? how can we comfortably remember the name of the Lord if we live carelessly? It may be that David means that he had been enabled to keep the law because he had attended to the separate precepts: he had taken the commands in detail, and so had reached to holiness of life. Or, by keeping certain of the precepts he had gained spiritual strength to keep others: for God gives more grace to those who have some measure of it, and those who improve their talents shall find themselves improving. It may be best to leave the passage open just as our version does; so that we may say of a thousand priceless blessings,

"These came to us in the way of obedience." All our possessions are the gifts of grace, and yet some of them come in the shape of reward; yet even then the reward is not of debt, but of grace. God first works in us good works, and then rewards us for them. Here we have an apt conclusion to this section of the psalm, for this verse is a strong argument for the prayer with which the section commenced. The sweet singer had evidence of having kept God's precepts, and therefore he could the more properly beg the Lord to keep his promises. All through the passage we may find pleas, especially in the two remembers.

"I have remembered thy judgments," and

"I have remembered thy name";

"Remember thy word unto thy servant."

CHETH

57 ¶ Thou art my portion, O LORD: I have said that I would keep thy words.
Exposition

In this section the Psalmist seems to take firm hold upon God himself;

- appropriating him (Psalm 119:57),
- crying out for him (Psalm 119:58),
- returning to him (Psalm 119:59),
- solacing himself in him (Psalm 119:61-62),
- associating with his people (Psalm 119:63),
- and sighing for personal experience of his goodness (Psalm 119:64).

Note how the first verse of this octave is linked to the last of the former one, of which indeed it is an expanded repetition.

"This I had because I kept thy precepts. Thou art my portion, O Lord: I have said that I would keep thy words."

119: 57. Thou art my portion, O LORD. A broken sentence. The translators have mended it by insertions, but perhaps it had been better to have left it alone, and then it would have appeared as an exclamation, --

"My portion, O Lord!" The poet is lost in wonder while he sees that the great and glorious God is all his own! Well might he be so, for there is no possession like Jehovah himself. The form of the sentence expresses joyous recognition and appropriation, -- "My portion, O Jehovah!" David had often seen the prey divided, and heard the victors shouting over it; here he rejoices as one who seizes his share of the spoil; he chooses the Lord to be his part of the treasure. Like the Levites, he took God to be his portion, and left other matters to those who coveted them. This is a large and lasting heritage, for it includes all, and more than all, and it outlasts all; and yet no man chooses it for himself until God has chosen and renewed him. Who that is truly wise could hesitate for a moment when the infinitely blessed God is set before him to be the object of his choice? David leaped at the opportunity, and grasped the priceless boon. Our author here dares exhibit the title deeds of his portion before the eye of the Lord himself, for he addresses his joyful utterance directly to God whom he boldly calls his own. With much else to choose from, for he was a king, and a man of great resources, Ire deliberately turns from all the treasures of the world, and declares that the Lord, even Jehovah, is his portion. I have said that I would keep thy words. We cannot always look back with comfort upon what we have said, but in this instance David had spoken wisely and well. He had declared his choice: he preferred the word of God to the wealth of worldlings. It was his firm resolve to keep -- that is, treasure up and observe -- the words of his God, and as he had aforetime solemnly expressed it in the presence of the Lord himself, so here he confesses the binding obligation of his former vow. Jesus said, "If a man love me, he will keep my words," and this is a case which he might have quoted as an
illustration; for the Psalmist's love to God as his portion led to his keeping the words of God. David took God to be his Prince as well as his Portion. He was confident as to his interest in God, and therefore he was resolute in his obedience to him. Full assurance is a powerful source of holiness. The very words of God are to be stored up; for whether they relate to doctrine, promise, or precept, they are most precious. When the heart is determined to keep these words, and has registered its purpose in the court of heaven, it is prepared for all the temptations and trials that may befall it; for, with God as its heritage, it is always in good case.

58 ¶ I entreated thy favour with my whole heart: be merciful unto me according to thy word.

119: 58. **I entreated thy favour with my whole heart.** A fully assured possession of God does not set aside prayer, but rather urges us to it; he who knows God to be his God will seek his face, longing for his presence. Seeking God's presence is the idea conveyed by the marginal reading, "thy face," and this is true to the Hebrew. The presence of God is the highest form of his favour, and therefore it is the most urgent desire of gracious souls: the light of his countenance gives us an ante-past of heaven. O that we always enjoyed it! The good man entreated God's smile as one who begged for his life, and the entire strength of his desire went with the entreaty. Such eager pleadings are sure of success; that which comes from our heart will certainly go to God's heart. The whole of God's favors are ready for those who seek them with their whole hearts.

**Be merciful unto me according to thy word.** He has entreated favour, and the form in which he most needs it is that of mercy, for he is more a sinner than anything else. He asks nothing beyond the promise, he only begs for such mercy as the word reveals. And what more could he want or wish for? God has revealed such an infinity of mercy in his word that it would be impossible to conceive of more. See how the Psalmist dwells upon favour and mercy, he never dreams of merit. He does not demand, but entreat; for he feels his own unworthiness. Note how he remains a suppliant, though he knows that he has all things in his God. God is his portion, and yet he begs for a look at his face. The idea of any other standing before God than that of an undeserving but favored one never entered his head. Here we have his "Be merciful unto me" rising with as much intensity of humble pleading as if he still remained among the most trembling of penitents. The confidence of faith makes us bold in prayer, but it never teaches us to live without prayer, or justifies us in being other than humble beggars at mercy's gate.

59 ¶ I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.

119: 59. **I thought on my ways, and turned my feet unto thy testimonies.** While studying the word he was led to study his own life, and this caused a mighty revolution. He came to the word, and then he came to himself, and this made him arise and go to his Father. Consideration is the commencement of conversion: first we think and then we turn. When the mind repents of ill ways the feet are soon led into good ways; but there will be no repenting until there is deep, earnest thought. Many men are averse to thought of any kind, and as to thought upon their ways,
they cannot endure it, for their ways will not bear thinking of. David's ways had not been all that he could have wished them to be, and so his thoughts were sobered over with the pale cast of regret; but he did not end with idle lamentations, he set about a practical amendment; he turned and returned, he sought the testimonies of the Lord, and hastened to enjoy once more the conscious favour of his heavenly friend. Action without thought is folly, and thought without action is sloth: to think carefully and then to act promptly is a happy combination. He had entreated for renewed fellowship, and now he proved the genuineness of his desire by renewed obedience. If we are in the dark, and mourn an absent God, our wisest method will be not so much to think upon our sorrows as upon our ways: though we cannot turn the course of providence, we can turn the way of our walking, and this will soon mend matters. If we can get our feet right as to holy walking, we shall soon get our hearts right as to happy living. God will turn to his saints when they turn to him; yea, he has already favored them with the light of his face when they begin to think and turn.

60 I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments.

119: 60. I made haste, and delayed not to keep thy commandments. He made all speed to get back into the royal road from which he had wandered, and to run in that road upon the King's errands. Speed in repentance and speed in obedience are two excellent things. We are too often in haste to sin; O that we may be in a greater hurry to obey. Delay in sin is increase of sin. To be slow to keep the commands is really to break them. There is much evil in a lagging pace when God's command is to be followed. A holy alacrity in service is much to be cultivated. It is wrought in us by the Spirit of God, and the preceding verses describe the method of it: we are made to perceive and mourn our errors, we are led to return to the right path, and then we are eager to make up for lost time by dashing forward to fulfill the precept. Whatever may be the slips and wanderings of an honest heart, there remains enough of true life in it to produce ardent piety when once it is quickened by the visitations of God. The Psalmist entreated for mercy, and when he received it he became eager and vehement in the Lord's ways. He had always loved them, and hence when he was enriched with grace he displayed great vivacity and delight in them. He made double speed; for positively he "made haste," and negatively he refused to yield to any motive which suggested procrastination, -- he "delayed not." Thus he made rapid advances and accomplished much service, fulfilling thereby the vow which is recorded in Psalm 119:57:

"I said that I would keep thy words." The commands which he was so eager to obey were not ordinances of man, but precepts of the Most High. Many are zealots to obey custom and society, and yet they are slack in serving God. It is a crying shame that men should be served post haste, and that God's work should have the go by, or be performed with dreamy negligence.

61 ¶ The bands of the wicked have robbed me: but I have not forgotten thy law.

119: 61. The bands of the wicked have robbed me. Aforetime they derided him, and now they have defrauded him. Ungodly men grow worse, ariae become more and more daring, so that they go from ridicule to robbery. Much of this bold opposition arose from their being banded together: men will dare to do in company what they durst not have thought of alone. When firebrands are laid together there is no telling what a flame they will create. It seems that whole
bands of men assailed this one child of God, they are cowardly enough for anything; though they
could not kill him, they robbed him:
the dogs of Satan will worry saints if they cannot devour them. David's enemies did their utmost:
first the serpents hissed, and then they stung. Since words availed not, the wicked fell to blows.
How much the ungodly have plundered the saints in all ages, and how often have the righteous
bore gladly the spoiling of their goods!

But I have not forgotten thy law. This was well. Neither his sense of injustice, nor his sorrow at
his losses, nor his attempts at defense diverted him from the ways of God. He would not do
wrong to prevent the suffering of wrong, nor do ill to avenge ill. He carried the law in his heart,
and therefore no disturbance of mind could take him off from following it. He might have
forgotten himself if he had forgotten the law: as it was, he was ready to forgive and forget the
injuries done him, for his heart was taken up with the word of God. The bands of the wicked had
not robbed him of his choicest treasure, since they had left him his holiness and his happiness.
Some read this passage, "The bands of the wicked environ me." They hemmed him in, they cut
him off from succour, they shut up every avenue of escape, but the man of God had his protector
with him; a clear conscience relied upon the promise, and a brave resolve stuck to the precept.
He could not be either bribed or bullied into sin. The cordon of the ungodly could not keep God
from him, nor him from God: this was because God was his portion, and none could deprive him
of it neither by force or fraud. That is true grace which can endure the test: some are barely
gracious among the circle of their friends, but this man was holy amid a ring of foes.

62 ¶ At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous
judgments.

119: 62. At midnight I will rise to give thanks unto thee because of thy righteous judgments.
He was not afraid of the robbers; he rose, not to watch his house, but to praise his God. Midnight
is the hour for burglars, and there were bands of them around David, but they did not occupy his
thoughts; these were all up and away with the Lord his God. He thought not of thieves, but of
thanks; not of what they would steal, but of what he would give to his God. A thankful heart is
such a blessing that it drives out fear and makes room for praise. Thanksgiving turns night into
day, and consecrates all hours to the worship of God. Every hour is canonical to a saint. The
Psalmist observed posture; he did not lie in bed and praise. There is not much in the position of
the body, but there is something, and that something is to be observed whenever it is helpful to
devotion and expressive of our diligence or humility. Many kneel without praying, some pray
without kneeling; but the best is to kneel and pray: so here, it would have been no virtue to rise
without giving thanks, and it would have been no sin to give thanks without rising; but to rise
and give thanks is a happy combination. As for the season, it was quiet, lonely, and such as
proved his zeal. At midnight he would be unobserved and undisturbed; it was his own time
which he saved from his sleep, and so he would be free from the charge of sacrificing public
duties to private devotions. Midnight ends one day and begins another, it was therefore meet to
give the solemn moments to communion with the Lord. At the turn of the night he turned to his
God. He had thanks to give for mercies which God had given: he had on his mind the truth of
Psalm 119:57, "Thou art my portion," and if anything can make a man sing in the middle of the
night that is it. The righteous doings of the great Judge gladdened the heart of this godly man.

His judgments are the terrible side of God, but they have no terror to the righteous; they admire
them, and adore the Lord for them: they rise at night to bless God that he will avenge his own
elect. Some hate the very notion of divine justice, and in this they are wide as the poles asunder from this man of God, who was filled with joyful gratitude at the memory of the sentences of the Judge of all the earth. Doubtless in the expression, "thy righteous judgments," David refers also to the written judgments of God upon various points of moral conduct; indeed, all the divine precepts may be viewed in that light; they are all of them the legal decisions of the Supreme Arbiter of right and wrong. David was charmed with these judgments. Like Paul, he could say, "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." He could not find time enough by day to study the words of divine wisdom, or to bless God for them, and so he gave up his sleep that he might tell out his gratitude for such a law and such a Lawgiver. This verse is an advance upon the sense of Psalm 119:52, and contains in addition the essence of Psalm 119:55. Our author never repeats himself: though he runs up and down the same scale, his music has an infinite variety. The permutations and combinations which may be formed in connection with a few vital truths are innumerable.

63 ¶ I am a companion of all them that fear thee, and of them that keep thy precepts.

119: 63. I am a companion of all them that fear thee. The last verse said, "I will," and this says, "I am." We can hardly hope to be right in the future unless we are right now. The holy man spent his nights with God and his days with God's people. Those who fear God love those who fear him, and they make small choice in their company so long as the men are truly God fearing. David was a king, and yet he consorted with "all" who feared the Lord, whether they were obscure or famous, poor or rich. He was a fellow commoner of the College of All saints. He did not select a few specially eminent saints and leave ordinary believers alone. No, he was glad of the society of those who had only the beginning of wisdom in the shape of "the fear of the Lord": he was pleased to sit with them on the lower forms of the school of faith. He looked for inward godly fear, but he also expected to see outward piety in those whom he admitted to his society; hence he adds,

and of them that keep thy precepts. If they would keep the Lord's commands the Lord's servant would keep their company. David was known to be on the godly side, he was ever of the Puritanical party: the men of Belial hated him for this, and no doubt despised him for keeping such unfashionable company as that of humble men and women who are straitlaced and religious; but the man of God is by no means ashamed of his associates; so far from this, he even glories to avow his union with them, let his enemies make what they can of it. He found both pleasure and profit in saintly society: he grew better by consorting with the good, and derived honour from keeping right honourable company. What says the reader? Does he relish holy society? Is he at home among gracious people? If so he may derive comfort from the fact. Birds of a feather flock together. A man is known by his company. Those who have no fear of God before their eyes seldom desire the society of saints; it is too slow, too dull for them. Be this our comfort, that when we are let go by death we shall go to our own company, and those who loved the saints on earth shall be numbered with their in heaven.

There is a measure of parallelism between this seventh of its octave and the seventh or Teth (Psalm 119:71) and of Jod (Psalm 119:79); but, as a rule, the similarities which were so manifest
in earlier verses are now becoming dim. As the sense deepens, the artificial form of expression is less regarded.

64 ¶ The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy: teach me thy statutes.

119: 64. **The earth, O LORD, is full of thy mercy.** David had been exiled, but he had never been driven beyond the range of mercy, for he found the world to be everywhere filled with it. He had wandered in deserts and hidden in caves, and there he had seen and felt the lovingkindness of the Lord. He had learned that far beyond the bounds of the land of promise and She race of Israel the love of Jehovah extended, and in this verse he expressed that large hearted idea of God which is so seldom seen in the modern Jew. How sweet it is to us to know that not only is there mercy all over the world, but there is such an abundance of it that the earth is "full" of it. It is little wonder that the Psalmist, since he knew the Lord to be his portion, hoped to obtain a measure of this mercy for himself, and so was encouraged to pray, teach me thy statutes. It was to him the beau ideal of mercy to be taught of God, and taught in God's own law. He could not think of a greater mercy than this. Surely he who fills the universe with his grace will grant such a request as this to his own child. Let us breathe the desire to the All merciful Jehovah, and we may be assured of its fulfillment. The first verse of this eight is fragrant with full assurance and strong resolve, and this last verse overflows with a sense of the divine fullness, and of the Psalmist's personal dependence. This is an illustration of the fact that full assurance neither damps prayer nor hinders humility. It would be no error if we said that it creates lowliness and suggests supplication.

"Thou art my portion, O Lord," is well followed by "teach me"; for the heir of a great estate should be thoroughly educated, that his behaviour may comport with his fortune. What manner of disciples ought we to be whose inheritance is the Lord of hosts? Those who have God for their Portion long to have him for their Teacher. Moreover, those who have resolved to obey are the most eager to be taught.

"I have said that I would keep thy words" is beautifully succeeded by 

**teach me thy statutes.** Those who wish to keep a law are anxious to know all its clauses and provisions lest they should offend through inadvertence. He who does not care to be instructed of the Lord has never honestly resolved to be holy.

TETH

65 ¶ Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O LORD, according unto thy word.

*Exposition*
In this ninth section the verses all begin with the letter Teth. They are the witness of experience, testifying to the goodness of God, the graciousness of his dealings, and the preciousness of his word. Especially the Psalmist proclaims the excellent uses of adversity, and the goodness of God in afflicting him. The sixty-fifth verse is the text of the entire octave.

119: 65. *Thou hast dealt well with thy servant, O Lord, according unto thy word.* This is the summary of his life, and assuredly it is the sum of ours. The Psalmist tells the Lord the verdict of his heart; he cannot be silent, he must speak his gratitude in the, presence of Jehovah, his God. From the universal goodness of God in nature, in Psalm 119:64, it is an easy and pleasant step to a confession of the Lord's uniform goodness to ourselves personally. It is something that God has dealt at all with such insignificant and under serving beings as we are, and it is far more that he has dealt well with us, and so well, so wondrously well. He hath done all things well: the rule has no exception. In providence and in grace, in giving prosperity and sending adversity, in everything Jehovah hath dealt well with us. It is dealing well on our part to tell the Lord that we feel that he hath dealt well with us; for praise of this kind is specially fitting and comely. This kindness of the Lord is, however, no chance matter: he promised to do so, and he has done it according to his word. It is very precious to see the word of the Lord fulfilled in our happy experience; it endears the Scripture to us, and makes us love the Lord of the Scripture. The book of providence tallies with the book of promise: what we read in the page of inspiration we meet with again in the leaves of our life story. We may not have thought that it would be so, but our unbelief is repented of now that we see the mercy of the Lord to us, and his faithfulness to his word; henceforth we are bound to display a firmer faith both in God and in his promise. He has spoken well, and he has dealt well. He is the best of Masters; for it is to a very unworthy and incapable servant that he has acted thus blessedly: does not this cause us to delight in his service more and more? We cannot say that we have dealt well with our Master; for when we have done all, we are unprofitable servants; but as for our Lord, he has given us light work, large maintenance, loving encouragement, and liberal wages. It is a wonder that he has not long ago discharged us, or at least reduced our allowances, or handled us roughly; yet we have had no hard dealings, all has been ordered with as much consideration as if we had rendered perfect obedience. We have had bread enough and to spare, our livery has been duly supplied, and his service has ennobled us and made us happy as kings. Complaints we have none. We lose ourselves in adoring thanksgiving, and find ourselves again in careful thanks living.

66 Teach me good judgment and knowledge: for I have believed thy commandments.

119: 66. *Teach me good judgment and knowledge.* Again he begs for teaching, as in verse 64, and again he uses God's mercy as an argument. Since God had dealt well with him, he is encouraged to pray for judgment to appreciate the Lord's goodness. Good judgment is the form of goodness which the godly man most needs and most desires, and it is one which the Lord is most ready to bestow. David felt that he had frequently failed in judgment in the matter of the Lord's dealings with him: from want of knowledge he had misjudged the chastening hand of the heavenly Father, and therefore he now asks to be better instructed, since he perceives the injustice which he had done to the Lord by his hasty conclusions. He means to say -- Lord, thou didst deal well with me when I thought thee hard and stern, be pleased to give me more wit, that I may not a second time think so ill of my Lord. A sight of our errors and a sense of our
ignorance should make us teachable. We are not able to judge, for our knowledge is so sadly inaccurate and imperfect; if the Lord teaches us knowledge we shall attain to good judgment, but not otherwise. The Holy Ghost alone can fill us with light, and set the understanding upon a proper balance: let us ardently long for his teachings, since it is most desirable that we should be no longer mere children in knowledge and understanding.

**For I have believed thy commandments.** His heart was right, and therefore he hoped his head would be made right. He had faith, and therefore he hoped to receive wisdom. His mind had been settled in the conviction that the precepts of the word were from the Lord, and were therefore just, wise, kind, and profitable; he believed in holiness, and as that belief is no mean work of grace upon the soul, he looked for yet further operations of divine grace. He who believes the commands is the man to know and understand the doctrines and the promises. If in looking back upon our mistakes and ignorance we can yet see that we heartily loved the precepts of the divine will, we have good reason to hope that we are Christ's disciples, and that he will teach us and make us men of good judgment and sound knowledge. A man who has learned discernment by experience, and has thus become a man of sound judgment, is a valuable member of a church, and the means of much edification to others. Let all who would be greatly useful offer the prayer of this verse: "Teach me good judgment and knowledge."

67 ¶ Before I was afflicted I went astray: but now have I kept thy word.

119: 67. **Before I was afflicted I went astray.** Partly, perhaps, through the absence of trial. Often our trials act as a thorn hedge to keep us in the good pasture, but our prosperity is a gap through which we go astray. If any of us remember a time in which we had no trouble, we also probably recollect that then grace was low and temptation was strong. It may be that some believer cries, "O that it were with me as in those summer days before I was afflicted." Such a sigh is most unwise, and arises from a carnal love of ease: the spiritual man who prizes growth in grace will bless God that those dangerous days are over, and that if the weather be more stormy it is also more healthy. It is well when the mind is open and candid, as in this instance: perhaps David would never have known and confessed his own straying if he had not smarted under the rod. Let us join in his humble acknowledgments, for doubtless we have imitated him in his straying. Why is it that a little ease works in us so much disease? Can we never rest without rusting? Never be filled without waxing fat? Never rise as to one world without going down as to another! What weak creatures we are to be unable to bear a little pleasure! What base hearts are those which turn the abundance of God's goodness into an occasion for sin.

**But now have I kept thy word.** Grace is in that heart which profits by its chastening. It is of no use to plough barren soil. When there is no spiritual life affliction works no spiritual benefit; but where the heart is sound trouble awakens conscience, wandering is confessed, the soul becomes again obedient to the command, and continues to be so. Whipping will not turn a rebel into a child; but to the true child a touch of the rod is a sure corrective. In the Psalmist's case the medicine of affliction worked a change –

"but"; an immediate change –
"now"; a lasting change –

"have I" an inward change –

"have I kept"; a change towards God –

"thy word." Before his trouble he wandered, but after it he kept within the hedge of the word, and found good pasture for his soul the trial tethered him to his proper place; it kept him, and then he kept God's word. Sweet are the uses of adversity, and this is one of them, it puts a bridle upon transgression and furnishes a spur for holiness.

68 ¶ Thou art good, and doest good; teach me thy statutes.

119: 68. Thou art good, and doest good. Even in affliction God is good, and does good. This is the confession of experience. God is essential goodness in himself, and in every attribute of his nature he is good in the fullest sense of the term; indeed, he has a monopoly of goodness, for there is none good but one, that is God. His acts are according to his nature: from a pure source flow pure streams. God is not latent and ill active goodness; he displays himself by his doings, he is actively beneficent, he does good. How much good he does no tongue can tell! How good he is no heart can conceive! It is well to worship the Lord as the poet here does by describing him. Facts about God are the best praise of God. All the glory we can give to God is to reflect his own glory upon himself. We can say no more good of God than God is and does. We believe in his goodness, and so honour him by our faith; we admire that goodness, and so glorify him by our love; we declare that goodness, and so magnify him by our testimony.

Teach me thy statutes. The same prayer as before, backed with the same argument. He prays,

"Lord be good, and do good to me that I may both be good and do good through thy teaching." The man of God was a learner, and delighted to learn: he ascribed this to the goodness of the Lord, and hoped that for the same reason he would be allowed to remain in the school and learn on till he could perfectly practice every lesson. His chosen class book was the royal statutes, he wanted no other. He knew the sad result of breaking those statutes, and by a painful experience he had been led back to the way of righteousness; and therefore he begged as the greatest possible instance of the divine goodness that he might be taught a perfect knowledge of the law, and a complete conformity to it. He who mourns that he has not kept the word longs to be taught it, and he who rejoices that by grace he has been taught to keep it is not less anxious for the like instruction to be continued to him. In verse 12, which is the fourth verse of Beth, we have much the same sense as in this fourth verse of Teth.

69 ¶ The proud have forged a lie against me: but I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.

119: 69. The proud have forged a lie against me. They first derided him (Psalm 119:51), then defrauded him (Psalm 119:61), and now they have defamed him. To injure his character they resorted to falsehood, for they could find nothing against him if they spoke the truth. They forged
a lie as a blacksmith beats out a weapon of iron, or they counterfeited the truth as men forge false coin. The original may suggest a common expression – "They have patched up a lie against me." They were not too proud to lie. Pride is a lie, and when a proud man utters lies "he speaketh of his own." Proud men are usually the bitterest opponents of the righteous: they are envious of their good fame and are eager to ruin it. Slander is a cheap and handy weapon if the object is the destruction of a gracious reputation; and when many proud ones conspire to concoct, exaggerate, and spread abroad a malicious falsehood, they generally succeed in wounding their victim, and it is no fault of theirs if they do not kill him outright. O the venom which lies under the tongue of a liar! Many a happy life has been embittered by it, and many a good repute has been poisoned as with the deadliest drug. It is painful to the last degree to hear unscrupulous men hammering away at the devil's anvil forging a new calumny; the only help against it is the sweet promise, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper, and every tongue that riseth against thee in judgment thou shalt condemn."

**But I will keep thy precepts with my whole heart.** My one anxiety shall be to mind my own business and stick to the commandments of the Lord. If the mud which is thrown at us does not blind our eyes or bruise our integrity it will do us little harm. If we keep the precepts, the precepts will keep us in the day of contumely and slander. David renews his resolve –

"I will keep"; he takes a new look at the commands, and sees them to be really the Lord's –

"thy precepts"; and he arouses his entire nature to the work –

"with my whole heart." When slanders drive us to more resolute and careful obedience they work our lasting good; falsehood hurled against us may be made to promote our fidelity to the truth, and the malice of men may increase our love to God. If we try to answer lies by our words we may be beaten in the battle; but a holy life is an unanswerable refutation of all calumnies. Spite is balked if we persevere in holiness despite all opposition.

70 Their heart is as fat as grease; but I delight in thy law.

119: 70. **Their heart is as fat as grease.** They delight in fatness, but I delight in thee. Their hearts, through sensual indulgence, have grown insensible, coarse, and groveling; but thou hast saved me from such a fate through thy chastening hand. Proud men grow fat through carnal luxuries, and this makes them prouder still. They riot in their prosperity, and fill their hearts therewith till they become insensible, effeminate, and self indulgent. A greasy heart is something horrible; it is a fatness which makes a man fatuous, a fatty degeneration of the heart which leads to feebleness and death. The fat in such men is killing the life in them. Dryden wrote,

"O souls! In whom no heavenly fire is found,  
Fat minds and ever groveling on the ground."
In this condition men have no heart except for luxury, their very being seems to swim and stew in the fat of cookery and banqueting. Living on the fat of the land, their nature is subdued to that which they have fed upon; the muscle of their nature has gone to softness and grease.

**But I delight in thy law.** How much better is it to joy in the law of the Lord than to joy in sensual indulgences! This makes the heart healthy, and keeps the mind lowly. No one who loves holiness has the slightest cause to envy the prosperity of the worldling. Delight in the law elevates and ennobles, while carnal pleasure clogs the intellect and degrades the affections. There is and always ought to be a vivid contrast between the believer and the sensualist, and that contrast is as much seen in the affections of the heart as in the actions of the life: their heart is as fat as grease, and our heart is delighted with the law of the Lord. Our delights are a better test of our character than anything else: as a man's heart is, so is the man. David oiled the wheels of life with his delight in God's law, and not with the fat of sensuality. He had his relishes and dainties, his festivals and delights, and all these he found in doing the will of the Lord his God. When law becomes delight, obedience is bliss. Holiness in the heart causes the soul to eat the fat of the land. To have the law for our delight will breed in our hearts the very opposite of the effects of pride; deadness, sensuality, and obstinacy will be cured, and we shall become teachable, sensitive, and spiritual. How careful should we be to live under the influence of the divine law that we fall not under the law of sin and death.

71 ¶ *It is* good for me that I have been afflicted; that I might learn thy statutes.

119: 71. **It is good for me that I have been afflicted.** Even though the affliction came from bad men, it was overruled for good ends: though it was bad as it came from them, it was good for David. It benefited him in many ways, and he knew it. Whatever he may have thought while under the trial, he perceived himself to be the better for it when it was over. It was not good to the proud to be prosperous, for their hearts grew sensual and insensible; but affliction was good for the Psalmist. Our worst is better for us than the sinner's best. It is bad for sinners to rejoice, and good for saints to sorrow. A thousand benefits have come to us through our pains and griefs, and among the rest is this -- that we have thus been schooled in the law.

**That I might learn thy statutes.** These we have come to know and to keep by feeling the smart of the rod. We prayed the Lord to teach us (Psalm 119:66), and now we see how he has already been doing it. Truly he has dealt well with us, for he has dealt wisely with us. We have been kept from the ignorance of the greasy hearted by our trials, and this, if there were nothing else, is just cause for constant gratitude. To be larded by prosperity, is not good for the proud; but for the truth to be learned by adversity is good for the humble. Very little is to be learned without affliction. If we would be scholars we must be sufferers. As the Latins say, *"Experientia docet"*, experience teaches. There is no royal road to learning the royal statutes; God's commands are best read by eyes wet with tears.

72 ¶ The law of thy mouth *is* better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.

119: 72. **The law of thy mouth.** A sweetly expressive name for the word of God. It comes from God's own mouth with freshness and power to our souls. Things written are as dried herbs; but
speech has a liveliness and dew about it. We do well to look upon the word of the Lord as though it were newly spoken into our ear; for in very truth it is not decayed by years, but is as forcible and sure as though newly uttered. Precepts are prized when it is seen that they come forth from the lips of our Father who is in heaven. The same lips which spoke us into existence have spoken the law by which we are to govern that existence. Whence could a law so sweetly proceed as from the mouth of our covenant God?
Well may we prize beyond all price that which comes from such a source.

**Is better unto me than thousands of gold and silver.** If a poor man had said this, the world's witlings would have hinted that the grapes are sour, and that men who have no wealth are the first to despise it; but this is the verdict of a man who owned his thousands, and could judge by actual experience of the value of money and the value of truth. He speaks of great riches, he heaps it up by thousands, he mentions the varieties of its forms, -- "gold and silver"; and then he sets the word of God before it all, as better to him, even if others did not think it better to them. Wealth is good in some respects, but obedience is better in all respects. It is well to keep the treasures of this life; but far more commendable to keep the law of the Lord. The law is better than gold and silver, for these may be stolen from us, but not the word; these take to themselves wings, but the word of God remains; these are useless in the hour of death, but then it is that the promise is most dear. Instructed Christians recognize the value of the Lord's word, and warmly express it, not only in their testimony to their fellow men, but in their devotions to God. It is a sure sign of a heart which has learned God's statutes when it prizes them above all earthly possessions; and it is an equally certain mark of grace when the precepts of Scripture are as precious as its promises. The Lord cause us thus to prize the law of his mouth. See how this portion of the psalm is flavored with goodness.

- God's dealings are good
  Psalm 119:65
- holy judgment is good
  Psalm 119:66
- affliction is good
  Psalm 119:67
- God is good
  Psalm 119:68

and here the law is not only good, but better than the best of treasure. Lord, make us good, through thy good word. Amen.

**Psalm 119:73-80**

**Exposition**

**JOD**

73 ¶. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me: give me understanding, that I may learn thy commandments.
We have now come to the tenth portion, which in each stanza begins with Jod, but it certainly does not treat of jots and titles and other trifles. Its subject would seem to be personal experience and its attractive influence upon others. The prophet is in deep sorrow, but looks to be delivered and made a blessing. Endeavoring to teach, the Psalmist first seeks to be taught (119:73), persuaded himself that he will be well received (Psalm 119:74), and rehearses the testimony which he intends to bear (119:75). He prays for more experience (Psalm 119:76, 77), for the baffling of the proud (Psalm 119:78), for the gathering together of the godly to him (Psalm 119:79), and for himself again that he may be fully equipped for his witness bearing and may be sustained in it (Psalm 119:80). This is the anxious yet hopeful cry of one who is heavily afflicted by cruel adversaries, and therefore makes his appeal to God as his only friend.

119: 73. Thy hands have made me and fashioned me. It is profitable to remember our creation, it is pleasant to see that the divine hand has had much to do with us, for it never moves apart from the divine thought. It excites reverence, gratitude, and affection towards God when we view him as our Maker, putting forth the careful skill and power of his hands to our forming and fashioning. He took a personal interest in us, making us with his own hands; he was doubly thoughtful, for he is represented both as making and moulding us. In both giving existence and arranging existence he manifested love and wisdom, and therefore we find reasons for praise, confidence, and expectation in our being and well-being.
no power short of that which made him could make him wise unto holiness. We need a new creation, and who can grant us that but the Creator himself? He who made us to live must make us to learn; he who gave us power to stand must give us grace to understand. Let us each one breathe to heaven the prayer of this verse ere we advance a step further, for we shall be lost even in these petitions unless we pray our way through them, and cry to God for understanding.

74 ¶ They that fear thee will be glad when they see me; because I have hoped in thy word.

119: 74. They that fear thee will be glad when they see me: because I have hoped in thy word. When a man of God obtains grace for himself he becomes a blessing to others, especially if that grace has made him a man of sound understanding and holy knowledge. God fearing men are encouraged when they meet with experienced believers. A hopeful man is a God send when things are declining or in danger. When the hopes of one believer are fulfilled his companions are cheered and established, and led to hope also. It is good for the eyes to see a man whose witness is that the Lord is true; it is one of the joys of saints to hold converse with their more advanced brethren. The fear of God is not a left handed grace, as some have called it; it is quite consistent with gladness; for if even the sight of a comrade gladdens the God fearing, how glad must they be in the presence of the Lord himself? We do not only meet to share each others' burdens, but to partake in each others' joys, and some men contribute largely to the stock of mutual gladness. Hopeful men bring gladness with them. Despondent spirits spread the infection of depression, and hence few are glad to see them, while those whose hopes are grounded upon God's word carry sunshine in their faces, and are welcomed by their fellows. There are professors whose presence scatters sadness, and the godly quietly steal out of their company: may this never be the case with us.

75 ¶ I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right, and that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me.

119: 75. I know, O LORD, that thy judgments are right. He who would learn most must be thankful for what he already knows, and be willing to confess it to the glory of God. The Psalmist had been sorely tried, but he had continued to hope in God under his trial, and now he avows his conviction that he had been justly and wisely chastened. This he not only thought but knew, so that he was positive about it, and spoke without a moment's hesitation. Saints are sure about the rightness of their troubles, even when they cannot see the intent of them. It made the godly glad to hear David say this,

And that thou in faithfulness hast afflicted me. Because love required severity, therefore the Lord exercised it. It was not because God was unfaithful that the believer found himself in a sore strait, but for just the opposite reason: it was the faithfulness of God to his covenant which brought the chosen one under the rod. It might not be needful that others should be tried just then; but it was necessary to the Psalmist, and therefore the Lord did not withhold the blessing. Our heavenly Father is no Eli: he will not suffer his children to sin without rebuke, his love is too intense for that. The man who makes the confession of this verse is already progressing in the school of grace, and is learning the commandments. This third verse of the section corresponds
to the third of Teth (119: 67), and in a degree to several other verses which make the thirds in their octaves.

76 ¶ Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.

**119: 76. Let, I pray thee, thy merciful kindness be for my comfort, according to thy word unto thy servant.** Having confessed the righteousness of the Lord, he now appeals to his mercy, and while he does not ask that the rod may be removed, he earnestly begs for comfort under it. Righteousness and faithfulness afford us no consolation if we cannot also taste of mercy, and, blessed be God, this is promised us in the word, and therefore we may expect it. The words "merciful kindness," are a happy combination, and express exactly what we need in affliction: mercy to forgive the sin, and kindness to sustain under the sorrow. With these we can be comfortable in the cloudy and dark day, and without them we are wretched indeed; for these, therefore, let us pray unto the Lord, whom we have grieved by our sin, and let us plead the word of his grace as our sole reason for expecting his favour. Blessed be his name, notwithstanding our faults we are still his servants, and we serve a compassionate Master. Some read the last clause, "according to thy saying unto thy servant"; some special saying of the Lord was remembered and pleaded: can we not remember some such "faithful saying," and make it the groundwork of our petitioning? That phrase, "according to thy word," is a very favorite one; it shows the motive for mercy and the manner of mercy. Our prayers are according to the mind of God when they are according to the word of God.

77 Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live: for thy law is my delight.

**119: 77. Let thy tender mercies come unto me, that I may live.** He was so hard pressed that he was at death's door if God did not succour him. He needed not only mercy, but "mercies," and these must be of a very gracious and considerate kind, even "tender mercies," for he was sore with his wounds. These gentle favors must be of the Lord's giving, for nothing less would suffice; and they must "come" all the way to the sufferer's heart, for he was not able to journey after them; all he could do was to sigh out, "Oh that they would come." If deliverance did not soon come, he felt ready to expire, and yet he told us but a verse or so ago that he hoped in God's word: how true it is that hope lives on when death seems written on all besides. A heathen said, "dum spiro spero," while I breathe I hope; but the Christian can say, "dum expiro spero," even when I expire I still expect the blessing. Yet no true child of God can live without the tender mercy of the Lord; it; is death to him to be under God's displeasure. Notice, again, the happy combination of the words of our English version. Was there ever a sweeter sound than this -- "tender mercies"? He who has been grievously afflicted, and yet tenderly succored is the only man who knows the meaning of such choice language. How truly we live when tender mercy comes to us. Then we do not merely exist, but live; we are lively, full of life, vivacious, and vigorous. We know not what life is till we know God. Some are said to die by the visitation of God, but we live by it.
For thy law is my delight. O blessed faith! He is no mean believer who rejoices in the law even when its broken precepts cause him to suffer. To delight in the word when it rebukes us, is proof that we are profiting under it. Surely this is a plea which will prevail with God, however bitter our griefs may be; if we still delight in the law of the Lord he cannot let us die, he must and will cast a tender look upon us and comfort our hearts.

78 ¶ Let the proud be ashamed; for they dealt perversely with me without a cause: but I will meditate in thy precepts.

119: 78. Let the proud be ashamed. He begged that the judgments of God might no longer fall upon himself, but upon his cruel adversaries. God will not suffer those who hope in his word to be put to shame, for he reserves that reward for haughty spirits: they shall yet be overtaken with confusion, and become the subjects of contempt, while God's afflicted ones shall again lift up their heads. Shame is for the proud, for it is a shameful thing to be proud. Shame is not for the holy, for there is nothing in holiness to be ashamed of.

For they dealt perversely with me without a cause. Their malice was wanton, he had not provoked them. Falsehood was employed to forge an accusation against him; they had to bend his actions out of their true shape before they could assail his character. Evidently the Psalmist keenly felt the malice of his foes. His consciousness of innocence with regard to them created a burning sense of injustice, and he appealed to the righteous Lord to take his part and clothe his false accusers with shame. Probably he mentioned them as "the proud," because he knew that the Lord always takes vengeance on proud men, and vindicates the cause of those whom they oppress. Sometimes he mentions the proud, and sometimes the wicked, but he always means the same persons; the words are interchangeable: he who is proud is sure to be wicked, and proud persecutors are the worst of wicked men.

But I will meditate in thy precepts. He would leave the proud in God's hands, and give himself up to holy studies and contemplations. To obey the divine precepts we have need to know them, and think much of them. Hence this persecuted saint felt that meditation must be his chief employment. He would study the law of God and not the law of retaliation. The proud are not worth a thought. The worst injury they can do us is to take us away from our devotions; let us baffle them by keeping all the closer to our God when they are most malicious in their onslaughts. In a similar position to this we have met with the proud in other octaves, and shall meet them yet again.

They are evidently a great plague to the Psalmist, but he rises above them.

79 Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies.

119: 79. Let those that fear thee turn unto me, and those that have known thy testimonies. Perhaps the tongue of slander had alienated some of the godly, and probably the actual faults of David had grieved many more. He begs God to turn to him, and then to turn his people towards him. Those who are right with God are also anxious to be right with his children. David craved the love and sympathy of gracious men of all grades, -- of those who were beginners in grace,
and of those who were mature in piety – "those that fear thee," and "those that have known thy testimonies." We cannot afford to lose the love of the least of the saints, and if we have lost their esteem we may most properly pray to have it restored. David was the leader of the godly party in the nation, and it wounded him to the heart when he perceived that those who feared God were not as glad to see him as aforetime they had been. He did not bluster and say that if they could do without him, lie could very well do without them; but he so deeply felt the value of their sympathy, that he made it a matter of prayer that the Lord would turn their hearts to him again. Those who are dear to God, and are instructed in his word, should be very precious in our eyes, and we should do our utmost to be upon good terms with them. David has two descriptions for the saints, they are God fearing and God knowing. They possess both devotion and instruction; they have both the spirit and the science of true religion. We know some believers who are gracious, but not intelligent; and, on the other hand, we also know certain professors who have all head and no heart: he is the man who combines devotion with intelligence. We neither care for devout dunces nor for intellectual icebergs. When fearing, and knowing walk hand in hand they cause men to be thoroughly furnished unto every good work. If these are my choice companions I may hope that I am one of their order. Let such persons ever turn to me because they find in me congenial company.

80 ¶ Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed.

119: 80. Let my heart be sound in thy statutes; that I be not ashamed. This is even more important than to be held in esteem by good men. This is the root of the matter. If the heart be sound in obedience to God, all is well, or will be well. If right at heart we are right in the main. If we be not sound before God, our name for piety is an empty sound. Mere profession will fail, and undeserved esteem will disappear like a bubble when it bursts; only sincerity and truth will endure in the evil day. He who is right at heart has no reason for shame, and he never shall have any; hypocrites ought to be ashamed now, and they shall one day be put to shame without end; their hearts are rotten, and their names shall rot. This eightieth verse is a variation of the prayer of the seventy-third verse; there be sought sound understanding, here he goes deeper, and begs for a sound heart. Those who have learned their own frailty by sad experience, are led to dive beneath the surface, and cry to the Lord for truth in the inward parts. In closing the consideration of these eight verses, let us join with the writer in the prayer, "Let my heart be sound in thy statutes."

CAPH

81 ¶ My soul fainteth for thy salvation: but I hope in thy word.
This portion of the gigantic psalm sees the Psalmist in extremis. His enemies have brought him to the lowest condition of anguish and depression; yet he is faithful to the law and trustful in his God. This octave is the midnight of the psalm, and very dark and black it is. Stars, however, shine out, and the last verse gives promise of the dawn. The strain will after this become more cheerful; but meanwhile it should minister comfort to us to see so eminent a servant of God so hardly used by the ungodly: evidently in our own persecutions, no strange thing has happened unto us.

119: 81. My soul fainteth for thy salvation. He wished for no deliverance but that which came from God: his one desire was for "thy salvation." But for that divine deliverance he was eager to the last degree, -- up to the full measure of his strength, yea, and beyond it till he fainted. So strong was his desire that it produced prostration of spirit. He grew weary with waiting, faint with watching, sick with urgent need. Thus the sincerity and the eagerness of his desires were proved. Nothing else could satisfy him but deliverance wrought out by the hand of God, his inmost mature yearned and pined for salvation from the God of all grace, and he must have it or utterly fail.

But I hope in thy word. Therefore he felt that salvation would come, for God cannot break his promise, nor disappoint the hope which his own word has excited: yea, the fulfillment of his word is near at hand when our hope is firm and our desire fervent. Hope alone can keep the soul from fainting by using the smelling bottle of the promise. Yet hope does not quench desire for a speedy answer to prayer; it increases our importunity, for it both stimulates ardor and sustains the heart under delays. To faint for salvation, and to be kept from utterly failing by the hope of it, is the frequent experience of the Christian man. We are "faint yet pursuing" hope sustains when desire exhausts. While the grace of desire throws us down, the grace of hope lifts us up again.

82 Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me?

119: 82. Mine eyes fail for thy word, saying, When wilt thou comfort me? His eyes gave out with eagerly gazing for the kind appearance of the Lord, while his heart in weariness cried out for speedy comfort. To read the word till the eyes can no longer see is but a small thing compared with watching for the fulfillment of the promise till the inner eyes of expectancy begin to grow dim with hope deferred. We may not set times to God, for this is to limit the Holy One of Israel; yet we may urge our suit with importunity, and make fervent enquiry as to why the promise tarries. David sought no comfort except that which comes from God; his question is, "When wilt thou comfort me?" If help does not come from heaven it will never come at all: all the good man's hopes look that way, he has not a glance to dart in any other direction. This experience of waiting and fainting is well known by full grown saints, arid it teaches them many precious lessons which they would never learn by any other means. Among the choice results is this one -- that the body rises into sympathy with the soul, both heart and flesh cry out for the living God, and even the eyes find a tongue, "saying, When wilt thou comfort me?" It must be an intense longing which is not satisfied to express itself by the lips, but speaks with the eyes, by those eyes failing through intense watching. Eyes can speak right eloquently; they use both mutes and liquids, and can sometimes say more than tongues. David says in another place, "The Lord hath heard the voice of my weeping" (Psalm 6:8).
Specially are our eyes eloquent when they begin to fail with weariness and woe. A humble eye
lifted up to heaven in silent prayer may flash such flame as shall melt the bolts which bar the
entrance of vocal prayer, and so heaven shall be taken by storm with the artillery of tears.
Blessed are the eyes that are strained in looking after God. The eyes of the Lord will see to it that
such eyes do not actually fail. How much better to watch for the Lord with aching eyes than to
have them sparkling at the glitter of vanity.

83 ¶ For I am become like a bottle in the smoke; yet do I not forget thy statutes.

119: 83. For I am become like a bottle in the smoke. The skins used for containing wine, when
emptied, were hung up in the tent, and when the place reeked with smoke the skins grew black
and sooty, and in the heat they became wrinkled and worn. The Psalmist's face through sorrow
had become dark and dismal, furrowed and lined; indeed, his whole body had so sympathized
with his sorrowing mind as to have lost its natural moisture, and to have become like a skin dried
and tanned. His character had been smoked with slander, and his mind parched with persecution;
he was half afraid that he would become useless and incapable through so much mental
suffering, and that
men would look upon him as an old worn out skin bottle, which could hold nothing and answer
no purpose. What a metaphor for a man to use who was certainly a poet, a divine, and a master in
Israel, if not a king, and a man after God's own heart! It is little wonder if we, commoner folk,
are made to think very little of ourselves, and are filled with distress of mind. Some of us know
the inner meaning of this simile, for we, too, have felt dinghy, mean, and worthless, only fit to be
cast away. Very black and hot has been the smoke which has enveloped us; it seemed to come
not alone from the Egyptian furnace, but from the bottomless pit; and it had a clinging power
which made the soot of it fasten upon us and blacken us with miserable thoughts.

Yet do I not forget thy statutes. Here is the patience of the saints and the victory of faith.
Blackened the man of God might be by falsehood, but the truth was in him, and he never gave it
up. He was faithful to his King when he seemed deserted and left to the vilest uses. The promises
came to his mind, and, what was a still better evidence of his loyalty, the statutes were there too:
he stuck to his duties as well as to his comforts. The worst circumstances cannot destroy the true
believer's hold upon his God. Grace is a living power which survives that which would suffocate
all other forms of existence. Fire cannot consume it, and smoke cannot smother it. A man may be
reduced to skin and bone, and all his comfort may be dried out of him, and yet he may hold fast
his integrity and glorify his God. It is, however, no marvel that in such a case the eyes which are
tormented with the smoke cry out for the Lord's delivering hand, and the heart heated and faint
longs for the divine salvation.

84 ¶ How many are the days of thy servant? When wilt thou execute judgment on
them that persecute me?

119: 84. How many are the days of thy servant? I cannot hope to live long in such a condition,
thou must come speedily to my rescue, or I shall die. Shall all my short life be consumed in such
destroying sorrows? The brevity of life is a good argument against the length of an affliction.
Perhaps the Psalmist means that his days seemed too many when they were spent in such
distress. He half wished that they were ended, and therefore he asked in trouble, "How many are the days of thy servant?" Like a hired servant, he had a certain term to serve, and he would not complain; but still the time seemed long because his griefs were so heavy. No one knows the appointed number of our days except the Lord, and therefore to him the appeal is made that he would not prolong them beyond his servant's strength. It cannot be the Lord's mind that his own servant should always be treated so unjustly; there must be an end to it; when would it be?

When wilt thou execute judgment on them that persecute me? He had placed his case in the Lord's hands, and he prayed that sentence might be given and put into execution. He desired nothing but justice, that his character might be cleared and his persecutors silenced. He knew that God would certainly avenge Iris own elect, but the day of rescue tarried, the hours dragged heavily along, and the persecuted one cried day and night for deliverance.

85 ¶ The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law.

119: 85. The proud have digged pits for me, which are not after thy law. As men who hunt wild beasts are wont to make pitfalls and snares, so did David's foes endeavor to entrap him. They went laboriously and cunningly to work to ruin him, "they digged pits"; not one, but many. If one would not take him, perhaps another would, and so they digged again and again. One would think that such haughty people would not have soiled their fingers with digging; but they swallowed their pride in hopes of swallowing their victim. Whereas they ought to have been ashamed of such meanness, they were conscious of no shame, but, on the contrary, were proud of their cleverness; proud of setting a trap for a godly man. "Which are not after thy law." Neither the men nor their pits were according to the divine law: they were cruel and crafty deceivers, and their pits were contrary to the Levitical law, and contrary to the command which bids us love our neighbour. If men would keep to the statutes of the Lord, they would lift the fallen out of the pit, or fill up the pit so that none might stumble into it; but they would never spend a moment in working injury to others. When, however, they become proud, they are sure to despise others; and for this reason they seek to circumvent them, that they may afterwards hold them up to ridicule. It was well for David that his enemies were God's enemies, and that their attacks upon him had no sanction from the Lord. It was also much to his gain that he was not ignorant of their devices, for he was thus put upon his guard, and led to watch his ways lest he should fall into their pits. While he kept to the law of the Lord he was safe, though even then it was an uncomfortable thing to have his path made dangerous by the craft of wanton malice.

86 All thy commandments are faithful: they persecute me wrongfully; help thou me.

119: 86. All thy commandments are faithful. He had no fault to find with God's law, even though he had fallen into sad trouble through obedience to it. Whatever the command might cost him it was worth it; he felt that God's way might be rough, but it was right; it might make him enemies, but still it was his best friend. He believed that in the end God's command would turn out to his own profit, and that he should be no loser by obeying it.
They persecute me wrongfully. The fault lay with his persecutors, and neither with his God nor with himself. He had done no injury to anyone, nor acted otherwise than according to truth and justice; therefore he confidently appeals to his God, and cries,

"Help thou me." This is a golden prayer, as precious as it is short. The words are few, but the meaning is full. Help was needed that the persecuted one might avoid the snare, might bear up under reproach, and might act so prudently as to baffle his foes. God's help is our hope. Whoever may hurt us, it matters not so long as the Lord helps us; for if indeed the Lord help us, none can really hurt us. Many a time have these words been groaned out by troubled saints, for they are such as suit a thousand conditions of need, pain, distress, weakness, and sin.

"Help, Lord." will be a fitting prayer for youth and age, for labour and suffering, for life and death. No other help is sufficient, but God's help is all sufficient, and we cast ourselves upon it without fear.

87 They had almost consumed me upon earth; but I forsook not thy precepts.

119: 87. They had almost consumed me upon earth. His foes had almost destroyed him so as to make him altogether fail. If they could they would have eaten him, or burned him alive; anything so that they could have made a full end of the good man. Evidently he had fallen under their power to a large extent, and they had so used that power that he was well nigh consumed. He was almost gone from off the earth; but almost is not altogether, and so he escaped by the skin of his teeth. The lions are chained: they can rage no further than our God permits. The Psalmist perceives the limit of their power: they could only touch his earthly life and earthly goods. Upon earth they almost ate him up, but he had an eternal portion which they could not even nibble at.

But I forsook not thy precepts. Nothing could drive him from obeying the Lord. If we stick to the precepts we shall be rescued by the promises. If ill usage could have driven the oppressed saint from the way of right the purpose of the wicked would have been answered, and we should have heard no more of David. If we are resolved to die sooner than forsake the Lord, we may depend upon it that we shall not die, but shall live to see the overthrow of them that hate us.

88 ¶ Quicken me after thy lovingkindness; so shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth.

119: 88. Quicken me after thy loving kindness. Most wise, most blessed prayer! If we are revived in our own personal piety we shall be out of reach of our assailants. Our best protection from tempters and persecutors is more life. Lovingkindness itself cannot do us greater service than by making us to have life more abundantly. When we are quickened we are able to bear affliction, to baffle cunning, and to conquer sin. We look to the lovingkindness of God as the source of spiritual revival, and we entreat the Lord to quicken us, not according to our deserts, but after the boundless energy of his grace. What a blessed word is this "loving kindness." Take it to pieces, and admire its double force of love.
So shall I keep the testimony of thy mouth. If quickened by the Holy Ghost we shall be sure to exhibit a holy character. We shall be faithful to sound doctrine when the Spirit visits us and makes us faithful. None keep the word of the Lord's mouth unless the word of the Lord's mouth quickens them. We ought greatly to admire the spiritual prudence of the Psalmist, who does not so much pray for freedom from trial as for renewed life that he may be supported under it. When the inner life is vigorous all is well. David prayed for a sound heart in the closing verse of the last octave, and here he seeks a revived heart; this is going to the root of the matter, by seeking that which is the most needful of all things. Lord, let it be heart work with us, and let our hearts be right with thee.

LAMED

89 ¶ For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven.

119: 89. For ever, O LORD, thy word is settled in heaven. The strain is more joyful, for experience has given the sweet singer a comfortable knowledge of the word of the Lord, and this makes a glad theme. After tossing about on a sea of trouble the Psalmist here leaps to shore and stands upon a rock. Jehovah's word is not fickle nor uncertain; it is settled, determined, fixed, sure, immovable. Man's teachings change so often that there is never time for them to be settled; but the Lord's word is from of old the same, and will remain unchanged eternally. Some men are never happier than when they are unsettling everything and everybody; but God's mind is not with them. The power and glory of heaven have confirmed each sentence which the mouth of the Lord has spoken, and so confirmed it that to all eternity it must stand the same, -- settled in heaven, where nothing can reach it. In the former section David's soul fainted, but here the good man looks out of self and perceives that the Lord fainteth not, neither is weary, neither is there any failure in his word. The verse takes the form of an ascription of praise: the faithfulness and immutability of God are fit themes for holy song, and when we are tired with gazing upon the shifting scene of this life, the thought of the immutable promise fills our mouth with singing. God's purposes, promises, and precepts are all settled in his own mind, and none of them shall be disturbed. Covenant settlements will not be removed, however unsettled the thoughts of men may become; let us therefore settle it in our minds that we abide in the faith of our Jehovah as long as we have any being.

90 Thy faithfulness is unto all generations: thou hast established the earth, and it abideth.

119:90 Thy faithfulness is unto all generations. This is an additional glory: God is not affected by the lapse of ages; he is not only faithful to one man throughout his lifetime, but to his children's children after him, yea, and to all generations so long as they keep his covenant and remember his commandments to do them. The promises are ancient things, yet they are not worn out by centuries of use, for the divine faithfulness endureth for ever. He who succored his servants thousands of years ago still shows himself strong on the behalf of all them that trust in him.
Thou hast established the earth, and it abideth. Nature is governed by fixed laws; the globe keeps its course by the divine command, and displays no erratic movements: the seasons observe their predestined order, the sea obeys the rule of ebb and flow, and all things else are marshaled in their appointed order. There is an analogy between the word of God and the works of God, and specially in this, that they are both of them constant, fixed, and unchangeable. God's word which established the world is the same as that which he has embodied in the Scriptures; by the word of the Lord were the heavens made, and specially by him who is emphatically THE WORD. When we see the world keeping its place and all its laws abiding the same, we have herein assurance that the Lord will be faithful to his covenant, and will not allow the faith of his people to be put to shame. If the earth abideth the spiritual creation will abide; if God's word suffices to establish the world surely it is enough for the establishment of the individual believer.

91 They continue this day according to thine ordinances: for all are thy servants.

119: 91. They continue this day according to thine ordinances. Because the Lord has bid the universe abide, therefore it stands, and all its laws continue to operate with precision and power. Because the might of God is ever present to maintain them, therefore do all things continue. The word which spake all things into existence has supported them till now, and still supports them both in being and in well being. God's ordinance is the reason for the continued existence of creation. What important forces these ordinances are!

For all are thy servants. Created by thy word they obey that word, thus answering the purpose of their existence, and working out the design of their Creator. Both great things and small pay homage to the Lord. No atom escapes his rule, no world avoids his government. Shall we wish to be free of the Lord's sway and become lords unto ourselves? If we were so, we should be dreadful exceptions to a law which secures the well being of the universe. Rather while we read concerning all things else -- they continue and they serve, let us continue to serve, and to serve more perfectly as our lives are continued. By that word which is settled may we be settled; by that voice which establishes the earth may we be established; and by that command which all created things obey may we be made the servants of the Lord God Almighty.

92 ¶ Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction.

119: 92. Unless thy law had been my delights, I should then have perished in mine affliction. That word which has preserved the heavens and the earth also preserves the people of God in their time of trial. With that word we are charmed; it is a mine of delight to us. We take a double and treble delight in it, and derive a multiplied delight from it, and this stands us in good stead when all other delights are taken from us. We should have felt ready to lie down and die of our griefs if the spiritual comforts of God's word had not uplifted us; but by their sustaining influence we have been borne above all the depressions and despairs which naturally grow out of severe affliction. Some of us can set our seal to this statement. Our affliction, if it had not been for divine grace, would have crushed us out of existence, so that we should have perished. In our darkest seasons nothing has kept us from desperation but the promise of the Lord: yea, at times nothing has stood between us and self destruction save faith in the eternal word of God. When worn with pain until the brain has
become dazed and the reason well nigh extinguished, a sweet text has whispered to us its heart cheering assurance, and our poor struggling mind has reposed upon the bosom of God. That which was our delight in prosperity has been our light in adversity; that which in the day kept us from presuming has in the night kept us from perishing. This verse contains a mournful supposition "unless"; describes a horrible condition – "perished in mine affliction"; and implies a glorious deliverance, for he did not die, but live to proclaim the honours of the word of God.

93 ¶ I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me.

119: 93. I will never forget thy precepts: for with them thou hast quickened me. When we have felt the quickening power of a precept we never can forget it. We may read it, learn it, repeat it, and think we have it, and yet it may slip out of our minds; but if it has once given us life or renewed that life, there is no fear of its falling from our recollection. Experience teaches, and teaches effectually. How blessed a thing it is to have the precepts written on the heart with the golden pea of experience, and graven on the memory with the divine stylus of grace. Forgetfulness is a great evil in holy things; we see here the man of God fighting against it, and feeling sure of victory because he knew the life giving energy of the word in his own soul. That which quickens the heart is sure to quicken the memory. It seems singular that he should ascribe quickening to the precepts, and yet it lies in them and in all the words of the Lord alike. It is to be noted that when the Lord raised the dead he addressed to them the word of command. He said, "Lazarus, come forth," or "Maid, arise." We need not fear to address gospel precepts to dead sinners, since by them the Spirit gives them life. Remark that the Psalmist does not say that the precepts quickened him, but that the Lord quickened him by their means: thus he traces the life from the channel to the source, and places the glory where it is due. Yet at the same time he prized the instruments of the blessing, and resolved never to forget them. He had already remembered them when he likened himself to a bottle in the smoke, and now he feels that whether in the smoke or in the fire the memory of the Lord's precepts shall never depart from him.

94 ¶ I am thine, save me; for I have sought thy precepts.

119: 94. I am thine, save me. A comprehensive prayer with a prevailing argument. Consecration is a good plea for preservation. If we are conscious that we are the Lord's we may be confident that he will save us. We are the Lord's by creation, election, redemption, surrender, and acceptance; and hence our firm hope and assured belief that he will save us. A man will surely save his own child: Lord, save me. The need of salvation is better seen by the Lord's people than by any others, and hence their prayer -- "save me"; they know that only God can save them, and hence they cry to him alone; and they know that no merit can be found in themselves, and hence they urge a reason fetched from the grace of God, -- "I am thine."

For I have sought thy precepts. Thus had he proved that he was the Lord's. He might not have attained to all the holiness which he desired, but he had studiously aimed at being obedient to the Lord, and hence he begged to be saved even to the end. A man may be seeking the doctrines and the promises, and yet be unrenewed in heart; but to seek the precepts is a sure sign of grace; no one ever heard of a rebel or a hypocrite seeking the precepts. The Lord had evidently wrought a
great work upon the Psalmist, and he besought him to carry it on to completion. Saving is linked with seeking. "save me, for I have sought"; and when the Lord sets us seeking he will not refuse us the saving. He who seeks holiness is already saved: if we have sought the Lord we may be sure that the Lord has sought us, and will certainly save us.

95 ¶ The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies.

119: 95. The wicked have waited for me to destroy me: but I will consider thy testimonies. They were like wild beasts crouching by the way, or highway men waylaying a defenseless traveler; but the Psalmist went on his way without considering them, for he was considering something better, namely, the witness or testimony which God has borne to the sons of men. He did not allow the malice of the wicked to take him off from his holy study of the divine word. He was so calm that he could "consider"; so holy that he loved to consider the Lord's "testimonies"; so victorious over all their plots that he did not allow them to drive him from his pious contemplations.

If the enemy cannot cause us to withdraw our thoughts from holy study, or our feet from holy walking, or our hearts from holy aspirations, lie has met with poor success in his assaults. The wicked are the natural enemies of holy men and holy thoughts; if they could, they would not only damage us but destroy us, and if they cannot do this today they will wait for further opportunities, ever hoping that their evil designs may be compassed. They have waited hitherto in vain, and they will have to wait much longer yet; for if we are so unmoved that we do not even give them a thought their hope of destroying us must be a very poor one. Note the double waiting, -- the patience of the wicked who watch long and carefully for an opportunity to destroy the godly, and then the patience of the saint who will not quit his meditations, even to quiet his foes. See how the serpent's seed lie in wait as an adder that biteth at the horse's heels; but see how the chosen of the Lord live above their venom, and take no more notice of them than if they had no existence.

96 ¶ I have seen an end of all perfection: but thy commandment is exceeding broad.

119: 96. I have seen an end of all perfection. He had seen its limit, for it went but a little way; he had seen its evaporation under the trials of life, its detection under the searching glance of truth, its exposure by the confession of the penitent. There is no perfection beneath the moon. Perfect men, in the absolute sense of the word, live only in a perfect world. Some men see no end to their own perfection, but this is because they are perfectly blind. The experienced believer has seen an end of all perfection in himself, in his brethren, in the best man's best works. It would be well if some who profess to be perfect could even see the beginning of perfection, for we fear they cannot have begun aright, or they would not talk so exceeding proudly. Is it not the beginning of perfection to lament your imperfection? There is no such thing as perfection in anything which is the work of man.

But thy commandment is exceeding broad. When the breadth of the law is known the notion of perfection in the flesh vanishes: that law touches every act, word, and thought, and is of such a
spiritual nature that it judges the motives, desires, and emotions of the soul. It reveals a perfection which convicts us for shortcomings as well as for transgressions, and does not allow us to make up for deficiencies in one direction by special carefulness in others. The divine ideal of holiness is far too broad for us to hope to cover all its wide arena, and yet it is no broader than it ought to be. Who would wish to have an imperfect law? Nay, its perfection is its glory; but it is the death of all glorying in our own perfection. There is a breadth about the commandment which has never been met to the full by a corresponding breadth of holiness in any mere man while here below; only in Jesus do we see it fully embodied. The law is in all respects a perfect code; each separate precept of it is far reaching in its hallowed meaning, and the whole ten cover all, and leave no space wherein to please our passions. We may well adore the infinity of divine holiness, and then measure ourselves by its standard, and bow before the Lord in all lowliness, acknowledging how far we fall short of it.

MEM

97 ¶ O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.

119: 97. O how love I thy law! It is a note of exclamation. He loves so much that he must express his love, and in making the attempt he perceives that it is inexpressible -- and therefore cries, "O how I love!" We not only reverence but love the law, we obey it out of love, and even when it chides us for disobedience we love it none the less. The law is God's law, and therefore it is our love. We love it for its holiness, and pine to be holy; we love it for its wisdom, and study to be wise; we love it for its perfection, and long to be perfect. Those who know the power of the gospel perceive an infinite loveliness in the law as they see it fulfilled and embodied in Christ Jesus.

It is my meditation all the day. This was both the effect of his love and the cause of it. He meditated in God's word because he loved it, and then loved it the more because he meditated in it. He could not have enough of it, so ardentely did he love it: all the day was not too long for his converse with it. His main prayer, his noonday thought, his evensong were all out of Holy Writ; yea, in his worldly business he still kept his mind saturated with the law of the Lord. It is said of some men that the more you know them the less you admire them; but the reverse is true of God's word. Familiarity with the word of God breeds affection, and affection seeks yet greater familiarity. When "thy law," and "my meditation" are together all the day, the day grows holy, devout, and happy, and the heart lives with God. David turned away from all else; for in the preceding verse he tells us that he had seen an end of all perfection; but he turned in unto the law and tarried there the whole day of his life on earth, growing henceforth wiser and holier even sick of love, as the church saith (Song of Solomon:2:5; 5:8), she was sick of love towards Christ: so seemeth the prophet to be sick of love towards the word of God.

This word "how," also imports a comparison, and notes a greater love in David towards the word than towards riches or any other thing; in which respect he saith afterward in this very Psalm (Psalm 119:127), that he loveth the Lord's commandments "above gold, yea, above fine gold"; yea, as whosoever so loveth not Christ, that in respect of Christ, and for Christ's sake, he forsaketh father, and mother, and brethren, and sisters, wife and children, and his own life also (much more riches and other things not to be compared to life) is not worthy of him: so he that doth not love the word above all other things; yea, he that hateth not all other things below here,
ill respect of the word, is not worthy of the word. Christ himself loved the word of God more than he loved any riches; for did he not for the performance of the word submit himself to such want, that the foxes had holes, and the birds had nests, but he had not whereon to lay his head? and that, although he were the heir of all things, yet he was ministered unto by certain women? He loved the word of God more than he loved his mother, brethren, and sisters...Yea, Christ loved the word of God more than he loved his own life; for did he not lay down his life to fulfill the word of God?...If Christ Jesus himself loved the word more than all other things, yea, more than his life, which was more than the life of all angels, was there not great reason why David should love it in like manner? Had not David as much need of it as Christ?...

It is my meditation. The noun "meditation" seemeth to be more than if he had said only that he meditated. For he seemeth to mean that though he did often think upon other matters, yet he made nothing his "meditation" but that which he here speaketh of, and that this was his only, or his chief and principal meditation and set study. The object of David's meditation is not only to be understood of the bare letter of the word, as if he did always meditate of some text or other of the word before written; but also of the matters contained in the word; as of the justice, power, wisdom, mercy and goodness of God; of the frailty, corruption, and wickedness that is in man naturally, of the sins that God forbiddeth, and of the virtues that God commandeth in the word, and other the like. For he that meditates of these things, though he meditate not of any one text of the word, yet he may be truly said to meditate of the word.

All the day. We are not to imagine that the prophet did nothing else but meditate on the word; but this, first of all: that no day passed over his head wherein he did not meditate on the word; yea, that he took every occasion of meditating on the word. He was never weary of meditating. Though he had many other things wherein to employ himself, yet he forgot not the meditation of the word. His mind was not by any other employment alienated from the meditation of the word, but the more thereby provoked thereunto. As a man that hath laboured never so much one day in his calling, is not to be wearied thereby, but that he laboureth afresh the next day, and so day after day: so was it with the prophet touching this act of meditation. Secondly, when he saith he meditated on the word continually, or all the day, he meaneth that he did nothing at any time of the day without meditation on the word for doing thereof. Therefore we may safely say that continual meditation of the word is more necessary than continual praying, as being necessary before the doing of everything, and in the very doing of everything; yea, even before the said duty of prayer, and in the very act thereof, this work of meditation of the word is always necessary; as without which, we know not either for what to pray, or in what sort and manner to pray: it is God's word only that can and must teach us both what to pray for and also how to pray. --Thomas Stoughton, in "Two Profitable Treatises," 1616.

98 ¶ Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me.

119: 98. Thou through thy commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies. The commands were his book, but God was his teacher. The letter can make us knowing, but only the divine Spirit can make us wise. Wisdom is knowledge put to practical use. Wisdom comes to us through obedience: "If any man will do his will he shall know of the doctrine." We learn not only
from promise, and doctrine, and sacred history, but also from precept and command; in fact, from the commandments we gather the most practical wisdom and that which enables us best to cope with our adversaries. A holy life is the highest wisdom and the surest defense. Our enemies are renowned for subtlety, from the first father of them, the old serpent, down to the last cockatrice that has been hatched from the egg; and it would be vain for us to try to be a match with them in the craft and mystery of cunning, for the children of this world are in their generation wiser than the children of light. We must go to another school and learn of a different instructor, and then by uprightness we shall baffle fraud, by simple truth we shall vanquish deep laid scheming, and by open candor we shall defeat slander. A thoroughly straightforward man, devoid of all policy, is a terrible puzzle to diplomats; they suspect him of a subtle duplicity through which they cannot see, while he, indifferent to their suspicions, holds on the even tenor of his way, and baffles all their arts. Yes, "honesty is the best policy.” He who is taught of God has a practical wisdom such as malice cannot supply to the crafty; while harmless as a dove he also exhibits more than a serpent's wisdom.

For they are ever with me. He was always studying or obeying the commandments; they were his choice and constant companions. If we wish to become proficient we must be indefatigable. If we keep the wise law ever near us we shall become wise, and when our adversaries assail us we shall be prepared for them with that ready wit which lies in having the word of God at our fingers' ends. As a soldier in battle must never lay aside his shield, so must we never have the word of God out of our minds; it must be ever with us.

99 I have more understanding than all my teachers: for thy testimonies are my meditation.

119: 99. I have more understanding than all my teachers. That which the Lord had taught him had been useful in the camp, and now he finds it equally valuable in the schools. Our teachers are not always to be trusted; in fact, we may not follow any of them implicitly, for God holds us to account for our personal judgments. It behooves us then to follow closely the chart of the Word of God, that we may be able to save the vessel when even the pilot errs. If our teachers should be in all things sound and safe, they will be right glad for us to excel them, and they will ever be ready to own that the teaching of the Lord is better than any teaching which they can give us. Disciples of Christ who sit at his feet are often better skilled in divine things than doctors of divinity.

For thy testimonies are my meditation. This is the best mode of acquiring understanding. We may hear the wisest teachers and remain fools, but if we meditate upon the sacred word we must become wise. There is more wisdom in the testimonies of the Lord than in all the teachings of men if they were all gathered into one vast library. The one book outweighs all the rest. David does not hesitate to speak the truth in this place concerning himself, for he is quite innocent of self consciousness. In speaking of his understanding he means to extol the law and the Lord, and not himself. There is not a grain of boasting in these bold expressions, but only a sincere childlike desire to set forth the excellence of the Lord's word. He who knows the truths taught in the Bible will be guilty of no egotism if he
believes himself to be possessed of more important truth than all the agnostic professors buried and unburied.

100 I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts.

119: 100. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep thy precepts. The men of old age, and the men of old time, were outdone by the holier and more youthful learner. He had been taught to observe in heart and life the precepts of the Lord, and this was more than the most venerable sinner had ever learned, more than the philosopher of antiquity had so much as aspired to know. He had the word with him, and so outstripped his foes; he meditated on it, and so outran his friends; he practiced it, and so outshone his elders. The instruction derived from Holy Scripture is useful in many directions, superior from many points of view, unrivalled everywhere and in every way. As our soul may make her boast in the Lord, so may we boast in his word. "There is none like it: give it me," said David as to Goliath's sword, and we may say the same as to the word of the Lord. If men prize antiquity they have it here. The ancients are had in high repute, but what did they all know compared with that which we perceive in the divine precepts? "The old is better" says one: but the oldest of all is the best of all, and what is that but the word of the Ancient of days

101 ¶ I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word.

119: 101. I have refrained my feet from every evil way, that I might keep thy word. There is no treasuring up the holy word unless there is a casting out of all unholiness: if we keep the good word we must let go the evil. David had zealously watched his steps and put a check upon his conduct, -- he had refrained his feet. No one evil way could entice him, for he knew that if he went astray but in one road he had practically left the way of righteousness, therefore he avoided every false way. The bypaths were smooth and flowery, but he knew right well that they were evil, and so he turned his feet away, and held on along the strait and thorny pathway which leads to God. It is a pleasure to look back upon self conquests, -- "I have refrained," and a greater delight still to know that we did this out of no mere desire to stand well with our fellows, but with the one motive of keeping the law of the Lord. Sin avoided that obedience may be perfected is the essence of this verse; or it may be that the Psalmist would teach us that there is no real reverence for the book where there is not carefulness to avoid every transgression of its precepts. How can we keep God's word if we do not keep our own works from becoming vile?

102 ¶ I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me.

119: 102. I have not departed from thy judgments: for thou hast taught me. They are well taught whom God teaches. What we learn from the Lord we never forget. God's instruction has a practical effect -- we follow his way when he teaches us; and it has an abiding effect, -- we do not depart from holiness. Read this verse in connection with the preceding and you get the believer's "I have," and his "I have not": he is good both positively and negatively. What he did, namely, "refrained his feet," preserved him from doing that which otherwise he might have done, namely, "departed from thy judgments." He who is careful not to go an inch aside will not leave
the road. He who never touches the intoxicating cup will never be drunk. He who never utters an idle word will never be profane. If we begin to depart a little we can never tell where we shall end. The Lord brings us to persevere in holiness by abstinence from the beginning of sin; but whatever be the method he is the worker of our perseverance, and to him be all the glory.

103 ¶ How sweet are thy words unto my taste! Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth!

119: 103. How sweet are thy words into my taste. He had not only heard the words of God, but fed upon them: they affected his palate as well as his ear. God's words are many and varied, and the whole of them make up what we call "the word". David loved them each one, individually, and the whole of them as a whole; he tasted an indescribable sweetness in them. He expresses the fact of their sweetness, but as he cannot express the degree of their sweetness he cries, "How sweet!" Being God's words they were divinely sweet to God's servant; he who put the sweetness into them had prepared the taste of his servant to discern and enjoy it. David makes no distinction between promises and precepts, doctrines and threatenings; they are all included in God's words, and all are precious in his esteem. Oh for a deep love to all that the Lord has revealed, whatever form it may take.

Yea, sweeter than honey to my mouth. When he did not only eat but also speak the word, by instructing others, he felt an increased delight in it. The sweetest of all temporal things fall short of the infinite deliciousness of the eternal word. Honey itself is outstripped of the Lord Widen the Psalmist fed on it he in sweetness by the word found it sweet; but when he bore witness of it it became sweeter still. How wise it will be on our part to keep the word on our palate by meditation and on our tongue by confession. It must be sweet to our taste when we think of it, or it will not be Sweet to our mouth when we talk of it.

104 Through thy precepts I get understanding: therefore I hate every false way.

119: 104. Through thy precepts I get understanding. God's direction is our instruction. Obedience to the divine will begets wisdom of mind and action. As God's way is always best, those who follow it are sure to be justified by the result. If the Lawgiver were foolish his law would be the same, and obedience to such a law would involve us in a thousand mistakes; but as the reverse is the case, we may count ourselves happy to have such a wise, prudent, and beneficial law to be the rule of our lives. We are wise if we obey and we grow wise by obeying! Therefore I hate every false way. Because he had understanding, and because of the divine precepts, he detested sin and falsehood. Every sin is a falsehood; we commit sin because we believe a lie, and in the end the flattering evil turns a liar to us and we find ourselves betrayed. True hearts are not indifferent about falsehood, they grow warm in indignation: as they love the truth, so they hate the lie. Saints have a universal horror of all that is untrue, they tolerate no falsehood or folly, they set their faces against all error of doctrine or wickedness of life. He who is a lover of one sin is in league with the whole army of sins; we must have neither truce nor parley with even one of these Amalekites, for the Lord hath war with them from generation to generation, and so must we. It is well to be a good hater. And what is that? A hater of no living
being, but a hater of "every false way." The way of self will, of self righteousness, of worldliness, of pride, of unbelief, of hypocrisy, -- these are all false ways, and therefore not only to be shunned, but to be abhorred. This final verse of the strophe marks a great advance in character, and shows that the man of God is growing stronger, bolder, and happier than aforetime. He has been taught of the Lord, so that he discerns between the precious and the vile, and while he loves the truth fervently he hates falsehood intensely. May all of us reach this state of discrimination and determination, so that we may greatly glorify God.

**NUN**

105 § Thy word is a lamp unto my feet, and a light unto my path.

**119: 105. Thy word is a lamp unto my feet.** We are walkers through the city of this world, and we are often called to go out into its darkness; let us never venture there without the light giving word, lest we slip with our feet. Each man should use the word of God personally, practically, and habitually, that he may see his way and see what lies in it. When darkness settles down upon all around me, the word of the Lord, like a flaming torch, reveals my way. Having no fixed lamps in eastern towns, in old time each passenger carried a lantern with him that he might not fall into the open sewer, or stumble over the heaps of ordure which defiled the road. This is a true picture of our path through this dark world: we should not know the way, or how to walk in it, if Scripture, like a blazing flambeau, did not reveal it. One of the most practical benefits of Holy Writ is guidance in the acts of daily life: it is not sent to astound us with its brilliance, but to guide us by its instruction. It is true the head needs illumination, but even more the feet need direction, else head and feet may both fall into a ditch. Happy is the man who personally appropriates God's word, and practically uses it as his comfort and counselor, -- a lamp to his own feet.

*And a light unto my path.* It is a lamp by night, a light by day, and a delight at all times. David guided his own steps by it, and also saw the difficulties of his road by its beams. He who walks in darkness is sure, sooner or later, to stumble; while he who walks by the light of day, or by the lamp of night, stumbleth not, but keeps his uprightness. Ignorance is painful upon practical subjects; it breeds indecision and suspense, and these are uncomfortable: the word of God, by imparting heavenly knowledge, leads to decision, and when that is followed by determined resolution, as in this case, it brings with it great restfulness of heart. This verse converses with God in adoring and yet familiar tones. Have we not something of like tenor to address to our heavenly Father? Note how like this verse is to the first verse of the first octave, and the first of the second and other octaves. The seconds also are often in unison.

106 ¶ I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.

**119: 106. I have sworn, and I will perform it, that I will keep thy righteous judgments.** Under the influence of the clear light of knowledge he had firmly made up his mind, and solemnly declared his resolve in the sight of God. Perhaps mistrusting his own fickle mind, he had pledged
himself in sacred form to abide faithful to the determinations and decisions of his God. Whatever path might open before him, he was sworn to follow that only upon which the lamp of the word was shining. The Scriptures are God's judgments, or verdicts, upon great moral questions; these are all righteous, and hence righteous men should be resolved to keep them at all hazards, since it must always be right to do right. Experience shows that the less of covenanting and swearing men formally enter upon the better, and the genius of our Savior's teaching is against all supererogatory pledging and swearing; and yet under the gospel we ought to feel ourselves as much bound to obey the word of the Lord as if we had taken an oath so to do. The bonds of love are not less sacred than the fetters of law. When a man has vowed he must be careful to "perform it", and when a man has not vowed in so many words to keep the Lord's judgments, yet is he equally bound to do so by obligations which exist apart from any promise on our part, -- obligations founded in the eternal fitness of things, and confirmed by the abounding goodness of the Lord our God. Will not every believer own that he is under bonds to the redeeming Lord to follow his example, and keep his words? Yes, the vows of the Lord are upon us, especially upon such as have made profession of discipleship, have been baptized into the thrice holy name, have eaten of the consecrated memorials, and have spoken in the name of the Lord Jesus: We are enlisted, and sworn ill, and are bound to be loyal soldiers all through the war. Thus having taken the word into our hearts by a firm resolve to obey it, we have a lamp within our souls as well as in the Book, and our course will be light unto the end.

107 ¶ I am afflicted very much: quicken me, O LORD, according unto thy word.

119: 107. I am afflicted very much. According to the last verse he had been sworn in as a soldier of the Lord, and in this next verse he is called to suffer hardness in that capacity. Our service of the Lord does not screen us from trial, but rather secures it for us. The Psalmist was a consecrated man, and yet a chastened man; nor were his chastisements light; for it seemed as if the more he was obedient the more he was afflicted. He evidently felt the rod to be cutting deep, and this he pleads before the Lord. He speaks not by way of murmuring, but by way of pleading; from the very much affliction he argues for very much quickening.

Quicken me, O Lord, according unto thy word. This is the best remedy for tribulation; the soul is raised above the thought of present distress, and is filled with that holy joy which attends all vigorous spiritual life, and so the affliction grows light. Jehovah alone can quicken: he has life in himself, and therefore can communicate it readily; he can give us life at any moment, yea, at this present instant; for it is of the nature of quickening to be quick in its operation. The Lord has promised, prepared, and provided this blessing of renewed life for all his waiting servants: it is a covenant blessing, and it is as obtainable as it is needful. Frequently the affliction is made the means of the quickening, even as the stirring of a fire promotes the heat of the flame. In their affliction some desire death, let us pray for life. Our foreboding under trial are often very gloomy, let us entreat the Lord to deal with us, not according to our fears, but according to his own word. David had but few promises to quote, and probably these were in his own psalms, yet he pleads the word of the Lord; how much more should we do so, since to us so many holy men have spoken by the Spirit of the Lord in that wonderful library which is now our Bible. Seeing we have more promises, let us offer more prayers.
108 ¶ Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O LORD, and teach me thy judgments.

119: 108. Accept, I beseech thee, the freewill offerings of my mouth, O Lord. The living praise the living God, and therefore the quickened one presents his sacrifice. He offers prayer, praise, confession, and testimony -- these, presented with his voice in the presence of an audience, were the tribute of his mouth unto Jehovah. He trembles lest these should be so ill uttered as to displease the Lord, and therefore he implores acceptance. He pleads that the homage of his mouth was cheerfully and spontaneously rendered; all his utterances were freewill offerings. There can be no value in extorted confessions: God's revenues are not derived from forced taxation, but from freewill donation. There can be no acceptance where there is no willingness; there is no work of free grace where there is no fruit of free will. Acceptance is a favour to be sought from the Lord with all earnestness, for without it our offerings are worse than useless. What a wonder of grace that the Lord will accept anything of such unworthy ones as we are!

And teach me thy judgments. When we render unto the Lord our best, we become all the more concerned to do better. If, indeed, the Lord shall accept us, we then desire to be further instructed, that we may be still more acceptable. After quickening we need teaching: life without light, or zeal without knowledge, would be but half a blessing. These repeated cries for teaching show the humility of the man of God, and also discover to us our own need of similar instruction. Our judgment needs educating till it knows, agrees with, and acts upon, the judgments of the Lord. Those judgments are not always so clear as to be seen at once; we need to be taught in them till we admire their wisdom and adore their goodness as soon as ever we perceive them.

109 ¶ My soul is continually in my hand: yet do I not forget thy law.

119: 109. My soul is continually in my hand. He lived in the midst of danger. He had to be always fighting for existence -- hiding in caves, or contending in battles. This is a very uncomfortable and trying state of affairs, and men are apt to think any expedient justifiable by which they can end such a condition: but David did not turn aside to find safety in am, for he says,

Yet do I not forget thy law. They say that all things are fair in love and war; but the holy man thought not so: while he carried his life in his hand, he also carried the law in his heart. No danger of body should make us endanger our souls by forgetting that which is right. Trouble makes many a man forget his duty, and it would have had the same effect upon the Psalmist if he had not obtained quickening (Psalm 119:107) and teaching (Psalm 119:108). In his memory of the Lord's law lay his safety; he was certain not to be forgotten of God, for God was not forgotten of him. It is a special proof of grace when nothing can drive truth out of our thoughts, or holiness out of our lives. If we remember the law even when death stares us in the face, we may be well assured that the Lord is remembering us.

110 The wicked have laid a snare for me: yet I erred not from thy precepts.
119: 110. The wicked have laid a snare for me. Spiritual life is the scene of constant danger: the believer lives with his life in his hand, and meanwhile all seem plotting to take it from him, by cunning if they cannot by violence. We shall not find it an easy thing to live the life of the faithful. Wicked spirits and wicked men will leave no stone unturned for our destruction. If all other devices fail, and even hidden pits do not succeed, the wicked still persevere in their treacherous endeavors, and, becoming craftier still, they set snares for the victim of their hate. The smaller species of game are usually taken by this method, by gin, or trap, or net, or noose. Wicked men are quite indifferent as to the manner in which they can destroy the good man -- they think no more of him than if he were a rabbit or a rat: cunning and treachery are always the allies of malice, and everything like a generous or chivalrous feeling is unknown among the graceless, who treat the godly as if they were vermin to be exterminated. When a man knows that he is thus assailed, he is too apt to become timorous, and rush upon some hasty device for deliverance, not without sin in the endeavor; but David calmly kept his way, and was able to write,

Yet I erred not from thy precepts. He was not snared, for he kept his eyes open, and kept near his God. He was not entrapped and robbed, for he followed the King's highway of holiness, where God secures safety to every traveler. He did not err from the right, and he was not deterred from following it, because he referred to the Lord for guidance, and obtained it. If we err from the precepts, we part with the promises; if we get away from God's presence, we wander into the wilds where the fowlers freely spread their nets. From this verse let us learn to be on our guard, for we, too, have enemies both crafty and wicked. Hunters set their traps in the animals usual runs, and our worst snares are laid in our own ways. By keeping to the ways of the Lord we shall escape the snares of our adversaries, for his ways are safe and free from treachery.

111 ¶ Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever: for they are the rejoicing of my heart.

119: 111. Thy testimonies have I taken as an heritage for ever. He chose them as his lot, his portion, his estate; and what is more, he laid hold upon them and made them so, -- taking them into possession and enjoyment. David's choice is our choice. If we might have our desire, we would desire to keep the commands of God perfectly. To know the doctrine, to enjoy the promise, to practice the command, -- be this a kingdom large enough for me. Here we have an inheritance which cannot fade and cannot be alienated; it is for ever, and ours for ever, if we have so taken it. Sometimes, like Israel at the first coming into Canaan, we have to take our heritage by hard fighting, and, if so, it is worthy of all our labour and suffering; but always it has to be taken by a decided choice of the heart and grip of the will. What God gives we must take.

For they are the rejoicing of my heart. The gladness which had come to him through the word of the Lord had caused him to make an unalterable choice of it. All the parts of Scripture had been pleasing to David, and were so still and therefore he stuck to them, and meant to stick to them for ever. That which rejoices the heart is sure to be chosen and treasured. It is not the head knowledge but the heart experience which brings the joy. In this verse, which is the seventh of its octave, we have reached the same sweetness as in the last seventh (Psalm 119:103): indeed, in
several of the adjoining sevenths, delight is evident. How good a thing it is when experience
ripened into joy, passing up through sorrow, prayer, conflict, hope, decision, and holy content into
rejoicing! Joy fixes the spirit: when once a man's heart rejoices in the divine word, he greatly
values it, and is for ever united to it.

112 I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end.

119:112. I have inclined mine heart to perform thy statutes alway, even unto the end. He was
not half inclined to virtue, but heartily inclined to it. His whole heart was bent on practical,
persevering godliness. He was resolved to keep the statutes of the Lord with all his heart,
throughout all his time,
without erring or ending. He made it his end to keep the law unto the end, and that without end.
He had by prayer, and meditation, and resolution made his whole being lean towards God's
commands; or as we should say in other words -- the grace of God had inclined him to incline his
heart in a sanctified direction. Many are inclined to preach, but the Psalmist was inclined to
practice; many are inclined to perform ceremonies, but he was inclined to perform statutes; many
are inclined to obey occasionally, but David would obey alway; and, alas, many are inclined for
temporary religion, but this godly man was bound for eternity, he would perform the statutes of
his Lord and King even unto the end. Lord, send us such a heavenly inclination of heart as this:
then shall we show chat thou hast quickened and taught us. To this end create in us a clean heart,
and daily renew a right spirit within us, for only so shall we incline in the right direction.

SAMECH

113 ¶. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love.

119:113. I hate vain thoughts: but thy law do I love. In this paragraph the Psalmist deals with
thoughts and things and persons which are the opposite of God's holy thoughts and ways. He is
evidently in great fear of the powers of darkness, and of their allies, and his whole soul is stirred
up to stand against them with a determined opposition. Just as he began the octave, Psalm
119:97, with "O how I love thy law," so here he begins with a declaration of hatred against that
which breaks the law. The opposite of the fixed and infallible law of God is the wavering,
changing opinion of men: David had an utter contempt and abhorrence for this; all his reverence
and regard went to the sure word of testimony. In proportion to his love to the law was his hate of
man's inventions. The thoughts of men are vanity; but the thoughts of God are verity. We hear
much in these days of "men of thought," "thoughtful preachers," and "modern thought": what is
this but the old pride of the human heart? Vain man would be wise. The Psalmist did not glory in
his thoughts; and that which was called "thought" in his day was a thing which he detested.
When man thinks his best his highest thoughts are as far below those of divine revelation as the
earth is beneath the heavens. Some of our thoughts are specially vain in the sense of vain glory,
pride, conceit, and self trust; others in the sense of bringing disappointment, such as fond
ambition, sinful dreaming, and confidence in man; others in the sense of emptiness and frivolity,
such as the idle thoughts and vacant romancing in which so many indulge; and, yet once more,
too many of our thoughts are vain in the sense of being sinful, evil, and foolish. The Psalmist is
not indifferent to evil thoughts as the careless are; but upon them he looks with a hate as true as
was the love with which he clung to the pure thoughts of God. The last octave was practical, this
is thoughtful; there the man of God attended to his feet, and here to his heart: the emotions of the
soul are as important as the acts of the life, for they are the fountain and spring from which the
actions proceed. When we love the law it becomes a law of love, and we cling to it with our
whole heart.

114 ¶ Thou art my hiding place and my shield: I hope in thy word.

119: 114. Thou art my hiding place and my shield. To his God he ran for shelter from vain
thoughts; there he hid himself away from their tormenting intrusions,
and in solemn silence of the soul he found God to be his hiding place. When called into the
world, if he could not be alone with God as his hiding place, he could have the Lord with him as
his shield, and by this means he could ward off the attacks of wicked suggestions. This is an
experimental verse, and it testifies to that which the writer knew of his own personal knowledge:
he could not fight with his own thoughts, or escape from them, till he flew to his God, and then
he found deliverance. Observe that he does not speak of God's word as being his double defense,
but he ascribes that to God himself. When we are beset by very spiritual assaults, such as those
which arise out of vain thoughts, we shall do well to fly distinctly to the person of our Lord, and
to cast ourselves upon his real presence. Happy is he who can truly say to the triune God,

"Thou art my hiding place." He has beheld God under that glorious covenant aspect which
ensures to the beholder the surest consolation.

I hope in thy word. And well he might, since he had tried and proved it: he looked for protection
from all danger, and preservation from all temptation to him who had hitherto been the tower of
his defense on former occasions. It is easy to exercise hope where we have experienced help.
Sometimes when gloomy thoughts afflict us, the only thing we can do is to hope, and, happily,
the word of God always sets before us objects of hope and reasons for hope, so that it becomes
the very sphere and support of hope, and thus tiresome thoughts are overcome. Amid fret and
worry a hope of heaven is an effectual quietus.

115 ¶ Depart from me, ye evildoers: for I will keep the commandments of my
God.

119: 115. Depart from me, ye evil doers. Those who make a conscience of their thoughts are not
likely to tolerate evil company. If we fly to God from vain thoughts, much more shall we avoid
vain men. Kings are all too apt to be surrounded by a class of men who flatter them, and at the
same time take liberty to break the laws of God: David purged his palace of such parasites; he
would not harbor them beneath his roof. No doubt they would have brought upon him an ill
name, for their doings would have been imputed to him, since the acts of courtiers are generally
set down as acts of the court itself; therefore the king sent them packing bag and baggage,
saying, --

"Depart from me." Herein he anticipated the sentence of the last great day, when the Son of
David shall say,
"Depart from me, ye workers of iniquity." We cannot thus send all malefactors out of our houses, but it will often become a duty to do so where there is right and reason for it. A house is all the better for being rid of liars, pilferers, lewd talkers, and slanderers. We are bound at all hazards to keep ourselves clear of such companions as come to us by our own choice if we have any reason to believe that their character is vicious. Evil doers make evil counsellors. Those who say unto God,

"Depart from us," ought to hear the immediate echo of their words from the mouths of God's children,

"Depart from us. We cannot eat bread with traitors."

For I will keep the commandments of my God. Since he found it hard to keep the commandments in the company of the ungodly, he gave them their marching orders. He must keep the commandments, but he did not need to keep their company. What a beautiful title for the Lord this verse contains! The word God only occurs in this one place in all this lengthened psalm, and then it is attended by the personal word "my" -- "my God."

"My God! how charming is the sound! How pleasant to repeat! Well may that heart with pleasure bound, Where God hath fixed his seat."

Doddridge

Because Jehovah is our God therefore we resolve to obey him, and to chase out of our sight those who would hinder us in his service. It is a grand thing for the mind to have come to a point, and to be steadfastly fixed in the holy determination, --

"I will keep the commandments." God's law is our pleasure when the God of the law is our God.

116 ¶ Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live: and let me not be ashamed of my hope.

119: 116. Uphold me according unto thy word, that I may live. It was so necessary that the Lord should hold up his servant, that he could not even live without it. Our soul would die if the Lord did not continually sustain it, and every grace which makes spiritual life to be truly life would decay if he withdrew his upholding hand. It is a sweet comfort that this great necessity of upholding is provided for in the word, and we have not to ask for it as for an uncovenanted mercy, but simply to plead for the fulfillment of a promise, saying, "Uphold me according to thy word." He who has given us eternal life hath in that gift secured to us all that is essential thereto, and as gracious upholding is one of the necessary things we may be sure that we shall have it.
And let me not be ashamed of my hope. In Psalm 119:114 he had spoken of his hope as founded on the word, and now he begs for the fulfillment of that word that his hope might be justified in the sight of all. A man would be ashamed of his hope if it turned out that it was not based upon a sure foundation; but this will never happen in our case. We may be ashamed of our thoughts, and our words, and our deeds for they spring from ourselves; but we never shall be ashamed of our hope, for that springs from the Lord our God. Such is the frailty of our nature that unless we are continually upheld by grace, we shall all so fouly as to be ashamed of ourselves, and ashamed of all those glorious hopes which are now the crown and glory of our life. The man of God had uttered the most positive resolves, but he felt that he could not trust in his own solemn determination: hence these players. It is not wrong to make resolutions, but it will be useless to do so unless we salt them well with believing cries to God. David meant to keep the law of the Lord, but he first needed the Lord of the law to keep him.

117 Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe: and I will have respect unto thy statutes continually.

119: 117. Hold thou me up: as a nurse holds up a little child.

And I shall be safe, and not else; for unless thou hold me up I shall be falling about like an infant that is weak upon its knees. We are saved by past grace, but we are not safe unless we receive present grace. The Psalmist had vowed to keep the Lord's commands, but here he pleads with the Lord to keep him: a very sensible course of procedure. Our version reads the word "uphold," and then "hold up;" and truly we need this blessing in every shape in which it can come, for in all manner of ways our adversaries seek to cast us down. To be safe is a happy condition; there is only one door to it, and that is to be held up by God himself; thank God, that door is open to the least among us.

And I will have respect unto thy statutes continually. In obedience is safety; in being held up is obedience. No man will outwardly keep the Lord's statutes for long together unless he has an inward respect for them, and this will never be unless the hand of the Lord perpetually upholds the heart in holy love. Perseverance to the end, obedience continually, comes only through the divine power; we start aside as a deceitful bow unless we are kept right by him that first gave us grace. Happy is the man who realizes this verse in his life: upheld through his whole life in a course of unswerving integrity, he becomes a safe and trusted man, and maintains a sacred delicacy of conscience which is unknown to others. He feels a tender respect for the statutes of the Lord, which keeps him clear of inconsistencies and conformities to the world that are so common among others, and hence he is a pillar in the house of the Lord. Alas, we know some professors who are not upright, and therefore they lean to sin till they fall over, and though they are restored they are never safe or reliable, neither have they that sweet purity of soul which is the charm of the more sanctified who have been kept from falling into the mire.

118 ¶ Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes: for their deceit is falsehood.

119: 118. Thou hast trodden down all them that err from thy statutes. There is no holding up for them; they are thrown down and then trodden down, for they choose to go down into the wandering ways of sin. Sooner or later God will set his foot on those who turn their foot from his
commands: it has always been so, and it always will be so to the end. If the salt has lost its
savour, what is it fit for but to be trodden under foot? God puts away the wicked like dross,
which is only fit to be cast out as road metal to be trodden down.

For their deceit is falsehood. They call it far seeing policy, but it is absolute falsehood, and it
shall be treated as such. Ordinary men call it clever diplomacy, but the man of God calls a spade
a spade, and declares it to be falsehood, and nothing less, for he knows that it is so in the sight of
God. Men who err from the right road invent pretty excuses with which to deceive themselves
and others, and so quiet their consciences and maintain their credits; but their mask of falsehood
is too transparent. God treads down falsehoods; they are only fit to be spurned by his feet, and
crushed into the dust. How horrified must those be who have spent all their lives in contriving a
confectionery religion, and then see it all trodden upon by God as a sham which he cannot endure!

119 Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross: therefore I love thy testimonies.

119:119 Thou puttest away all the wicked of the earth like dross. He does not trifle with them,
or handle them with kid gloves. No, he judges them to be the scum of the earth, and he treats
them accordingly by putting them away. He puts them away from his church, away from their
honours, away from the earth, and at last away from himself. "Depart," saith he, "ye cursed." If
even a good man feels forced to put away the evil doers from him, much more must the thrice
holy God put away the wicked. They looked like precious metal, they were intimately mixed up
with it, they were laid up in the same heap; but the Lord is a refiner, and every day He removes
some of the wicked from among his people, either by making a shameful discovery of their
hypocrisy or by consuming them from off the earth. They are put away as dross, never to be
recalled. As the metal is the better for losing its alloy, so is the church the better for having the
wicked removed. These wicked ones are "of the earth," "the wicked of the earth," and they
have no right to be with those who are not of the world; the Lord perceives them to be out of
place and injurious, and therefore he puts them away, all of them, leaving none of them to
deteriorate his church. The process will one day be perfect; no dross will be spared, no gold will
be left impure. Where shall we be when that great work is finished

Therefore I love thy testimonies. Even the severities of the Lord excite the love of his people. If
he allowed men to sin with impunity, he would not be so fully the object of our loving
admiration; he is glorious in holiness because he thus rids his kingdom of rebels, and his temple
of them that defile it. In these evil days, when God's punishment of sinners has become the butt
of proud skeptical contentions, we may regard as a mark of the true man of God that he loves
the Lord none the less, but a great deal the more because of his condign judgment of the ungodly.

120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee; and I am afraid of thy judgments.

119: 120 My flesh trembleth for fear of thee. Such was his awe in the presence of the Judge of
all the earth, whose judgment he had just now been considering, that he did exceedingly fear and
quake. Even the grosser part of his being, -- his flesh, felt a solemn dread at the thought of
offending one so good and great, who would so effectually sever the wicked from among the just. Alas, poor flesh, this is the highest thing to which thou canst attain!

_And I am afraid of thy judgments_. God's words of judgment are solemn, and his deeds of judgment are terrible; they may well make us afraid. At the thought of the Judge of all, -- his piercing eye, his books of record, his day of assize, and the operations of his justice, -- we may well cry for cleansed thoughts, and hearts, and ways, lest his judgments should light on us. When we see the great Refiner separating the precious from the vile, we may well feel a godly fear, lest we should be put away by him, and left to be trodden under his feet. Love in the previous verse is quite consistent with fear in this verse: the fear which hath torment is cast out, but not the filial fear which leads to reverence and obedience.

AIN

121 ¶. I have done judgment and justice: leave me not to mine oppressors.

119: 121. _I have done judgment and justice_. This was a great thing for an Eastern ruler to say at any time, for these despots mostly cared more for gain than justice. Some of them altogether neglected their duty, and would not even do judgment at all, preferring their pleasures to their duties; and many more of them sold their judgments to the highest bidders by taking bribes, or regarding the persons of men. Some rulers gave neither judgment nor justice, others gave judgment without justice, but David gave judgment and justice, and saw that his sentences were carried out. He could claim before the Lord that he had dealt out even handed justice, and was doing so still. On this fact he founded a plea with which he backed the prayer –

_Leave me not to mine oppressors_. He who, as far as his power goes, has been doing right, may hope to be delivered from his superiors when attempts are made by them to do him wrong. If I will not oppress others, I may hopefully pray that others may not oppress me. A course of upright conduct is one which gives us boldness in appealing to the Great Judge for deliverance from the injustice of others. Nor is this kind of pleading to be censured as self righteous: when we are dealing with God as to our shortcomings, we use a very different tone from that with which we face the censures of our fellow men; when they are in the question, and we are guiltless towards them, we are justified in pleading our innocence.

122 Be surety for thy servant for good: let not the proud oppress me.

119: 122. _Be surety for thy servant for good_. Answer for me. Do not leave thy poor servant to die by the hand of his enemy and thine. Take up my interests and weave them with thine own, and stand for me. As my Master, undertake thy servants' cause, and represent me before the faces of haughty men till they see what an august ally I have in the Lord my God.

_Let not the proud oppress me_. Thine interposition will answer the purpose of my rescue: when the proud see that thou art my advocate they will hide their heads. We should have been crushed beneath our proud adversary the devil if our Lord Jesus had not stood between us and the
accuser, and become a surety for us. It is by his suretyship that we escape like a bird from the
snare of the fowler. What a blessing to be able to leave our matters in our Surety's hands,
knowing that all will be well, since he has an answer for every accuser, a rebuke for every
reviler. Good men dread oppression, for it makes even a wise man mad, and they send up their
cries to heaven for deliverance; nor shall they cry in vain, for the Lord will undertake the cause
of his servants, and fight their battles against the proud. The word "servant" is wisely used, as a
plea for favour for himself, and the word "proud" as an argument against his enemies. It seems to
be inevitable that proud men should become oppressors, and that they should take most delight in
oppressing really gracious men.

123 ¶ Mine eyes fail for thy salvation, and for the word of thy righteousness.

119: 123. Mine eyes fail for thy salvation. He wept, waited, and watched for God's saving hand,
and these exercises tried the eyes of his faith till they were almost ready to give out. He looked to
God alone, he looked eagerly, he looked long, he looked till his eyes ached. The mercy is, that if
our eyes fail, God does not fail, nor do his eyes fail. Eyes are tender things, and so are our faith, hope and expectancy: the Lord will not try them above what they are able to bear.

And for the word of thy righteousness, a word that would silence the unrighteous words of his
oppressors. His eyes as well as his ears waited for the Lord's word: he looked to see the divine
word come forth as a fiat for his deliverance. He was "waiting for the verdict" -- the verdict of
righteousness itself. How happy are we if we have righteousness on our side; for then that which
is the sinners' terror is our hope, that which the proud dread is our expectation and desire. David
left his reputation entirely in the Lord's hand, and was eager to be cleared by the word of the
Judge rather than by any defense of his own. He knew that he had done right, and, therefore,
instead of avoiding the supreme court, he begged for the sentence which he knew would work out
his deliverance. He even watched with eager eyes for the judgment and the deliverance, the
word of righteousness from God which meant salvation to himself.

124 ¶ Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy, and teach me thy statutes.

119: 124. Deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy. Here he recollects himself: although
before men he was so clear that he could challenge the word of righteousness, yet before the
Lord, as his servant, he felt that he must appeal to mercy. We feel safest here. Our heart has more
rest in the cry,

"God be merciful to me," than in appealing to justice. It is well to be able to say,

"I have done judgment and justice," and then to add in all lowliness, yet
"deal with thy servant according unto thy mercy." The title of servant covers a plea; a master
should clear the character of his servant if he be falsely accused, and rescue him from those who
would oppress him; and, moreover, the master should show mercy to a servant? even if he deal
severely with a stranger. The Lord condescendingly deals, or has communications with his
servants, not spurning them, but communing with them; and this he does in a tender and merciful
way, for in any other form of dealing we should be crushed into the dust.
And teach me thy statutes. This will be one way of dealing with us in mercy. We may expect a master to teach his own servant the meaning of his own orders. Yet since our ignorance arises from our own sinful stupidity, it is great mercy on God's part that he condescends to instruct us in his commands. For our ruler to become our teacher is an act of great grace, for which we cannot be too grateful. Among our mercies this is one of the choicest.

125 I am thy servant; give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies.

119: 125. I am thy servant. This is the third time he has repeated this title in this one section: he is evidently fond of the name, and conceives it to be very effective plea. We who rejoice that we are sons of God are by no the less delighted to be his servants. Did not the firstborn Son assume the servant's form and fulfill the servant's labour to the full? What high, honour can the younger brethren desire than to be made like the Heir of things.

Give me understanding, that I may know thy testimonies. In the verse he sought teaching; but here he goes much further, and craves understanding. Usually, if the instructor supplies the teaching, the finds the understanding; but in our case we are far more dependent, must beg for understanding as well as teaching: this the ordinary cannot give, and we are thrice happy that our Divine Tutor can furnish us with it. We are to confess ourselves fools, and then our Lord will make us wise, as well as give us knowledge. The best understanding is that which enables us to render perfect obedience and to exhibit intelligent faith, and it is this which David desires, --

"understanding, that I may know thy testimonies." Some would rather not know these things; they prefer to be at ease in the dark rather than possess the light which leads to repentance and diligence. The servant of God longs to know in an understanding manner all that the Lord reveals of man and to man; he wishes to be so instructed that he may apprehend and comprehend that which is taught him. A servant should not be ignorant concerning his master, or his master's business; he should study the mind, will, purpose, and aim of him whom he serves, for so only can he complete his service; and as no man knows these things so well as his master himself, he should often go to him for instructions, lest his very zeal should only serve to make him the greater blunderer. It is remarkable that the Psalmist does not pray for understanding through acquiring knowledge, but begs of the Lord first that he may have the gracious gift of understanding, and then may obtain the desired instruction. All that we know before we have understanding is apt to spoil us and breed vanity in us; but if there be first an understanding heart, then the stores of knowledge enrich the soul, and bring neither sin nor sorrow therewith. Moreover, this gift of understanding acts also in the form of discernment and thus the good man is preserved from hoarding up that which is false and dangerous: he knows what are and what are not the testimonies of the Lord.

126 ¶ It is time for thee, LORD, to work: for they have made void thy law.
It is time for thee, Lord, to work: For they have made void thy law. David was a servant, and therefore it was always his time to work: but being oppressed by a sight of man's ungodly behaviour, he feels that his Master's hand is wanted, and therefore he appeals to him to work against the working of evil. Men make void the law of God by denying it to be his law, by promulgating commands and doctrines in opposition to it, by setting up tradition in its place, or by utterly disregarding and scorning the authority of the lawgiver. Then sin becomes fashionable, and a holy walk is regarded as a contemptible Puritanism; vice is styled pleasure, and vanity bears the bell. Then the saints sigh for the presence and power of their God: Oh for an hour of the King upon the throne and the rod of iron! Oh for another Pentecost with all its wonders, to reveal the energy of God to gain sayers, and make them see that there is a God in Israel! Man's extremity, whether of need or sin, is God's opportunity. When the earth was without form and void, the Spirit came and moved upon the face of the waters; should he not come when society is returning to a like chaos? When Israel in Egypt were reduced to the lowest point, and it seemed that the covenant would be void, then Moses appeared and wrought mighty miracles; so, too, when the church of God is trampled down, and her message is derided, we may expect to see the hand of the Lord stretched out for the revival of religion, the defense of the truth, and the glorifying of the divine name. The Lord can work either by judgments which hurl down the ramparts of the foe; or by revivals which build up the walls of his own Jerusalem. How heartily may we pray the Lord to raise up new evangelists, to quicken those we all early have, to set his whole church on fire, and to bring the world to his feet. God's work is ever honourable and glorious; as for our work, it is as nothing apart from him.

Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold.

Therefore I love thy commandments above gold; yea, above fine gold. As it was God's time to work so it was David's time to love. So far from being swayed by the example of evil men, so as to join them in slighting the Scriptures, he was the rather led into a more vehement love of them. As he saw the commandments slighted by the ungodly, his heart was in sympathy with God, and he felt a burning affection for his holy precepts. It is the mark of a true believer that he does not depend upon others for his religion, but drinks water out of his own well, which springs up even when the cisterns of earth are all dried. Our holy poet amid a general depreciation of the law felt his own esteem of it rising so high that gold and silver sank in comparison. Wealth brings with it so many conveniences that men naturally esteem it, and gold as the symbol of it is much set by; and yet, in the judgment of the wise, God's laws are more enriching, and bring with them more comfort than all the choicest treasures. The Psalmist could not boast that he always kept the commands; but he could declare that he loved them; he was perfect in heart, and would fain have been perfect in life. He judged God's holy commands to be better than the best earthly thing, yea, better than the best sort of the best earthly thing; and this esteem was confirmed and forced into expression by those very oppositions of the world which drive hypocrites to forsake the Lord and his ways.

"The dearer, for their rage,
Thy words I love and own, --
A wealthier heritage
Than gold and precious stone."

128 Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right; and I hate every false way.

119: 128. Therefore I esteem all thy precepts concerning all things to be right. Because the ungodly found fault with the precepts of God, therefore David was all the more sure of their being right. The censure of the wicked is a certificate of merit; that which they sanction we may justly suspect, but that which they abominate we may ardently, admire. The good man's delight in God's law is unreserved, he believes in all God's precepts concerning all things.

And I hate every false way. Love to truth begat hatred of falsehood. This godly man was not indifferent to anything, but that which he did not love he hated. He was no chip in the porridge without flavor; he was a good lover or a good hater, but he was never a waverer. He knew what he felt, and expressed it. He was no Gallio, caring for none of the things. His detestation was as unreserved as his affection; he had not a good word for any practice which would not bear the light of truth. The fact that such large multitudes follow the broad road had no influence upon this holy mail, except to make him more determined to avoid every form of error and sin. May the Holy Spirit so rule in our hearts that our affections may be in the same decided condition towards the precepts of the word.

PE

129 ¶ Thy testimonies are wonderful: therefore doth my soul keep them.

119: 129. Thy commands are wonderful. Full of wonderful revelations, commands and promises. Wonderful in their nature, as being free from all error, and bearing within themselves overwhelming self evidence of their truth; wonderful in their effects as instructing, elevating, strengthening, and comforting the soul. Jesus the eternal Word is called Wonderful, and all the uttered words of God are wonderful in their degree. Those who know them best wonder at them most. It is wonderful that God should have borne testimony at all to sinful men, and more wonderful still that his testimony should be of such a character, so clear, so full, so gracious, so mighty.

Therefore doth my soul keep them. Their wonderful character so impressed itself upon his mind that he kept them in his memory: their wonderful excellence so charmed his heart that he kept them in his life. Some men wonder at the words of God, and use them for their speculation; but David was always practical, and the more he wondered the more he obeyed. Note that his religion was soul work; not with head and hand alone did he keep the testimonies; but his soul, his truest and most real self, held fast to them.
130 ¶ The entrance of thy words giveth light; it giveth understanding unto the simple.

**119: 130. The entrance of thy words giveth light.** No sooner do they gain admission into the soul than they enlighten it: what light may be expected from their prolonged indwelling! Their very entrance floods the mind with instruction for they are so full, so clear; but, on the other hand, there must be such an "entrance," or there will be no illumination. The mere hearing of the word with the external ear is of small value by itself, but when the words of God enter into the chambers of the heart then light is scattered on all sides. The word finds no entrance into some minds because they are blocked up with self conceit, or prejudice, or indifference; but where due attention is given, divine illumination must surely follow upon a knowledge of the mind of God. Oh, that thy words, like the beams of the sun, may enter through the window of my understanding, and dispel the darkness of my mind!

**It giveth understanding unto the simple.** The sincere and candid are the true disciples of the word. To such it gives not only knowledge, but understanding. These simple hearted ones are frequently despised, and their simplicity has another meaning infused into it, so as to be made the theme of ridicule; but what matters it? Those whom the world dubs as fools are among the truly wise if they are taught of God. What a divine power rests in the word of God, since it not only bestows light, but gives that very mental eye by which the light is received – "It giveth understanding." Hence the value of the words of God to the simple, who cannot receive mysterious truth unless their minds are aided to see it and prepared to grasp it.

131 ¶ I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

**119: 131. I opened my mouth, and panted.** So animated was his desire that he looked into the animal world to find a picture of it. He was filled with an intense longing, and was not ashamed to describe it by a most expressive, natural, and yet singular symbol. Like a stag that has been hunted in the chase, and is hard pressed, and therefore pants for breath, so did the Psalmist pant for the entrance of God's word into his soul. Nothing else could content him. All that the world could yield him left him still panting with open mouth.

**For I longed for thy commandments.** Longed to know them, longed to obey them, longed to be conformed to their spirit, longed to teach them to others. He was a servant of God, and his industrious mind longed to receive orders; he was a learner in the school of grace, and his eager spirit longed to be taught of the Lord.

132 ¶ Look thou upon me, and be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name.

**119: 132. Look thou upon me.** A godly man cannot long be without prayer. During the previous verses he had been expressing his love to God's word, but here he is upon his knees again. This prayer is specially short, but exceedingly sententious,
"Look thou upon me." While he stood with open mouth panting for the commandments, he besought the Lord to look upon him, and let his condition and his unexpressed longings plead for him. He desires to be known of God, and daily observed by him. He wishes also to be favored with the divine smile which is included in the word -- "look." If a look from us to God has saving efficacy in it, what may we not expect from a look from God to us.

And be merciful unto me. Christ's look at Peter was a look of mercy, and all the looks of the heavenly Father are of the same kind. If he looked in stern justice his eyes would not endure us, but looking in mercy he spares and blesses us. If God looks and sees us panting, he will not fail to be merciful to us.

As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name. Look on me as thou lookest on those who love thee; be merciful to me as thou art accustomed to be towards those who truly serve thee. There is a use and wont which God observes towards them that love him, and David craved that he might experience it. He would not have the Lord deal either better or worse with him than he was accustomed to deal with his saints -- worse would not save him, better could not be. In effect he prays,

"I am thy servant; treat me as you treat thy servants. I am thy child; deal with me as with a son."

Especially is it clear from the context that he desired such an entering in of the word, and such a clear understanding of it as God usually gives to his own, according to the promise,

"All thy children shall be taught of the Lord." Reader, do you love the name of the Lord? Is his character most honourable in your sight? Most dear to your heart? This is a sure mark of grace, for no soul ever loved the Lord except as the result of love received from the Lord himself.

133 ¶ Order my steps in thy word: and let not any iniquity have dominion over me.

119: 133. Order my steps in thy word. This is one of the Lord's customary mercies to his chosen, -- "He keepeth the feet of his saints." By his grace he enables us to put our feet step by step in the very place which his word ordains. This prayer seeks a very choice favour, namely, that every distinct act, every step, might be arranged and governed by the will of God. This does not stop short of perfect holiness, neither will the believer's desires be satisfied with anything beneath that blessed consummation.

And let not any iniquity have dominion over me. This is the negative side of the blessing. We ask to do all that is right, and to fall under the power of nothing that is wrong. God is our sovereign, and we would have every thought in subjection to his sway. Believers have no choice, darling sins to which they would be willing to bow. They pant for perfect liberty from the power of evil, and being conscious that they cannot obtain it of themselves, they cry unto God for it.

134 ¶ Deliver me from the oppression of man: so will I keep thy precepts.
Deliver me from the oppression of man. David had tasted all the bitterness of this great evil. It had made him an exile from his country, and banished him from the sanctuary of the Lord: therefore he pleads to be saved from it. It is said that oppression makes a wise man mad, and no doubt it has made many a righteous man sinful. Oppression is in itself wicked, and it drives men to wickedness.

We little know how much of our virtue is due to our liberty; if we had been in bonds under haughty tyrants we might have yielded to them, and instead of being confessors we might now have been apostates. He who taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," will sanction this prayer, which is of much the same tenor, since to be oppressed is to be tempted.

So will I keep thy statutes. When the stress of oppression was taken off he would go his own way, and that way would be the way of the Lord. Although we ought not to yield to the threatenings of men, yet many do so; the wife is sometimes compelled by the oppression of her husband to act against her conscience: children and servants, and even whole nations have been brought into the same difficulty. Their sins will be largely laid at the oppressor's door, and it usually pleases God ere long to overthrow these powers and dominions which compel men to do evil. The worst of it is that some persons, when the pressure is taken off from them, follow after unrighteousness of their own accord. These give evidence of being sinners in grain. As for the righteous, it happens to them as it did to the apostles of old, "Being let go, they went to their own company. "When saints are freed from the tyrant they joyfully pay homage to their king.

Make thy face to shine upon thy servant; and teach me thy statutes. Oppressors frown, but do thou smile. They darken my life, but do thou shine upon me, and all will be bright. The Psalmist again declares that he is God's servant, and he seeks for no favour from others, but only from his own Lord and Master.

And teach me thy statutes. This is the favour which he considers to be the shining of the face of God upon him. If the Lord will be exceeding gracious, and make him his favorite, he will ask no higher blessing than still to be taught the royal statutes. See how he craves after holiness; this is the choicest of all gems in his esteem. As we say among men that a good education is a great fortune, so to be taught of the Lord is a gift of special grace. The most favored believer needs teaching; even when he walks in the light of God's countenance he has still to be taught the divine statutes or he will transgress.

Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law. He wept in sympathy with God to see the holy law despised and broken. He wept in pity for men who were thus drawing down upon themselves the fiery wrath of God. His grief was such that he could scarcely give it vent; his tears were not mere drops of sorrow, but torrents of woe. In this he became like the Lord Jesus, who beheld the city, and wept over it; and like unto Jehovah himself, who hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but that be turn unto him and live. The
experience of this verse indicates a great advance upon anything we have had before: the psalm and the Psalmist are both growing. That man is a ripe believer who sorrows because of the sins of others. In Psalm 119:120 his flesh trembled at the presence of God, and here it seems to melt and flow away in floods of tears. None are so affected by heavenly things as those who are much in the study of the word, and are thereby taught the truth and essence of things. Carnal men are afraid of brute force, and weep over losses and crosses; but spiritual men feel a holy fear of the Lord himself, and most of all lament when they see dishonour cast upon his holy name.

"Lord, let me weep for nought but sin,
   And after none but thee,
   And then I would, O that I might!
   A constant weeper be."

TZADDI

137 ¶. Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments.

Psalm 119:137

Exposition

This passage deals with the perfect righteousness of Jehovah and his word, and expresses the struggles of a holy soul in reference to that righteousness. The initial letter with which every verse commences in the Hebrew is "P", and the keyword to us is PURITY.

119: 137. Righteous art thou, O LORD. The Psalmist has not often used the name of Jehovah in this vast composition. The whole psalm shows him to have been a deeply religious man, thoroughly familiar with the things of God; and such persons never use the holy name of God carelessly, nor do they even use it at all frequently in comparison with the thoughtless and the ungodly. Familiarity begets reverence in this case. Here he uses the sacred name in worship. He praises God by ascribing to him perfect righteousness. God is always right, and he is always actively light, that is, righteous.

This quality is bound up in our very idea of God. We cannot imagine an unrighteous God.

And upright are thy judgments. Here he extols God's word, or recorded judgments, as being right, even as their Author is righteous. That which conics from the Righteous God is itself righteous. Jehovah both saith and doth that which is right, and that alone. This is a great stay to the soul in time of trouble. When we are most sorely afflicted, and cannot see the reason for the dispensation, we may fall back upon this most sure and certain fact, that God is righteous, and his dealings with us are righteous too. It should be our glory to sing this brave confession when all things around us appear to suggest the contrary. This is the richest adoration -- this which rises from the lips of faith when carnal reason mutters about undue severity, and the like.
138 Thy testimonies *that* thou hast commanded *are* righteous and very faithful.

119: 138. *Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.* All that which God hath testified in his word is right and truthful. It is righteous, and may be relied upon for the present; it is faithful, and may be trusted in for the future. About every portion of the inspired testimonies there is a divine authority, they are issued and published by God's command, and they bear the impress of the royal style which carries omnipotence about it. Not only the precepts but the promises also are commanded of the Lord, and so are all the teachings of Scripture. It is not left to our choice whether we will accept them or no; they are issued by royal command, and are not to be questioned. Their characteristic is that they are like the Lord who has proclaimed them, they are the essence of justice and the soul of truth. God's word is righteous and cannot be impeached; it is faithful and cannot be questioned it is true from the beginning, and it will be true unto the end. Dwell upon that "sweet word" -- "very faithful." What a mercy that we have a God to deal with who is scrupulously faithful, true to all the items and details of his promises, punctual to time, steadfast during all time. Well may we risk all upon a word which is" ever faithful, ever sure."

139 ¶ My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words.

119: 139. In the last two verses David spoke concerning his God and his law; here he speaks of himself, and says,

*My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words:* this was no doubt occasioned by his having so clear a sense of the admirable character of God's word. His zeal was like a fire burning within his soul. The sight of man's forgetfulness of God acted as a fierce blast to excite the fire to a more vehement flame, and it blazed until it was ready to consume him. David could not bear that men should forget God's words. He was ready to forget himself, aye, to, consume himself, because these men forgot God. The ungodly were David's enemies: his enemies, because they hated him for his godliness; his enemies, because he abhorred them for their ungodliness. These men had gone so far in iniquity that they not only violated and neglected the commands of God, but they appeared actually to have forgotten them. This put David into a great heat; he burned with indignation. How dare they trample on sacred things! How could they utterly ignore the commands of God himself! He was astonished, and filled with holy anger.

140 ¶ Thy word *is* very pure: therefore thy servant loveth it.

119: 140. *Thy word is very pure.* It is truth distilled, holiness in its quintessence. In the word of God there is no admixture of error or sin. It is pure in its sense, pure in its language, pure in its spirit, pure in its influence, and all this to the very highest degree -- "very pure."

*Therefore thy servant loveth it,* which is a proof that he himself was pure in heart, for only those who are pure love God's word because of its purity. His heart was knit to the word because of its
glorious holiness and truth. He admired it, delighted in it, sought to practice it, and longed to come under its purifying power.

141 I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts.

119: 141. I am small and despised: yet do not I forget thy precepts. That fault of forgetfulness which he condemned in others (Psalm 119:139) could not be charged upon himself. His enemies made no account of him, regarded him as a man without power or ability, and therefore looked down upon him. He appears to accept the situation and humbly take the lowest room, but he carries God's word with him. How many a man has been driven to do some ill action in order to reply to the contempt of his enemies: to make himself conspicuous he has either spoken or acted in a manner which he could not justify. The beauty of the Psalmist's piety was that it was calm and well balanced, and as he was not carried away by flattery, so was he not overcome by shame. If small, he the more jealously attended to the smaller duties; and if despised, he was the more in earnest to keep the despised commandments of God.

142 ¶ Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, and thy law is the truth.

119: 142. Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness. Having in a previous verse ascribed righteousness to God, he now goes on to declare that that righteousness is unchanging and endures from age to age. This is the joy and glory of the saints, that what God is he always will be, and his mode of procedure towards the sons of men is immutable: having kept his promise, and dealt out justice among his people, he will do so world without end. Both the righteousnesses and the unrighteousnesses of men come to an end, but the righteousness of God is without end.

And thy law is the truth. As God is love, so his law is the truth, the very essence of truth, truth applied to ethics, truth in action, truth upon the judgment seat. We hear great disputes about, "What is truth?" The holy Scriptures are the only answer to that question. Note, that they are not only true, but the truth itself. We may not say of them that they contain the truth, but that they are the truth: "thy law is the truth." There is nothing false about the law or preceptory part of Scripture. Those who are obedient thereto shall find that they are walking in a way consistent with fact, while those who act contrary thereto are walking in a vain show.

143 ¶ Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights.

119: 143. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me. This affliction may have arisen from his circumstances, or from the cruelty of his enemies, or from his own internal conflicts, but certain it is that he was the subject of much distress, a distress which apprehended him, and carried him away a captive to its power. His griefs, like fierce dogs, had taken hold upon him; he felt their teeth. He had double trouble: trouble without and anguish within, as the apostle Paul put it, "without were rightings and within were fears."
Yet thy commandments are my delights. Thus he became a riddle; troubled, and yet delighted; in anguish, and yet in pleasure. The child of God can understand this enigma, for well he knows that while he is cast down on account of what he sees within himself he is all the more lifted up by what he sees in the word. He is delighted with the commandments, although he is troubled because he cannot perfectly obey them. He finds abundant light in the commandments, and by the influence of that light he discovers and mourns over his own darkness. Only the man who is acquainted with the struggles of the spiritual life will understand the expression before us. Let the reader herein find a balance in which to weigh himself. Does he find even when he is begin with sorrow that it is a delightful thing to do the will of the Lord? Does he find more joy in being sanctified than sorrow in being chastised? Then the spot of God's children is upon him.

144 The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live.

119: 144. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting. First he had said that God's testimonies were righteous, then that they were everlasting, and now that their righteousness is everlasting. Thus he gives us a larger and more detailed account of the word of God the longer he is engaged in writing upon it. The more we say in praise of holy writ, the more we may say and the more we can say. God's testimonies to man cannot be assailed, they are righteous from beginning to end; and though ungodly men have opposed the divine justice, especially in the plan of salvation, they have always failed to establish any charge against the Most High. Long as the earth shall stand, long as there shall be a single intelligent creature in the universe, it will be confessed that God's plans of mercy are in all respects marvelous proofs of his love of justice: even that he may be gracious Jehovah will not be unjust.

Give me understanding, and I shall live. This is a prayer which he is constantly praying, that God will give him understanding. Here he evidently considers that such a gift is essential to his lifting. To live without understanding is not to live the life of a man, but to be dead while we live. Only as we know and apprehend the things of God can we be said to enter into life. The more the Lord teaches us to admire the eternal rightness of his word, and the more he quickens us to the love of such lightness, the happier and the better we shall be. As we love life, and seek many days that we may see good, it behooves us to seek immortality in the everlasting word which liveth and abideth for ever, and to seek good in that renewal of our entire nature which begins with the enlightenment of the understanding and passes on to the regeneration of the entire man. Here is our need of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, and the guide of all the quickened ones, who shall lead us into all truth. O for the visitations of his grace at this good hour!

KOPH

145 ¶ I cried with my whole heart; hear me, O LORD: I will keep thy statutes.

Psalm 119:145-152

Exposition
This section is given up to memories of prayer. The Psalmist describes the time and the manner of his devotions, and pleads with God for deliverance from his troubles. He who has been with God in the closet will find God with him in the furnace. If we have cried we shall be answered. Delayed answers may drive us to importunity; but we need not fear the ultimate result, since God's promises are not uncertain, but are founded for ever. The whole passage shows us:

- How he prayed (Psalm 119:145).
- What he prayed for (Psalm 119:146).
- When he prayed (Psalm 119:147).
- What he pleaded (Psalm 119:1149).
- What happened (Psalm 119:150).
- How he was rescued (Psalm 119:151).
- What was his witness as to the whole matter (Psalm 119:152).

119: 145 I cried with my whole heart. His prayer was a sincere, plaintive, painful, natural utterance, as of a creature in pain. We cannot tell whether at all times he used his voice when he thus cried; but we are informed of something which is of much greater consequence, he cried with his heart. Heart cries are the essence of prayer. He mentions the unity of his heart in this holy engagement. His whole soul pleaded with God, his entire affections, his united desires all went out towards the living God. It is well when a man can say as much as this of his prayers: it is to be feared that many never cried to God with their whole heart in all their lives. There may be no beauty of elocution about such prayers, no length of expression, no depth of doctrine, nor accuracy of diction; but if the whole heart be in them they will find their way to the heart of God.

Hear me, O Lord. He desires of Jehovah that his cries may not die upon the air, but that God may have respect to them. True suppliants are not satisfied with the exercise itself, they have an end and object in praying, and they look out for it. If God does not hear prayer we pray in vain. The term "hear" is often used in Scripture to express attention and consideration. In one sense God hears every sound that is made on earth, and every desire of every heart; but David meant much more; he desired a kindly, sympathetic hearing, such as a physician gives to his patient when he tells him his pitiful story. He asked that the Lord would draw near, and listen with friendly ear to the voice of his complaint, with the view of pitying him and helping him. Observe, that his whole hearted prayer goes to the Lord alone; he has no second hope or help. "Hear me, O Lord," is the full range of his petition and expectation.
I will keep thy statutes. He could not expect the Lord to hear him if he did not hear the Lord, neither would it be true that he prayed with his whole heart unless it was manifest that he laboured with all his might to be obedient to the divine will. His object in seeking deliverance was that he might be free to fulfil his religion and carry out every ordinance of the Lord. He would be a free man that he might be at liberty to serve the Lord. Note well that a holy resolution goes well with an importunate supplication: David is determined to be holy, his whole heart goes with that resolve as well as with his prayers. He will keep God's statutes in his memory, in his affections, and in his actions. He will not willfully neglect or violate any one of the divine laws.

146 I cried unto thee; save me, and I shall keep thy testimonies.

119: 146. I cried unto thee. Again he mentions that his prayer was unto God alone. The sentence imports that he prayed vehemently, and very often; and that it had become one of the greatest facts of his life that he cried unto God. "Save me." This was his prayer; very short, but very full. He needed saving, none but the Lord could save him, to him he cried, "Save me" from the dangers which surround me, from the enemies that pursue me, from the temptations which beset me, from the sins which accuse me. He did not multiply words, and men never do so when they are in downright earnest. He did not multiply objects, and men seldom do so when they are intent upon the one thing needful: "save me" was his one and only prayer.

And I shall keep thy testimonies. This was his great object in desiring salvation, that he might be able to continue in a blameless life of obedience to God, that he might be able to believe the witness of God, and also to become himself a witness for God. It is a great thing when men seek salvation for so high an end. He did not ask to be delivered that he might sin with impunity; his cry was to be delivered from sin itself. He had vowed to keep the statutes or laws, here he resolves to keep the testimonies or doctrines, and so to be sound of head as well as clean of hand. Salvation brings all these good things in its train. David had no idea of a salvation which would allow him to live in sin, or abide in error: he knew right well that there is no saving a man while he abides in disobedience and ignorance.

147 ¶ I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried: I hoped in thy word.

119: 147. I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried. He was up before the sun, and began his pleadings before the dew began to leave the grass. Whatever is worth doing is worth doing speedily. This is the third time that he mentions that he cried. He cried, and cried, and cried again. His supplications had become so frequent, fervent, and intense, that he might hardly be said to be doing anything else from morning to night but crying unto his God. So strong was his desire after salvation that he could not rest in his bed; so eagerly did he seek it that at the first possible moment he was on his knees.

I hoped in thy word. Hope is a very powerful means of strengthening us in prayer. Who would pray if he had no hope that God would hear him? Who would not pray when he has a good hope of a blessed issue to his entreaties? His hope was fixed upon God's word, and this is a sure anchorage, because God is true, and in no case has he ever run back from his promise, or altered the thing that has gone forth from his mouth. He who
is diligent in prayer will never be destitute of hope. Observe that as the early bird gets the worm, so the early prayer is soon refreshed with hope.

148 Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word.

119: 148. Mine eyes prevent the night watches. Or rather, the watches. Before the watchman cried the hour, he was crying to God. He did not need to be informed as to how the hours were flying, for every hour his heart was flying towards heaven. He began the day with prayer, and he continued in prayer through the watches of the day, and the watches of the night. The soldiers changed guard, but David did not change his holy occupation. Specially, however, at night did he keep his eyes open, and drive away sleep, that he might maintain communion with his God. He worshipped on from watch to watch as travelers journey from stage to stage.

That I might meditate in thy word. This had become meat and drink to him. Meditation was the food of his hope, and the solace of his sorrow: the one theme upon which his thoughts ran was that blessed "word" which he continually mentions, and in which his heart rejoices. He preferred study to slumber; and he learned to forego his necessary sleep for much more necessary devotion. It is instructive to find meditation so constantly connected with fervent prayer: it is the fuel which sustains the flame. How rare an article is it in these days.

149 ¶ Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness: O LORD, quicken me according to thy judgment.

119: 149. Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness. Men find it very helpful to use their voices in prayer; it is difficult long to maintain the intensity of devotion unless we hear ourselves speak; hence David at length broke through his silence, arose from his quiet meditations, and began crying with voice as well as heart unto the Lord his God. Note, that he does not plead his own descryings, nor for a moment appeal for payment of a debt on account of merit; he takes the free-grace way, and puts it, "according unto thy lovingkindness." When God hears player according to his lovingkindness he overlooks all the imperfections of the prayer, he forgets the sinfulness of the offerer, and in pitying love he grants the desire though the suppliant be unworthy. It is according to God's lovingkindness to answer speedily, to answer frequently, to answer abundantly, yea, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think. Lovingkindness is one of the sweetest words in our language. Kindness has much in it that is most precious, but loving kindness is doubly dear; it is the cream of kindness.

O Lord, quicken me according to thy judgment. This is another of David's wise and ardent prayers. He first cried, "Save me;" then, "Hear me;" and now, "Quicken me." This is often the very best way of delivering us from trouble, -- to give us more life that we may escape from death; and to add more strength to that life that we may not be overloaded with its burdens. Observe, that he asks to receive quickening according to God's judgment, that is, in such a way as should be consistent with infinite wisdom and prudence. God's methods of communicating greater vigor
to our spiritual life are exceedingly wise; it would probably be in vain for us to attempt to understand them; and it will be our wisdom to wish to receive grace, not according to our notion of how it should come to us, but according to God's heavenly method of bestowing it. It is his prerogative to make alive as well as to kill, and that sovereign act is best left to his infallible judgment. Hath he not already given us to have life more and more abundantly? "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

150 ¶ They draw nigh that follow after mischief: they are far from thy law.

119: 150. They draw nigh that follow after mischief. He could hear their footfalls close behind him. They are not following him for his benefit, but for his hurt, and therefore the sound of their approach is to be dreaded. They are not prosecuting a good object, but persecuting a good man. As if they had not enough mischief in their own hearts, they are hunting after more. He sees them going a steeple chase over hedge and ditch in order to bring mischief to himself, and he points them out to God, and entreats the Lord to fix his eyes upon them, and deal with them to their confusion. They were already upon him, and he was almost in their grip, and therefore he cries the more earnestly.

They are far from thy law. A mischievous life cannot be an obedient one. Before these men could become persecutors of David they were obliged to get away from the restraints of God's law. They could not hate a saint and yet love the law. Those who keep God's law neither do harm to themselves nor to others. Sin is the greatest mischief in the world. David mentions this to the Lord in prayer, feeling some kind of comfort in the fact that those who hated him hated God also, and found it needful to get away from God before they could be free to act their cruel part towards himself. When we know that our enemies are God's enemies, and ours because they are his, we may well take comfort to ourselves.

151 Thou art near, O LORD; and all thy commandments are truth.

119: 151. Thou art near, O Lord. Near as the enemy might be, God was nearer: this is one of the choicest comforts of the persecuted child of God. The Lord is near to hear our cries, and to speedily afford us succour. He is near to chase away our enemies, and to give us rest and peace.

And all thy commandments are truth. God neither commands a lie, nor lies in his commands. Virtue is truth in action, and this is what God commands. Sin is falsehood in action, and this is what God forbids. If all God's commands are truth, then the true man will be glad to keep near to them, and therein he will find the true God near him. This sentence will be the persecuted man's protection from the false hearts that seek to do him mischief: God is near and God is true, therefore his people are safe. If at any time we fall into danger through keeping the commands of God we need not suppose that we have acted unwisely: we may, on the contrary, be quite sure that we are in the right way; for God's precepts are right and true. It is for this very reason that wicked men assail us: they hate the truth, and therefore hate those who do the truth. Their opposition may be our consolation; while God's presence upon our side is our glory and delight.
Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever.

David found of old that God had founded them of old, and that they would stand firm throughout all ages. It is a very blessed thing to be so early taught of God that we know substantial doctrines even from our youth. Those who think that David was a young man when he wrote this psalm will find it rather difficult to reconcile this verse with the theory; it is much more probable that he was now grown grey, and was looking back upon what he had known long before. He knew at the very first that the doctrines of God's word were settled before the world began, that they had never altered, and never could by any possibility be altered. He had begun by building on a rock, by seeing that God's testimonies were "founded", that is, grounded, laid as foundations, settled and established; and that with a view to all the ages that should come, during all the changes that should intervene. It was because David knew this that he had such confidence in prayer, and was so importunate in it. It is sweet to plead immutable promises with an immutable God. It was because of this that he learned to hope: a man cannot have much expectation from a changing friend, but he may well have confidence in a God who cannot change. It was because of this that he delighted in being near the Lord, for it is a most blessed thing to keep up close intercourse with a Friend who never varies.

Let those who choose follow at the heels of the modern school and look for fresh light to break forth which will put the old light out of countenance; we are satisfied with the truth which is old as the hills and as fixed as the great mountains. Let "cultured intellects" invent another god, more gentle and effeminate than the God of Abraham; we are well content to worship Jehovah, who is eternally the same. Things everlastingly established are the joy of established saints. Bubbles please boys, but men prize those things which are solid and substantial, with a foundation and a bottom to them which will bear the test of the ages.

Consider mine affliction, and deliver me: for I do not forget thy law.

Psalm 119:153-60

Exposition

In this section the Psalmist seems to draw still nearer to God in prayer, and to state his case and to invoke the divine help with more of boldness and expectation. It is a pleading passage, and the key word of it is, "Consider." With much boldness he pleads his intimate union with the Lord's cause as a reason why he should be aided. The special aid that he seeks is personal quickening, for which he cries to the Lord again and again.

Consider mine affliction, and deliver me. The writer has a good case, though it be a grievous one, and he is ready, yea anxious, to submit it to the divine arbitration. His matters are
right, and he is ready to lay them before the supreme court. His manner is that of one who feels safe at the throne.

Yet there is no impatience: he does not ask for hasty action, but for consideration. In effect he cries "Look into my grief, and see whether I do not need to be delivered. From my sorrowful condition judge as to the proper method and time for my rescue." The Psalmist desires two things, and these two things blended: first, a full consideration of his sorrow; secondly, deliverance; and, then, that this deliverance should come with a consideration of his affliction. It should be the desire of every gracious man who is in adversity that the Lord should look upon his need, and relieve it in such a way as shall be most for the divine glory, and for his own benefit. The words, "mine affliction," are picturesque; they seem to portion off a special spot of woe as the writer's own inheritance: he possesses it as no one else had ever done, and he begs the Lord to have that special spot under his eye: even as a husbandman looking over all his fields may yet take double care of a certain selected plot. His prayer is eminently practical, for he seeks to be delivered; that is, brought out of the trouble and preserved from sustaining any serious damage by it. For God to consider is to act in due season: men consider and do nothing; but such is never the case with our God.

For I do not forget thy law. His affliction was not sufficient, with all its bitterness, to drive out of his mind the memory of God's law; nor could it lead him to act contrary to the divine command. He forgot prosperity, but he did not forget obedience. This is a good plea when it can be honestly urged. If we are kept faithful to God's law we may be sure that God will remain faithful to his promise. If we do not forget his law the Lord will not forget us. He will not long leave that man in trouble whose only fear in trouble is lest he should leave the way of right.

119: 153. Consider mine affliction, and deliver me. God looks upon or considers man in various ways, and for different ends.

To give him light; for "as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth" (John 9:1).

To convert him; "He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me" (Matthew 9:9).

To restore him; "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Luke 22:61).

To deliver him; "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt" (Exodus 3:7).

To advance him; "He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden" (Luke 1:48): and to reward him;

"The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering" (Genesis 4:4) (Hugh de St. Victor (1098-1141), in John Mason Neale and Richard Frederick Littledale, 1833-1890).

119: 153. Consider mine affliction, and deliver me. We must pray that God will help and deliver us, not after the device of our own brains, but after such wise as seemeth best unto his tender wisdom, or else that he will mitigate our pain, that our weakness may not utterly faint. Like as a sick person, although he doubt nothing of the faithfulness and tenderness of his
physician, yet, for all that, desireth him to handle his wound as tenderly as possible, even so may we call upon God, that, if it be not against his honour and glory, he will vouchsafe to give some mitigation of the pain. Otto Wermuellerus.

119: 153. Consider mine affliction. These prayers of David are penned with such heavenly wisdom that they are convenient for the state of the whole church, and every member thereof. The church is the bush that burneth with fire, but cannot be consumed; every member thereof beareth a part of the cross of Christ; they are never without some affliction, for which they have need to pray with David,

"Behold mine affliction." We know that in afflictions it is some comfort to us to have our crosses known to those of whom we are assured that they love us: it mitigates our dolor when they mourn with us, albeit they be not able to help us. But the Christian hath a more solid comfort; to wit, that in all his troubles the Lord beholds him; like a king, rejoicing to see his own servant wrestle with the enemy. He looks on with a merciful eye, pitying the infirmity of his own, when he sees it; and with a powerful hand ready to help them. But because many a time the cloud of our corruption cometh between the Lord and us, and lets us not see his helping hand, nor his loving face looking upon us, we have need to pray at such times with David, "Behold mine affliction." --William Cowper.

154 Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word.

119: 154. Plead my cause, and deliver me. In the last verse he had prayed, "Deliver me," and here he specifies one method in which that deliverance might be vouchsafed, namely, by the advocacy of his cause. In providence the Lord has many ways of clearing the slandered of the accusations brought against them. He can make it manifest to all that they have been belied, and in this way he can practically plead their cause. He can, moreover, raise up friends for the godly who will leave no stone unturned till their characters are cleared; or he can smite their enemies with such fearfulness of heart that they will be forced to confess their falsehood, and thus the righteous will be delivered without the striking of a blow.

Alexander reads it, "Strive my strife, and redeem me" -- that is, stand in my stead, bear my burden, fight my fight, pay my price, and bring me out to liberty. When we feel ourselves dumb before the foe, here is a prayer made to our hand. What a comfort that if we sin we have an advocate, and if we do not sin the same pleader is engaged on our side.

Quicken me. We had this prayer in the last section, and we shall have it again and again in this. It is a desire which cannot be too often felt and expressed. As the soul is the centre of everything, so to be quickened is the central blessing. It means more love, more grace, more faith more courage, more strength, and if we get these we can hold up our heads before our adversaries. God alone can give this quickening; but to the Lord and giver of life the work is easy enough, and he delights to perform it.

According to thy word. David had found such a blessing among the promised things, or at least he perceived that it was according to the general tenor of God's word that tried believers should
be quickened and brought up again from the dust of the earth; therefore he pleads the word, and
desires the Lord to act to him according to the usual run of that word. What a mighty plea is this
-- "according to thy word." No gun in all our arsenals can match it.

155 ¶ Salvation is far from the wicked: for they seek not thy statutes.

119: 155. Salvation is far from the wicked. By their perseverance in evil they have almost put
themselves out of the pale of hope. They talk about being saved, but they cannot have known
anything of it or they would not remain wicked. Every step they have taken in the path of evil
has removed them further from the kingdom of grace: they go from one degree of hardness to
another till their hearts become as stone. When they fall into trouble it will be irremediable. Yet
they talk big, as if they either needed no salvation or could save themselves whenever their fancy
turned that way.

For they seek not thy statutes. They do not endeavor to be obedient, but quite the reverse; they
seek themselves, they seek evil, and therefore they never find the way of peace and
righteousness. When men have broken the statutes of the Lord their wisest course is by
repentance to seek forgiveness, and by faith to seek salvation: then salvation is near them, so
near them that they shall not miss it; but when the wicked continue to seek after mischief,
salvation is set further and further from them. Salvation and God's statutes go together: those
who are saved by the King of grace love the statutes of the King of glory.

156 ¶ Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD: quicken me according to thy judgments.

119: 156. This verse is exceedingly like verse one hundred and forty nine, and yet it is no vain
repetition. There is such a difference in the main idea that the one verse stands out distinct from
the other. In the first case he mentions his prayer, but leaves the method of its accomplishment
with the wisdom or judgment of God;
while here he pleads no prayer of his own, but simply the mercies of the Lord, and begs to be
quickened by judgments rather than to be left to spiritual lethargy. We may take it for granted
that an inspired author is never so short of thought as to be obliged to repeat himself: where we
think we have the same idea in this psalm we are misled by our neglect of careful study. Each
verse is a distinct pearl. Each blade of grass in this field has its own drop of heavenly dew.

Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD. Here the Psalmist pleads the largeness of God's mercy,
the immensity of his tender love; yea, he speaks of mercies -- mercies many, mercies tender,
mercies great; and with the glorious Jehovah he makes this a plea for his one leading prayer, the
prayer for quickening. Quickening is a great and tender mercy; and it is many mercies in one.
Shall one so really good permit his servant to die? Will not one so tender breathe new life into
him?

Quicken me according to thy judgments. A measure of awakening comes with the judgments of
God; they are startling and arousing; and hence the believer's quickening thereby. David would
have every severe stroke sanctified to his benefit, as well as every tender mercy. The first clause of this verse may run, "Many," or, "manifold are thy compassions, O Jehovah." This he remembers in connection with the "many persecutors" of whom he will speak in the next verse. By all these many mercies he pleads for enlivening grace, and thus he has many strings to his bow. We shall never be short of arguments if We draw them from God himself, and urge both his mercies and his judgments as reasons for our quickening.

157 ¶ Many are my persecutors and mine enemies; yet do I not decline from thy testimonies.

119: 157. Many are my persecutors and mine enemies. Those who actually assail me, or who secretly abhor me, are many. He sets this over against the many tender mercies of God. It seems a strange thing that a truly godly man, as David was, should have many enemies; but it is inevitable. The disciple cannot be loved where his Master is hated. The seed of the serpent must oppose the seed of the woman: it is their nature.

Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies. He did not deviate from the truth of God, but proceeded in the straight way, however many adversaries might endeavor to block up his path. Some men have been led astray by one enemy, but here is a saint who held on his way in the teeth of many persecutors. There is enough in the testimonies of God to recompense us for pushing forward against all the hosts that may combine against us. So long as they cannot drive or draw us into a spiritual decline our foes have done us no great harm, and they have accomplished nothing by their malice. If we do not decline they are defeated. If they cannot make us sin they have missed their mark. Faithfulness to the truth is victory over our enemies.

158 ¶ I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word.

119: 158. I beheld the transgressors. I saw the traitors; I understood their character, their object, their way, and their end. I could not help seeing them, for they pushed themselves into my way. As I was obliged to see them I fixed my eyes on them, to learn what I could from them.

And was grieved. I was sorry to see such sinners. I was sick of them, disgusted with them, I could not endure them. I found no pleasure in them, they were a sad sight to me, however fine their clothing or witty their chattering. Even when they were most mirthful a sight of them made my heart heavy; I could not tolerate either them or their doings.

Because they kept not thy word. My grief was occasioned more by their sin against God than by their enmity against myself. I could bear their evil treatment of my words, but not their neglect of thy word. Thy word is so precious to me that those who will not keep it move me to indignation; I cannot keep the company of those who keep not God's word. That they should have no love for me is a trifle; but to despise the teaching of the Lord is abominable.

159 ¶ Consider how I love thy precepts: quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness.

119: 159. Consider, or see, how I love thy precepts. A second time he asks for consideration. As he said before,
"Consider mine affliction," so now he says,

"Consider mine affection." He loved the precepts of God -- loved them unspeakably loved them so as to be grieved with those who did not love them. This is a sure test: many there are who have a warm side towards the promises, but as for the precepts, they cannot endure them. The Psalmist so loved everything that was good and excellent that he loved all God had commanded. The precepts are all of them wise and holy, therefore the man of God loved them extremely, loved to know them, to think of them, to reclaim them, and principally to practice them. He asked the Lord to remember and consider this, not upon the ground of merit, but that it should serve as an answer to the slanderous accusations which at this time were the great, sting of his sorrow.

Quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness. Here he comes back to his former prayer, "Quicken me" (119: 154), "quicken me" (119:156). "Quicken me." He prays again the third time, using the same words. We may understand that David felt like one who was half stunned with the assaults of his foes, ready to faint under their incessant malice. What he wanted was revival, restoration, renewal; therefore he pleaded for more life. O thou who didst quicken me when I was dead, quicken me again that I may not return to the dead! Quicken me that I may outlive the blows of my enemies, the faintness of my faith, and the swooning of my sorrow. This time he does not say,

"Quicken me according to thy judgments," but,

"Quicken me, O Lord, according to thy lovingkindness." This is the great gun which he brings up last to the conflict: it is his ultimate argument, if this succeed not he must fail. He has long been knocking at mercy's gate, and with this plea he strikes his heaviest blow. When he had fallen into great sin this was his plea, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness," and now that he is in great trouble he flies to the same effectual reasoning. Because God is love he will give us life; because he is kind he will again kindle the heavenly flame within us.

160 ¶ Thy word is true from the beginning: and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever.

119: 160. The sweet singer finishes up this section in the same way as the last by dwelling upon the sureness of the truth of God. It will be well for the reader to note the likeness between Psalm 119:144, 152, and the present one.

Thy word is true. Whatever the transgressors may say, God is true, and his word is true. The ungodly are false, but God's word is true. They charge us with being false, but our solace is that God's true word will clear us.

From the beginning. God's word has been true from the first moment in which it was spoken, true throughout the whole of history, true to us from the instant in which we believed it, and true to us before we were true to it. Some read it,
Thy word is true from the head; true as a whole, true from top to bottom. Experience had taught David this lesson, and experience is teaching us the same. The Scriptures are as true in Genesis as in Revelation, and the five books of: Moses are as inspired as the four Gospels.

And every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever. That which thou hast decided remains irreversible in every case. Against the decisions of the Lord no writ of error can be demanded, neither will there ever be a repealing of any of the acts of his sovereignty. There is not one single mistake either in the word of God or in the providential dealings of God. Neither in the book of revelation nor of providence will there be any need to put a single note of errata. The Lord has nothing to regret or to retract, nothing to amend or to reverse. All God's judgments, decrees, commands, and purposes are righteous, and as righteous things are lasting things, every one of them will outlive the stars.

"Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." God's justice endureth for ever. This is a cheering thought, but there is a much sweeter one, which of old was the song of the priests in the temple; let it be ours, "His mercy endureth for ever."

SCHIN

161 ¶ Princes have persecuted me without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word.

119: 161. Princes have persecuted me without a cause. Such persons ought to have known better; they should have had sympathy with one of their own rank. A man expects a fair trial at the hand of his peers: it is ignoble to be prejudiced. Moreover, if honour be banished from all other breasts it should remain in the bosom of kings, and honour forbids the persecution of the innocent. Princes are appointed to protect the innocent and avenge the oppressed, and it is a shame when they themselves become the assailants of the righteous. It was a sad case when the man of God found himself attacked by the judges of the earth, for eminent position added weight and venom to their enmity. It was well that the sufferer could truthfully assert that this persecution was without cause. He had not broken their laws, he had not injured them, he had not even desired to see them injured, he had not been an advocate of rebellion or anarchy, he had neither openly nor secretly opposed their power, and therefore, while this made their oppression the more inexcusable, it took away a part of its sting, and helped the brave hearted servant of God to bear up.

But my heart standeth in awe of thy word. He might have been overcome by awe of the princes had it not been that a greater fear drove out the less, and he was swayed by awe of God's word. How little do crowns and scepters become in the judgment of that man who perceives a more majestic royalty in the commands of his God. We are not likely to be disheartened by persecution, or driven by it into sin, if the word of God continually has supreme power over our minds.

162 ¶ I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil.

119: 162. I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. His awe did not prevent his joy; his fear of God was not of the kind which perfect love casts out, but of the sort which it
nourishes. He trembled at the word of the Lord, and yet rejoiced at it. He compares his joy to that of one who has been long in battle, and has at last won the victory and is dividing the spoil. This usually falls to the lot of princes, and though David was not one with them in their persecutions, yet he had his victories, and his spoil was equal to their greatest gains. The profits made in searching the Scriptures were greater than the trophies of war. We too have to fight for divine truth; every doctrine costs us a battle, but when we gain a full understanding of it by personal struggles it becomes doubly precious to us. In these days godly men have a full share of battling for the word of God; may we have for our spoil a firmer hold upon the priceless word. Perhaps, however, the Psalmist may have rejoiced as one who comes upon hidden treasure for which lie had not fought, in which case we find the analogy in the man of God who, while reading the Bible, makes grand and blessed discoveries of the grace of God laid up for him, -- discoveries which surprise him, for he looked not to find such a prize. Whether we come by the truth as finders or as warriors fighting for it, the heavenly treasure should be equally dear to us. With what quiet joy does the ploughman steal home with his golden find! How victors shout as they share the plunder! How glad should that man be who has discovered his portion in the promises of holy writ, and is able to enjoy it for himself, knowing by the witness of the Holy Spirit that it is all his own.

163 ¶ I hate and abhor lying: but thy law do I love.

119: 163. I hate and abhor lying. A double expression for an inexpressible loathing. Falsehood in doctrine, in life, or in speech, falsehood in any form or shape, had become utterly detestable to the Psalmist. This was a remarkable state for an Oriental, for generally lying is the delight of Easterns, and the only wrong they see in it is a want of skill in its exercise so that the liar is found out. David himself had made much progress when he had come to this. He does not, however, alone refer to falsehood in conversation; he evidently intends perversity in faith and teaching. He set down all opposition to the God of truth as lying, and then he turned his whole soul against it in the most intense form of indignation. Godly men should detest false doctrine even as they abhor a lie.

But thy law do I love, because it is all truth. His love was as ardent as his hate. True men love truth, and hate lying. It is well for us to know which way our hates and loves run, and we may do essential service to others by declaring what are their objects. Both love and hate are contagious, and when they are sanctified the wider their influence the better.

164 ¶ Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments.

119: 164. Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments. He laboured perfectly to praise his perfect God, and therefore fulfilled the perfect number of songs. Seven may also intend frequency. Frequently he lifted up his heart in thanksgiving to God for his divine teachings in the word, and for his divine actions in providence. With his voice he extolled the righteousness of the Judge of all the earth. As often as ever he thought of God's ways a song leaped to his lips. At the sight of the oppressive princes, and at the hearing of the abounding falsehood around him, he felt all the more bound to adore and magnify God, who in all things is truth and righteousness. When others rob us of our praise it should be a caution to us not to fall into the same conduct towards our God, who is so much more worthy of honour. If we praise God when we are persecuted our music will be all the sweeter to him because of our constancy in
suffering. If we keep clear of all lying, our song will be the more acceptable because it comes out of pure lips. If we never flatter men we shall be the better condition for honoring the Lord. Do we praise God seven times a day? Do we praise him once in seven days?

165 ¶ Great peace have they which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them.

119: 165. Great peace have they which love thy law. What a charming verse is this! It dwells not with those who perfectly keep the law, for where should such men be found? but with those who love it, whose hearts and hands are made to square with its precepts and demands. These men are ever striving, with all their hearts, to walk in obedience to the law, and though they are often persecuted they have peace, yea, great peace; for they have learned the secret of the reconciling blood, they have felt the power of the comforting Spirit, and they stand before the Father as men accepted. The Lord has given them to feel his peace, which passed all understanding. They have many troubles, and are likely to be persecuted by the proud, but their usual condition is that of deep calm -- a peace too great for this little world to break.

And nothing shall offend them, or, "shall really injure them." "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." It must needs be that offences come, but these lovers of the law are peacemakers, and so they neither give nor take offence. That peace which is founded upon conformity to God's will is a living and lasting one, worth writing of with enthusiasm, as the Psalmist here does.

166 ¶ LORD, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments.

119: 166. Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments. Here we have salvation by grace, and the fruits thereof. All David's hope was fixed upon God, he looked to him alone for salvation; and then he endeavoured most earnestly to fulfill the commands of his law. Those who place least reliance upon good works are very frequently those who have the most of them; that same divine teaching which delivers us from confidence in our own doings leads us to abound in every good work to the glory of God. In times of trouble there are two things to be done, the first is to hope in God, and the second is to do that which is right. The first without the second would be mere presumption: the second without the first mere formalism. It is well if in looking back we can claim to have acted in the way which is commanded of the Lord. If we have acted rightly towards God we are sure that lie will act kindly with us.

167 ¶ My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.

119: 167. My soul hath kept thy testimonies. My outward life has kept thy precepts, and my inward life -- my soul, has kept thy testimonies. God has borne testimony to many sacred truths, and these we hold fast as for life itself. The gracious man stores up the truth of God within his heart as a treasure exceedingly dear and precious -- he keeps it. His secret soul, his inmost self, becomes the guardian of these divine teachings which are his sole authority in soul matters.

And I love them exceedingly. This was why he kept them, and having kept them this was the result of the keeping. He did not merely store up revealed truth by way of duty, but because of a deep, unutterable affection for it. He felt that he could sooner die than give up any part of the revelation of God. The more we store our minds with heavenly truth, the more deeply shall we
be in love with it: the more we see the exceeding riches of the Bible the more will our love exceed measure, and exceed expression

168 I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies: for all my ways are before thee.

**119: 168. I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies.** Both the practical and the doctrinal parts of God's word he had stored up, and preserved, and followed. It is a blessed thing to see the two forms of the divine word, equally known, equally valued, equally confessed: there should be no picking and choosing as to the mind of God. We know those who endeavor to be careful as to the precepts, but who seem to think that the doctrines of the gospel are mere matters of opinion, which they may shape for themselves. This is not a perfect condition of things. We have known others again who are very rigid as to the doctrines, and painfully lax with reference to the precepts. This also is far from right. When the two are "kept" with equal earnestness then have we the perfect man.

For all my ways are before thee. Probably he means to say that this was the motive of his endeavoring to be right both in head and heart, because he knew that God saw him, and under the sense of the divine presence he was afraid to err. Or else he is thus appealing to God to bear witness to the truth of what he has said. In either case it is no small consolation to feel that our heavenly Father knows all about us, and that if princes speak against us, and worldlings fill their mouths with cruel lies, yet he can vindicate us, for there is nothing secret or hidden from him. We are struck with the contrast between this verse, which is the last of its octave, and Psalm 119:176, which is similarly placed in the next octave. This is a protest of innocence,

"I have kept thy precepts," and that a confession of sin,

"I have gone astray like a lost sheep." Both were sincere, both accurate. Experience makes many a paradox plain, and this is one. Before God we may be clear of open fault and yet at the same time mourn over a thousand heart wanderings which need his restoring hand.

TAU

169 ¶. Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD: give me understanding according to thy word.

**Psalm 119:169-176**

Exposition

The Psalmist is approaching the end of the psalm, and his petitions gather force and fervency; he seems to break into the inner circle of divine fellowship, and to come even to the feet of the great God whose help he is imploring this nearness creates the most lowly mew of himself, and leads
him to close the psalm upon his face in deepest self humiliation, begging to be sought out like a lost sheep.

**Exposition**

119: 169. *Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD.* He is tremblingly afraid lest he should not be heard. He is conscious that his prayer is nothing better than the cry of a poor child, or the groan of a wounded beast. He dreads lest it should be shut out from the ear of the Most High, but he very boldly prays that it may come before God, that it may be in his sight, under his notice, and looked upon with his acceptance; yea, he goes further, and entreats,

*Let my cry come near before thee, O Lord.* He wants the Lord's attention to his prayer to be very close and considerate. He uses a figure of speech and personifies his prayer. We may picture his prayer as Esther, venturing into the royal presence, entreating an audience, and begging to find favour in the sight of the blessed and only Potentate. It is a very sweet thing to a suppliant when he knows of a surety that his prayer has obtained audience, when it has trodden the sea of glass before the throne, and has come even to the footstool of the glorious seat around which heaven and earth adore. It is to Jehovah that this prayer is expressed with trembling earnestness -- our translators, filled with holy reverence, translate the word, "O LORD." We crave audience of none else, for we have confidence in none beside.

*Give me understanding according to thy word.* This is the prayer about which the Psalmist is so exceedingly anxious. With all his gettings he would get understanding, and whatever he misses he is resolved not to miss this priceless boon. He desires spiritual light and understanding as it is promised in God's word, as it proceeds from God's word, and as it produces obedience to God's word. He pleads as though he had no understanding whatever of his own, and asks to have one given to him.

*Give we understanding according to thy word.* In truth, he had an understanding according to the judgment of men, but what he sought was an understanding according to God's word, which is quite another thing. To understand spiritual things is the gift of God. To have a judgment enlightened by heavenly light and conformed to divine truth is a privilege which only grace can give. Many a man who is accounted wise after the manner of this world is a fool according to the word of the Lord. May we be among those happy children who shall all be taught of the Lord.

170 Let my supplication come before thee: deliver me according to thy word.

119: 170. *Let my supplication come before thee.* It is the same entreaty with a slight change of words. He humbly calls his cry a supplication, a sort of beggar's petition; and again he asks for audience and for answer. There might be hindrances in the way to an audience, and he begs for their removal -- let it come. Other believers are heard -- let my prayer come before thee.

*Deliver me according to thy word.* Rid me of mine adversaries, clear me of my slanderers, preserve me from my tempters, and bring me up out of all my afflictions, even as thy word has led me to expect thou wilt do. It is for this that he seeks understanding. His enemies would
succeed through his folly, if they succeeded at all; but if he exercised a sound discretion they
would be baffled, and he would escape from them. The Lord in answer to prayer frequently
delivers his children by making them wise as serpents as well as harmless as doves.

171 ¶ My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes.

119: 171. My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught we thy statutes. He will not always
be pleading for himself, he will rise above all selfishness, and render thanks for the benefit
received. He promises to praise God when he has obtained practical instruction in the life of
godliness: this is something to praise for, no blessing is more precious. The best possible praise
is that which proceeds from men who honour God, not only with their lips, but in their lives. We
learn the music of heaven in the school of holy living.
He whose life honours the Lord is sure to be a man of praise. David would not only be grateful in
silence, but he would express that gratitude in appropriate terms: his lips would utter what his
life had practiced. Eminent disciples are wont to speak well of the master who instructed them,
and this holy man, when taught the statutes of the Lord, promises to give all the glory to him to
whom it is due.

172 ¶ My tongue shall speak of thy word: for all thy commandments are
righteousness.

119: 172. My tongue shall speak of thy word. When he had done singing he began preaching.
God's tender mercies are such that they may be either said or sung. When the tongue speaks of
God's word it has a most fruitful subject; such speaking will be as a tree of life, whose leaves
shall be for the healing of the people. Men will gather together to listen to such talk, and they
will treasure it up in their hearts. The worst of us is that for the most part we are full of our own
words, and speak but little of God's word. Oh, that we could come to the same resolve as this
godly man, and say henceforth,

My tongue shall speak of thy word. Then should we break through our sinful silence; we should
no more be cowardly and half hearted, but should be true witnesses for Jesus. It is not only of
God's works that we are to speak, but of his word. We may extol its truth, its wisdom, its
preciousness, its grace, its power; and then we may tell of all it has revealed, all it has promised,
all it has commanded, all it has effected. The subject gives us plenty of sea room; we may speak
on for ever: the tale is for ever telling, yet untold.

For all thy commandments are righteousness. David appears to have been mainly enamored of
the preceptive part of the word of God, and concerning the precept his chief delight lay in its
purity and excellence. When a man can speak this from his heart, his heart is indeed a temple of
the Holy Ghost. He had said aforetime (Psalm 119:138),

Thy testimonies are righteous, but here he declares that they are righteousness itself. The law of
God is not only the standard of right, but it is the essence of righteousness. This the Psalmist
affirms of each and every one of the precepts without exception. He felt like Paul –
The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good. When a man has so high an opinion of God's commandments it is little wonder that his lips should be ready to extol the ever glorious One.

173 ¶ Let thine hand help me; for I have chosen thy precepts.

119: 173. Let thine hand help me. Give me practical succour. Do not entrust me to my friends or thy friends, but put thine own hand to the work. Thy hand has both skill and power, readiness and force: display all these qualities on my behalf. I am willing to do the utmost that I am able to do; but what I need is thine help, and this is so urgently required that if I have it not I shall sink. Do not refuse thy succour. Great as thy hand is, let it light on me, even me. The prayer reminds me of Peter walking on the sea and beginning to sink; he, too, cried, "Lord, help me," and the hand of his Master was stretched out for his rescue.

For I have chosen, thy precepts. A good argument. A man may fitly ask help from God's hand when he has dedicated his own hand entirely to the obedience of the faith.

I have chosen thy precepts. His election was made, his mind was made up. In preference to all earthly rules and ways, in preference even to his own will, he had chosen to be obedient to the divine commands. Will not God help such a man in holy work and sacred service? Assuredly he will. If grace has given us the heart with which to will, it will also give us the hand with which to perform. Wherever, under the constraints of a divine call, we are engaged in any high and lofty enterprise, and feel it to be too much for our strength, we may always invoke the right hand of God in words like these.

174 I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is my delight.

119: 174. I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD. He speaks like old Jacob on his deathbed; indeed, all saints, both in prayer and in death, appear as one, in word, and deed, and mind. He knew God's salvation, and yet he longed for it; that is to say, he had experienced a share of it, and he was therefore led to expect something yet higher and more complete. There is a salvation yet to come, when we shall be clean delivered from the body of this death, set free from all the turmoil and trouble of this mortal life, raised above the temptations and assaults of Satan, and brought near unto our God, to be like him and with him for ever and ever.

I have longed for thy salvation, O Jehovah; and thy law is my delight. The first clause tells us what the saint longs for, and this informs us what is his present satisfaction. God's law, contained in the ten commandments, gives joy to believers. God's law, that is, the entire Bible, is a well spring of consolation and enjoyment to all who receive it. Though we have not yet reached the fullness of our salvation, yet we find in God's word so much concerning a present salvation that we are even now delighted.

175 ¶ Let my soul live, and it shall praise thee; and let thy judgments help me.
119: 175. Let my soul live. Fill it full of life, preserve it from wandering into the ways of death, give it to enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, let it live to the fullness of life, to the utmost possibilities of its new created being.

And it shall praise thee. It shall praise thee for life, for new life, for eternal life, for thou art the Lord and Giver of life. The more it shall live, the more it shall praise, and when it shall live in perfection it shall praise thee in perfection. Spiritual life is prayer and praise.

And let thy judgments help me. While I read the record of what thou hast done, in terror or in love, let me be quickened and developed. While I see thy hand actually at work upon me, and upon others, chastening sin, and smiling upon righteousness, let me be helped both to live aright and to praise thee. Let all thy deeds in providence instruct me, and aid me in the struggle to overcome sin and to practice holiness. This is the second time he has asked for help in this portion; he was always in need of it, and so are we.

176 ¶ I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments.
Suddenly we have left the continent of the vast Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm for the islands and islets of the Songs of Degrees. It may be well to engage in protracted devotion upon a special occasion, but this must cast no slur upon the sacred brevities which sanctify the godly life day by day. He who inspired the longest psalm was equally the author of the short compositions which follow it.

**TITLE. A SONG OF DEGREES.** We have already devoted a sufficient space to the consideration of this title in its application to this psalm and the fourteen compositions which succeed it. These appear to us to be Pilgrim Psalms, but we are not sure that they were always sung in company; for many of them are in the first person singular. No doubt there were solitary pilgrims as well as troops who went to the house of God in company, and for these lonely ones hymns were prepared.

**SUBJECT.** A certain author supposes that this hymn was sung by an Israelite upon leaving his house to go up to Jerusalem. He thinks that the good man had suffered from the slander of his neighbours, and was glad to get away from their gossip, and spend his time in the happier engagements of the holy feasts. It may be so, but we hope that pious people were not so foolish as to sing about their bad neighbours when they were leaving them, for a few days. If they wished to leave their houses in safety, and to come home to kind surroundings, it would have been the height of folly to provoke those whom they were leaving behind by singing aloud a psalm of complaint against them. We do not know why this ode is placed first among the Psalms of Degrees, and we had rather hazard no conjecture of our own. We prefer the old summary of the translators—"David prayeth against Doeg"—to any far fetched supposition: and if this be the scope of the psalm, we see at once why it suggested itself to David at the station where the ark abode, and from which he had come to remove it. He came to fetch away the ark, and at the place where he found it he thought of Doeg, and poured out his complaint concerning him. The author had been grievously calumniated, and had been tortured into bitterness by the false charges of his persecutors, and here is his appeal to the great Arbiter of right and wrong before whose judgment seal no man shall suffer from slanderous tongues.

1 ¶ In my distress I cried unto the LORD, and he heard me.

120: 1 *In my distress.* Slander occasions distress of the most grievous kind. Those who have felt the edge of a cruel tongue know assuredly that it is sharper than the sword. Calumny rouses our indignation by a sense of injustice, and yet we find ourselves helpless to fight with the evil, or to act in our own defense. We could ward off the strokes of a cutlass, but we have no shield against a liar's tongue. We do not know who was the father of the falsehood, nor where it was born, nor where it has gone, nor how to follow it, nor how to stay its withering influence. We are perplexed, and know not which way to turn. Like the plague of flies in Egypt, it baffles opposition, and few can stand before it. Detraction touches us in the most tender point, cuts to the quick,
and leaves a venom behind which it is difficult to extract. In all ways it is a sore distress to come under the power of "slander, the foulest whelp of sin." Even in such distress we need not hesitate to cry unto the Lord. Silence to man and prayer to God are the best cures for the evil of slander.

I cried unto the LORD (or Jehovah). The wisest course that he could follow. It is of little use to appeal to our fellows on the matter of slander, for the more we stir in it the more it spreads; it is of no avail to appeal to the honour of the slanderers, for they have none, and the most piteous demands for justice will only increase their malignity and encourage them to fresh insult. As well plead with panthers and wolves as with black hearted traducers. However, when cries to man would be our weakness, cries to God will be our strength. To whom should children cry but to their father? Does not some good come even out of that vile thing, falsehood, when it drives us to our knees and to our God?

And he heard me. Yes, Jehovah hears. He is the living God, and hence prayer to him is reasonable and profitable. The Psalmist remembered and recorded this instance of prayer hearing, for it had evidently much affected him; and now he rehearsest it for the glory of God and the good of his brethren. "The righteous cry and the Lord heareth them". The ear of our God is not deaf, nor even heavy. He listens attentively, he catches the first accent of supplication; he makes each of his children confess,—"he heard me". When we are slandered it is a joy that the Lord knows us, and cannot be made to doubt our uprightness: he will not hear the lie against us, but he will hear our prayer against the lie. If these psalms were sung at the ascent of the ark to Mount Zion, and then afterwards by the pilgrims to Jerusalem at the annual festivals and at the return from Babylon, we shall find in the life of David a reason for this being made the first of them.

Did not this servant of God meet with Doeg the Edomite when he enquired of the oracle by Abiathar, and did not that wretched creature believe him and betray him to Saul? This made a very painful and permanent impression upon David's memory, and therefore in commencing the ark journey he poured out his lament before the Lord, concerning the great and monstrous wrong of "that dog of a Doeg", as Trapp wittily calls him. The poet, like the preacher, may find it to his advantage to "begin low," for then he has the more room to rise: the next Psalm is a full octave above the present mournful hymn. Whenever we are abused it may console us to see that we are not alone in our misery we are traversing a road upon which David left his footprints.

2 Deliver my soul, O LORD, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue.
render to men according to their deserts. Oh for a dumb generation rather than a lying one! The faculty of speech becomes a curse when it is degraded into a mean weapon for smiting men behind their backs. We need to be delivered from slander by the Lord's restraint upon wicked tongues, or else to be delivered out of it by having our good name cleared from the liar's calumny.

**And from a deceitful tongue** This is rather worse than downright falsehood. Those who fawn and flatter, and all the while have enmity in their hearts, are horrible beings; they are the seed of the devil, and he worketh in them after his own deceptive nature. Better to meet wild beasts and serpents than deceivers: these are a kind of monster whose birth is from beneath, and whose end lies far below. It should be a warning to liars and deceivers when they see that all good men pray against them, and that even bad men are afraid of them. Here is to the believer good cause for prayer.

*Deliver us from evil*, may be used with emphasis concerning this business. From gossips, talebearers, writers of anonymous letters, forgers of newspaper paragraphs, and all sorts of liars, good Lord deliver us!

3 What shall be given unto thee? Or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?

**120: 3 What shall be given unto thee?** What is the expected guerdon of slander? It ought to be something great to make it worth while to work in so foul an atmosphere and to ruin one's soul. Could a thousand worlds be bribe enough for such villainous deeds? The liar shall have no welcome recompense: he shall meet with his deserts; but what shall they be? What punishment can equal his crime? The Psalmist seems lost to suggest a fitting punishment. It is the worst of offences—this detraction, calumny, and slander. Judgment sharp and crushing would be measured out to it if men were visited for their transgressions.

But what punishment could be heavy enough? What form shall the chastisement take? O liar, what shall be given unto thee?

**Or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?** How shalt thou be visited? The law of retaliation can hardly meet the case, since none can slander the slanderer, he is too black to be blackened; neither would any of us blacken him if we could. Wretched being! He fights with weapons which true men cannot touch. Like the cuttlefish, he surrounds himself with an inky blackness into which honest men cannot penetrate. Like the foul skunk, he emits an odor of falsehood which cannot be endured by the true; and therefore he often escapes, unchastised by those whom he has most injured. His crime, in a certain sense, becomes his shield; men do not care to encounter so base a foe. But what will God do with lying tongues? He has uttered his most terrible threats against them, and he will terribly execute them in due time.

4 Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.

**120: 4 Sharp arrows of the mighty.** Swift, sure, and sharp shall be the judgment. Their words were as arrows, and so shall their punishment be. God will see to it that their punishment shall be comparable to an arrow keen in itself, and driven home with all the force with which a mighty
man shoots it from his bow of steel,—"sharp arrows of the mighty". Nor shall one form of judgment suffice to avenge this complicated sin.

**with coals of juniper.** The slanderer shall feel woes comparable to coals of juniper, which are quick in flaming, fierce in blazing, and long in burning. He shall feel sharp arrows and sharper fires. Awful doom! All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Juniper coals long retain their heat, but hell burneth ever, and the deceitful tongue may not deceive itself with the hope of escape from the fire which it has kindled. What a crime is this to which the All merciful allots a doom so dreadful! Let us hate it with perfect hatred. It is better to be the victim of slander than, to be the author of it. The shafts of calumny will miss the mark, but not so the arrows of God: the coals of malice will cool, but not the fire of justice. Shun slander as you would avoid hell.

5 ¶ Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, *that* I dwell in the tents of Kedar!

120:5 Woe is me, that sojourn in Mesech, *that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!* Gracious men are vexed with the conversation of the wicked. Our poet felt himself to be as ill at ease among lying neighbours as if he had lived among savages and cannibals. The traitors around him were as bad as the unspeakable Turk. He cries

"Woe is me!" Their sin appalled him, their enmity galled him. He had some hope from the fact that he was only a sojourner in Mesech; but as years rolled on the time dragged heavily, and he feared that he might call himself a dweller in Kedar. The wandering tribes to whom he refers were constantly at war with one another; it was their habit to travel armed to the teeth; they were a kind of plundering gypsies, with their hand against every man and every man's hand against them; and to these he compared the false hearted ones who had assailed his character. Those who defame the righteous are worse than cannibals; for savages only eat men after they are dead, but these wretches cat them up alive.

"Woe's me that I in Mesech am
    A sojourner so long;
    That I in tabernacles dwell
    To Kedar that belong.
My soul with him that hateth peace
    Hath long a dweller been;
I am for peace; but when I speak,
    For battle they are keen.
My soul distracted mourns and pines
    To reach that peaceful short,
Where all the weary are at rest,
    And troublets vex no more."

6 My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.
**120: 6 My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.** Long, long enough, too long had he been an exile among such barbarians. A peace maker is a blessing, but a peace hater is a curse. To lodge with such for a night is dangerous, but to dwell with them is horrible. The verse may apply to any one of the Psalmist's detractors: he had seen enough of him and pined to quit such company. Perhaps the sweet singer did not at first detect the nature of the man, for he was a deceiver; and when he did discover him he found himself unable to shake him off, and so was compelled to abide with him. Thoughts of Doeg, Saul, Ahithophel, and the sons of Zeruiah come to our mind,—these last, not as enemies, but as hot blooded soldiers who were often too strong for David. What a change for the man of God from the quietude of the sheepfold to the turmoil of court and the tumult of combat! How he must have longed to lay aside his sceptre, and to resume his crook. He felt the time of his dwelling with quarrelsome spirits to be long, too long; and he only endured it because, as the Prayer book version has it, he was constrained so to abide.

7 I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war.

**120: 7 I am for peace.** Properly, "I am peace"; desirous of peace, peaceful, forbearing,—in fact, peace itself.

**But when I speak, they are for war.** My kindest words appear to provoke them, and they are at daggers drawn at once. Nothing pleases them; if I am silent they count me morose, and if I open my mouth they cavil and controvert. Let those who dwell with such pugilistic company console themselves with the remembrance that both David and David's Lord endured the same trial. It is the lot of the saints to find foes even in their own households. Others besides Daniel have been cast into a den of lions. Meanwhile, let those who are in quiet resting places and peaceful habitations be greatly grateful for such ease. God has given us this tranquility. Be it ours never to inflict upon others that from which we have been screened ourselves.

PSALM 121
This bears no other title than "A Song of degrees". It is several steps in advance of its predecessor, for it tells of the peace of God's house, and the guardian care of the Lord, while Psalm 120 bemoans the departure of peace from the good man's abode, and his exposure to the venomous assaults of slanderous tongues. In the first instance his eyes looked around with anguish, but here they look up with hope. From the constant recurrence of the word keep, we are led to name this song "a Psalm to the keeper of Israel". Were it not placed among the Pilgrim Psalms we should regard it as a martial hymn, fitted for the evensong of one who slept upon the tented field. It is a soldier's song as well as a traveler's hymn. There is an ascent in the psalm itself which rises to the greatest elevation of restful confidence.

1 ¶ A Song of degrees. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.

121: 1 ¶ A Song of degrees. I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help. It is wise to look to the strong for strength. Dwellers in valleys are subject to many disorders for which there is no cure but a sojourn in the uplands, and it is well when they shake off their lethargy and resolve upon a climb. Down below they are the prey of marauders, and to escape from them the surest method is to fly to the strongholds upon the mountains. Often before the actual ascent the sick and plundered people looked towards the hills and longed to be upon their summits. The holy man who here sings a choice sonnet looked away from the slanderers by whom he was tormented to the Lord who saw all from his high places, and was ready to pour down succour for his injured servant. Help comes to saints only from above, they look elsewhere in vain: let us lift up our eyes with hope, expectance, desire, and confidence. Satan will endeavor to keep our eyes upon our sorrows that we may be disquieted and discouraged; be it ours firmly to resolve that we will look out and look up, for there is good cheer for the eyes, and they that lift up their eyes to the eternal hills shall soon have their hearts lifted up also. The purposes of God; the divine attributes; the immutable promises; the covenant, ordered in all things and sure; the providence, predestination, and proved faithfulness of the Lord—these are the hills to which we must lift up our eyes, for from these our help must come. It is our resolve that we will not be bandaged and blindfolded, but will lift up our eyes. Or is the text in the interrogative? Does he ask, "Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills?" Does he feel that the highest places of the earth can afford him no shelter? Or does he renounce the idea of recruits hastening to his standard from the hardy mountaineers? and hence does he again enquire, "Whence cometh my help?" If so, the next verse answers the question, and shows whence all help must come.

2 My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.

121: 2 My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth. What we need is help,—help powerful, efficient, constant: we need a very present help in trouble. What a mercy that we have it in our God. Our hope is in Jehovah, for our help comes from him. Help is on the road, and
will not fail to reach us in due time, for he who sends it to us was never known to be too late. Jehovah who created all things is equal to every emergency; heaven and earth are at the disposal of him who made them, therefore let us be very joyful in our infinite helper. He will sooner destroy heaven and earth than permit his people to be destroyed, and the perpetual hills themselves shall bow rather than he shall fail whose ways are everlasting. We are bound to look beyond heaven and earth to him who made them both: it is vain to trust the creatures: it is wise to trust the Creator.

3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved: he that keepeth thee will not slumber.

121: 3 He will not suffer thy foot to be moved. Though the paths of life are dangerous and difficult, yet we shall stand fast, for Jehovah will not permit our feet to slide; and if he will not suffer it we shall not suffer it. If our foot will be thus kept we may be sure that our head and heart will be preserved also. In the original the words express a wish or prayer,—

May he not suffer thy foot to be moved. Promised preservation should be the subject of perpetual prayer; and we may pray believing; for those who have God for their keeper shall be safe from all the perils of the way. Among the hills and ravines of Palestine the literal keeping of tim feet is a great mercy; but in the slippery ways of a tried and afflicted life, the boon of upholding is of priceless value, for a single false step might cause us a fall fraught with awful danger. To stand erect and pursue the even tenor of our way is a blessing which only God can give, which is worthy of the divine hand, and worthy also of perennial gratitude. Our feet shall move in progress, but they shall not be moved to their overthrow.

He that keepeth thee will not slumber,—or thy keeper shall not slumber. We should not stand a moment if our keeper were to sleep; we need him by day and by night; not a single step can be safely taken except under his guardian eye. This is a choice stanza in a pilgrim song. God is the convoy and body guard of his saints. When dangers are awake around us we are safe, for our Preserver is awake also, and will not permit us to be taken unawares. No fatigue or exhaustion can cast our God into sleep; his watchful eyes are never closed.

4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.

121:4 Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep. The consoling truth must be repeated: it is too rich to be dismissed in a single line. It were well if we always imitated the sweet singer, and would dwell a little upon a choice doctrine, sucking the honey from it. What a glorious title is in the Hebrew—

The keeper of Israel, and how delightful to think that no form of unconsciousness ever steals over him, neither the deep slumber nor the lighter sleep. He will never suffer the house to be broken up by the silent thief; he is ever on the watch, and speedily perceives every intruder. This is a subject of wonder, a theme for attentive consideration, therefore the word

Behold is set up as a waymark. Israel fell asleep, but his God was awake. Jacob had neither walls, nor curtains, nor body guard around him; but the Lord was in that place though Jacob knew it not, and therefore the defenseless man was safe as in a castle.
In after days he mentioned God under this enchanting name—"The God that led me all my life long": perhaps David alludes to that passage in this expression. The word "keepeth" is also full of meaning: he keeps us as a rich man keeps his treasures, as a captain keeps a city with a garrison, as a royal guard keeps his monarch's head. If the former verse is in strict accuracy a prayer, this is the answer to it; it affirms the matter thus, "Lo, he shall not slumber nor sleep—the Keeper of Israel". It may also be worthy of mention that in verse three the Lord is spoken of as the personal keeper of one individual, and here of all those who are in his chosen nation, described as Israel: mercy to one saint is the pledge of blessing to them all. Happy are the pilgrims to whom this psalm is a safe conduct; they may journey all the way to the celestial city without fear.

5 The LORD is thy keeper: the LORD is thy shade upon thy right hand.

121: 5 The Lord is thy keeper. Here the preserving One, who had been spoken of by pronouns in the two previous verses, is distinctly named—Jehovah is thy keeper. What a mint of meaning lies here: the sentence is a mass of bullion, and when coined and stamped with the king's name it will bear all our expenses between our birthplace on earth and our rest in heaven. Here is a glorious person—Jehovah, assuming a gracious office and fulfilling it in person,—Jehovah is thy keeper, in behalf of a favored individual—thy, and a firm assurance of revelation that it is even so at this hour—Jehovah is thy keeper. Can we appropriate the divine declaration? If so, we may journey onward to Jerusalem and know no fear; yea, we may journey through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil.

The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. A shade gives protection from burning heat and glaring light. We cannot bear too much blessing; even divine goodness, which is a right hand dispensation, must be toned down and shaded to suit our infirmity, and this the Lord will do for us. He will bear a shield before us, and guard the right arm with which we fight the foe. That member which has the most of labour shall have the most of protection. When a blazing sun pours down its burning beams upon our heads the Lord Jehovah himself will interpose to shade us, and that in the most honourable manner, acting as our right hand attendant, and placing us in comfort and safety.

The Lord at thy right hand shall smite through kings. How different this from the portion of the ungodly ones who have Satan standing at their right hand, and of those of whom Moses said, “their defense has departed from them”. God is as near us as our shadow, and we are as safe as angels.

6 The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.

121: 6 The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night. None but the Lord could shelter us from these tremendous forces. These two great lights rule the day and the night, and under the lordship of both we shall labour or rest in equal safety. Doubtless there are dangers of the light and of the dark, but in both and from both we shall be preserved—literally from excessive heat and from baneful chills; mystically from any injurious effects which might follow from doctrine bright or dim; spiritually from the evils of prosperity and adversity; eternally from the strain of overpowering glory and from the pressure of terrible events, such as judgment and the burning of the world.
Day and night make up all time: thus the ever present protection never ceases. All evil may be ranked as under the sun or the moon, and if neither of these can smite us we are indeed secure. God has not made a new sun or a fresh moon for his chosen, they exist under the same outward circumstances as others, but the power to smite is in their case removed from temporal agencies; saints are enriched, and not injured, by the powers which govern the earth's condition; to them has the Lord given "the precious things brought forth by the sun, and the precious things put forth by the moon," while at the same moment he has removed from them all glare and curse of heat or damp, of glare or chill.

7 The LORD shall preserve thee from all evil: he shall preserve thy soul.

121:7 The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, or keep thee from all evil. It is a great pity that our admirable translation did not keep to the word keep all through the psalm, for all along it is one. God not only keeps his own in all evil times but from all evil influences and operations, yea, from evils themselves. This is a far reaching word of covering: it includes everything and excludes nothing: the wings of Jehovah amply guard Iris own from evils great and small, temporary and eternal. There is a most delightful double personality in tiffs verse: Jehovah keeps the believer, not by agents, but by himself; and the person protected is definitely pointed out by the word thee,—it is not our estate or name which is shielded, but the proper personal man. To make this even more intensely real and personal another sentence is added,

"The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil:" he shall preserve thy soul,—or Jehovah will keep thy soul. Soul keeping is the soul of keeping. If the soul be kept all is kept. The preservation of the greater includes that of the less so far as it is essential to the main design: the kernel shall be preserved, and in order thereto the shell shall be preserved also. God is the sole keeper of the soul. Our soul is kept from the dominion of sin, the infection of error, the crush of despondency, the puffing up of pride; kept from the world, the flesh, and the devil; kept for holier and greater things; kept in the love of God; kept unto the eternal kingdom and glory. What can harm a soul that is kept of the Lord?

8 The LORD shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.

121:8 The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore. When we go out in the morning to labour, and come home at eventide to rest, Jehovah shall keep us. When we go out in youth to begin life, and come in at the end to die, we shall experience the same keeping. Our exits and our entrances are under one protection. Three times have we the phrase,

"Jehovah shall keep", as if the sacred Trinity thus sealed the word to make it sure: ought not all our fears to be slain by such a threefold flight of arrows? What anxiety can survive this triple promise? This keeping is eternal; continuing from this time forth, even for evermore. The whole
church is thus assured of everlasting security: the final perseverance of the saints is thus ensured, and the glorious immortality of believers is guaranteed.

Under the aegis of such a promise we may go on pilgrimage without trembling, and venture into battle without dread. None are so safe as those whom God keeps; none so much in danger as the self secure. To goings out and comings in belong peculiar dangers since every change of position turns a fresh quarter to the foe, and it is for these weak points that an especial security is provided: Jehovah will keep the door when it opens and closes, and this he will perseveringly continue to do so long as there is left a single man that trusteth in him, as long as a danger survives, and, in fact, as long as time endures. Glory be unto the Keeper of Israel, who is endeared to us under that title, since our growing sense of weakness makes us feel more deeply than ever our need of being kept. Over the reader we would breathe a benediction, couched in the verse of Keble.

"God keep thee safe from harm and sin,
Thy Spirit keep; the Lord watch o'er
Thy going out, thy coming in,
From this time, evermore."

PSALM 122

A Song of degrees of David

TITLE AND SUBJECT. This brief but spirited Psalm is entitled "A Song of Degrees of David", and thus we are informed as to its author, and the occasion for which it was designed: David wrote it for the people to sing at the time of their goings up to the holy feasts at Jerusalem. It comes third in the series, and appears to be suitable to be sung when the people had entered the gates, and their feet stood within the city. It was most natural that they should sing of Jerusalem
itself, and invoke peace and prosperity upon the Holy City, for it was the centre of their worship, and the place where the Lord revealed himself above the mercy seat. Possibly the city was not all built in David's day, but he wrote under the spirit of prophecy, and spoke of it as it would be in the age of Solomon; a poet has license to speak of things, not only as they are, but as they will be when they come to their perfection. Jerusalem, or the Habitation of Peace, is used as the key word of this Psalm, wherein we have in the original many happy allusions to the salem, or peace, which they implored upon Jerusalem. When they stood within the triple walls, all things around the pilgrims helped to explain the words which they sang within her ramparts of strength. One voice led the Psalm with its personal "I, " but ten thousand brethren and companions united with the first musician and swelled the chorus of the strain.

1 ¶I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.

122: 1 I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD. Good children are pleased to go home, and glad to hear their brothers and sisters call them thither. David's heart was in the worship of God, and he was delighted when he found others inviting him to go where his desires had already gone: it helps the ardor of the most ardent to hear others inviting them to a holy duty. The word was not "go, "but "let us go"; hence the ear of the Psalmist found a double joy in it. He was glad for the sake of others: glad that they wished to go themselves, glad that they had the courage and liberality to invite others. He knew that it would do them good; nothing better can happen to men and their friends than to love the place where God's honour dwelleth. What a glorious day shall that be when many people shall go and say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."

"Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths."

But David was glad for his own sake: he loved the invitation to the holy place, he delighted in being called to go to worship in company, and, moreover, he rejoiced that good people thought enough of him to extend their invitation to him. Some men would have been offended, and would have said, "Mind your own business. Let my religion alone; "but not so King David, though he had mote dignity than any of us, and less need to be reminded of his duty. He was not teased but pleased by being pressed to attend holy services. He was glad to go into the house of the Lord, glad to go in holy company, glad to find good men and women willing to have him in their society. He may have been sad before, but this happy suggestion cheered him up: he pricked up his ears, as the proverb puts it, at the very mention of his Father's house. Is it so with us? Are we glad when others invite us to public worship, or to church fellowship? Then we shall be glad when the spirits above shall call us to the house of the Lord not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

"Hark! they whisper: angels say, Sister spirit, come away."

If we are glad to be called by others to our Father's house, how much more glad shall we be actually to go there. We love our Lord, and therefore we love his house, and pangs of strong
desire are upon us that we may soon reach the eternal abode of his glory. An aged saint: when
dying, cheered herself with this evidence of grace, for she cried,

"I have loved the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth," and
therefore she begged that she might join the holy congregation of those who for ever behold the
King in his beauty. Our gladness at the bare thought of being in God's house is detective as to
our character, and prophetic of our being one day happy in the Father's house on high. What a
sweet Sabbath Psalm is this! In prospect of the Lord's day, and all its hallowed associations, our
soul rejoices. How well, also, may it refer to the church! We are happy when we see numerous
bands ready to unite themselves with the people of God. The pastor is specially glad when many
come forward and ask of him assistance in entering into fellowship with the church. No language
is more cheering to him than the humble request, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."

2 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.

122: 2 Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem; or, better, "our feet are standing."
The words imply present and joyous standing within the walls of the city of peace; or perhaps the
pilgrims felt so sure of getting there that they antedated the joy, and spoke as if they were already
there, though they were as yet only on the road. If we are within the church we may well triumph
in the fact. While our feet are standing in Jerusalem our lips may well be singing. Outside the
gates all is danger, and one day all will be destruction; but within the gates all is safely,
seclusion, serenity, salvation, and glory. The gates are opened that we may pass in, and they are
only shut that our enemies may not follow us. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, and so do we
when we are enclosed within them. What a choice favour, to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem!
Why are we so greatly favored? Many feet are running the downward road, or kicking against the
pricks, or held by snares, or sliding to an awful fall; but our feet, through grace divine, are
"standing"—an honourable posture,

within thy gates, O Jerusalem—an honourable position, and there shall they stand for ever—an
honourable future.

3 Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together:

122: 3 Jerusalem is built as a city that is compact together. David saw in vision the city
built; no more a waste, or a mere collection of tents, or a city upon paper, commenced but not
completed. God's mercy to the Israelitish nation allowed of peace and plenty, sufficient for the
uprise and perfecting of its capital: that City flourished in happy times, even as the church is only
built up when all the people of God are prospering.
Thanks be to God, Jerusalem is built: the Lord by his glorious appearing has built up Zion.
Furthermore, it is not erected as a set of booths, or a conglomeration of hovels, but as a city,
substantial, architectural, designed, arranged, and defended. The church is a permanent and
important institution, founded on a rock, built with art, and arranged with wisdom. The city of
God had this peculiarity about it, that it was not a long, straggling street, or a city of magnificent
distances (as some mere skeleton places have been styled), but the allotted space was filled, the
buildings were a solid block, a massive unity: this struck the dwellers in villages, and conveyed
to them the idea of close neighborhood, sure standing, and strong defense. No quarter could be
surprised and sacked while other portions of the town were unaware of the assault: the ramparts surrounded every part of the metropolis, which was singularly one and indivisible. There was no flaw in this diamond of the world, this pearl of cities. In a church one of the most delightful conditions is the compactness of unity:

"one Lord, one faith, one baptism." A church should be one in creed and one in heart, one in testimony and one in service, one in aspiration and one in sympathy. They greatly injure our Jerusalem who would build dividing walls within her; she needs compacting, not dividing. There is no joy in going up to a church which is rent with internal disension: the gladness of holy men is aroused by the adhesiveness of love, the unity of life; it would be their sadness if they saw the church to be a house divided against itself. Some bodies of Christians appear to be periodically blown to fragments, and no gracious man is glad to be in the way when the explosions take place: thither the tribes do not go up, for strife and contention are not attractive forces.

4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD, unto the testimony of Israel, to give thanks unto the name of the LORD.

122: 4 Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD. When there is unity within there will be gatherings from without: the tribes go up to a compact centre. Note that Israel was one people, but yet it was in a sense divided by the mere surface distinction of tribes; and this may be a lesson to us that all Christendom is essentially one, though from various causes we are divided into tribes. Let us as much as possible sink the tribal individuality in the national unity, so that the church may be many waves, but one sea; many branches, but one tree; many members, but one body. Observe that the tribes were all of them the Lord's; whether Judah or Benjamin, Manasseh or Ephraim, they were all the Lord's. Oh that all the regiments of the Christian army may be all and equally the Lord's own, alike chosen, redeemed, accepted, and upheld by Jehovah.

Unto the testimony of Israel. They went up to the holy city to hear and to bear testimony. Everything in the temple was a testimony unto the Lord, and the annual journeys of the tribes to the hallowed shrine partook of the same testifying character, for these journeys were Israel's open avowal that Jehovah was their God, and that he was the one only living and true God. When we assemble on the Sabbath a large part of our business is giving out and receiving testimony: we are God's witnesses; all the tribes of the one church of Jesus Christ bear witness unto the Lord.

To give thanks unto the name of the LORD. Another part of our delightful duty is to praise the Lord. Sacred praise is a chief design of the assembling of ourselves together. All Israel had been fed by the fruit of the field, and they went up to give thanks unto the name of their great Husbandman: we, too, have countless mercies, and it becomes us unitedly in our solemn gatherings to magnify the name of our loving Lord. Testimony should be mingled with thanks, and thanks with testimony, for in combination they bless both God and man, and tend to spread themselves over the hearts of our companions; who, seeing our joyful gratitude, are the more inclined to hearken to our witness bearing. Here, then, was part of the cause of the gladness of the pious Israelite when he had an invitation to join the caravan which was going to Zion: he would there meet with representatives
of all the clans of his nation, and aid them in the double object of their holy assemblies, namely, testimony and thanksgiving. The very anticipation of such delightful engagements filled him to overflowing with sacred gladness.

5 For there are set thrones of judgment, the thrones of the house of David.

122: 5. For there are set thrones of judgment. If discontented with the petty judgments of their village lords, the people could bring their hard matters to the royal seat, and the beloved King would be sure to decide aright; for the judgment thrones were

The thrones of the house of David. We who come to the church and its public worship are charmed to come to the throne of God, and to the throne of the reigning Saviour.

"He reigns! Ye saints, exalt your strains: Your God is King, your Father reigns: And he is at the Father's side, The Man of love, the Crucified."

To a true saint the throne is never more amiable than in its judicial capacity; righteous men love judgment, and are glad that right will be rewarded and iniquity will be punished. To see God reigning in the Son of David and evermore avenging the just cause is a thing which is good for weeping eyes, and cheering for disconsolate hearts. They sang of old as they went towards the throne, and so do we. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." The throne of judgment is not removed, but firmly "set, "and there it shall remain till the work of justice is accomplished, and truth and right are set on the throne with their King. Happy people to be under so glorious a rule.

6 ¶ Pray for the peace of Jerusalem: they shall prosper that love thee.

122: 6 Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. Peace was her name, pray that her condition may verify her title. Abode of Peace, peace be to thee. Here was a most sufficient reason for rejoicing at the thought of going up to the house of the Lord, since that sacred shrine stood in the centre of an area of peace: well might Israel pray that such peace should be continued. In a church peace is to be desired, expected, promoted, and enjoyed. If we may not say "Peace at any price, "yet we may certainly cry "Peace at the highest price." Those who are daily fluttered by rude alarms are charmed to reach their nest in a holy fellowship, and abide in it. In a church one of the main ingredients of success is internal peace: strife, suspicion, party spirit, division,—these are deadly things. Those who break the peace of the church deserve to suffer, and those who sustain it win a great blessing. Peace in the church should be our daily prayer, and in so praying we shall bring down peace upon ourselves; for the Psalmist goes on to say,

They shall prosper that love thee, or, perhaps we may read it as a prayer, "May they have peace that love thee." Whether the passage be regarded as a promise or as a prayer matters not, for prayer pleads the promise, and the promise is the ground of prayer. Prosperity of soul is already enjoyed by those who take a deep interest in the church and cause of God: they are men of peace, and find peace in their holy endeavors: God's people pray for them, and God himself delights in them. Prosperity of worldly condition often comes to the lovers of the church if they are able to bear it: many a time the house of Obed-edom is blessed because of the ark of the Lord. Because the Egyptian midwives feared the Lord, therefore the Lord made them houses. No man shall ever
be a permanent loser by the house of the Lord: in peace of heart alone. If in nothing else, we find recompense enough for all that we can do in promoting the interests of Zion.

7 Peace be within thy walls, and prosperity within thy palaces.

122: 7 Peace be within thy walls. See how the poet personifies the church, and speaks to it: his heart is with Zion, and therefore his conversation runs in that direction. A second time is the sweet favour of peace earnestly sought after:

"There is none like it, give it me." Walls were needed to keep out the foe, but it was asked of the Lord that those walls might prove sufficient for her security. May the munitions of rock so securely defend the city of God that no intruder may ever enter within her enclosure. May her ramparts repose in safety. Three walls environed her, and thus she had a trinity of security.

And prosperity within thy palaces, or "Repose within thy palaces." Peace is prosperity; there can be no prosperity which is not based on peace, nor can there long be peace if prosperity be gone, for decline of grace breeds decay of love. We wish for the church rest from internal dissension and external assault: war is not her element, but we read of old,

"Then had the churches rest; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." The bird of Paradise is not a sternly petrel: her element is not the hurricane of debate, but the calm of communion. Observe that our Jerusalem is a city of palaces: kings dwell within her walls, and God himself is there. The smallest Church is worthy of higher honour than the greatest confederacies of nobles. The order of the New Jerusalem is of more repute in heaven than the knights of the Golden Fleece. For the sake of all the saintly spirits which inhabit the city of God we may well entreat for her the boons of lasting peace and abounding prosperity.

8 For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.

122:8 For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee. It is to the advantage of all Israel that there should be peace in Jerusalem. It is for the good of every Christian, yea, of every man, that there should be peace and prosperity in the church. Here our humanity and our common philanthropy assist our religious prayer. By a flourishing church our children, our neighbours, our fellow countrymen are likely to be blest. Moreover, we cannot but pray for a cause with which our dearest relatives and choicest friends are associated: if they labour for it, we must and will pray for it. Here peace is mentioned for the third time. Are not these frequent threes some hint of the Trinity? It would be hard to believe that the triple form of so many parts of the Old Testament is merely accidental. At least, the repetition of the desire displays the writer's high valuation of the blessing mentioned; he would not again and again have invoked peace had he not perceived its extreme desirableness.

9 Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.
122: 9 Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good. He prays for Jerusalem because of Zion. How the church salts and savors all around it. The presence of Jehovah, our God, endears to us every place wherein he reveals his glory. Well may we seek her good within whose walls there dwells God who alone is good. We are to live for God's cause, and to be ready to die for it. First we love it (Ps 122:6) and then we labour for it, as in this passage: we see its good, and then seek its good. If we can do nothing else we can intercede for it. Our covenant relation to Jehovah as our God binds us to pray for his people,—they are "the house of the Lord our God." If we honour our God we desire the prosperity of the church which he has chosen for his indwelling. Thus is the poet glad of an invitation to join with others in the Lord's service. He goes with them and rejoices, and then he turns his delight into devotion, and intercedes for the city of the great King. O church of the living God, we hail thine assemblies, and on bended knee we pray that thou mayest have peace and felicity. May our Jehovah so send it. Amen.

PSALM 123

A Song of degrees

TITLE. A Song of degrees. We are climbing. The first step (Psalm 120) saw us lamenting our troublesome surroundings, and the next saw us lifting or eyes to the hills and resting in assured security; from this we rose to delight in the house of the Lord; but here we look to the Lord himself, and this is the highest ascent of all by many degrees. The eyes are now looking above the hills, and above Jehovah's footstool on earth, to his throne in the heavens. Let us know it as "the Psalm of the eyes". Old authors call it Oculus "Sperans", or the eye of hope. It is a short
Psalm, written with singular art, containing one thought, and expressing it in a most engaging manner. Doubtless it would be a favorite song among the people of God. It has been conjectured that this brief song, or rather sigh, may have first been heard in the days of Nehemiah, or under the persecutions of Antiochus. It may be so, but there is no evidence of it; it seems to us quite as probable that afflicted ones in all periods after David's time found this psalm ready to their hand. If it appears to describe days remote from David, it is all the more evident that the Psalmist was also a prophet, and sang what he saw in vision.

1 ¶Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, O thou that dwellest in the heavens.

123: 1 Unto thee lift I up mine eyes. It is good to have someone to look up to. The Psalmist looked so high that he could look no higher. Not to the hills, but to the God of the hills he looked. He believed in a personal God, and knew nothing of that modern pantheism which is nothing more than atheism wearing a fig leaf. The uplifted eyes naturally and instinctively represent the state of heart which fixes desire, hope, confidence, and expectation upon the Lord. God is everywhere, and yet it is most natural to think of him as being above us, in that glory land which lies beyond the skies.

O thou that dwellest in the heavens, just sets forth, the unsophisticated idea of a child of God in distress: God is, God is in heaven, God resides in one place, and God is evermore the same, therefore will I look to him. When we cannot look to any helper on a level with us, it is greatly wise to look above us; in fact, if we have a thousand helpers, our eyes should still be toward the Lord. The higher the Lord is the better for our faith, since that height represents power, glory, and excellence, and these will be all engaged on our behalf. We ought to be very thankful for spiritual eyes; the blind men of this world, however much of human learning they may possess, cannot behold our God, for in heavenly matters they are devoid of sight. Yet we must use our eyes with resolution, for they will not go upward to the Lord of themselves, but they incline to look downward, or inward, or anywhere but to the Lord: let it be our firm resolve that the heavenward glance shall not be lacking. If we cannot see God, at least we will look towards him. God is in heaven as a king in his palace; he is here revealed, adored, and glorified: thence he looks down on the world and sends succors to his saints as their needs demand; hence we look up, even when our sorrow is so great that we can do no more. It is a blessed condescension on God's part that he permits us to lift up our eyes to his glorious high throne; yea, more, that he invites and even commands us so to do. When we are looking to the Lord in hope, it is well to tell him so in prayer: the Psalmist uses his voice as well as his eye. We need not speak in prayer; a glance of the eye will do it all; for—

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near."

Still, it is helpful to the heart to use the tongue, and we do well to address ourselves in words and sentences to the God who heareth his people. It is no small joy that our God is always at home:
he is not on a journey, like Baal, but he dwells in the heavens. Let us think no hour of the day
inopportune for waiting upon the Lord; no watch of the night too dark for us to look to him.

2 Behold, as the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters, and as the
eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress; so our eyes wait upon the LORD
our God, until that he have mercy upon us.

123: 2 Behold—for it is worthy of regard among men, and O that the Majesty of heaven would
also note it, and speedily send the mercy which our waiting spirits seek. See, O Lord, how we
look to thee, and in thy mercy look on us. This Behold has, however, a call to us to observe and
consider. Whenever saints of God have waited upon the Lord their example has been worthy of
earnest consideration. Sanctification is a miracle of grace; therefore let us behold it. For God to
have wrought in men the spirit of service is a great marvel, and as such let all men turn aside and
see this great sight.

As the eyes of servants (or slaves) look unto the hand of their masters. They stand at the end of
the room with their hands folded watching their lord's movements. Orientals speak less than we
do, and prefer to direct their slaves by movements of their hands: hence, the domestic must fix
his eyes on his master, or he might miss a sign, and so fail to obey it: even so, the sanctified man
lifts his eyes unto God, and endeavors to learn the divine will from every one of the signs which
the Lord is pleased to use. Creation, providence, grace; these are all motions of Jehovah's hand,
and from each of them a portion of our duty is to be learned; therefore should we carefully study
them, to discover the divine will.

"And as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress," this second comparison may be
used because Eastern women are even more thorough than the men in the training of their
servants. It is usually thought that women issue more commands, and are more sensitive of
disobedience, than the sterner sex. Among the Roman matrons female slaves had a sorry time of
it, and no doubt it was the same among the generality of Eastern ladies.

"Even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God." Believers desire to be attentive to each and all
of the directions of the Lord; even those which concern apparently little things are not little to us,
for we know that even for idle words we shall be called to account, and we are anxious to give in
that account with joy, and not with grief. True saints, like obedient servants, look to the Lord
their God reverentially: they have a holy awe and inward fear of the great and glorious One.
They watch, obediently, doing his commandments, guided by his eye. Their constant gaze is
fixed attentively on all that comes from the Most High; they give

earnest heed, and fear lest they should let anything slip through inadvertence or drowsiness. They
look continuously, for there never is a time when they are off duty; at all times they delight to
serve in all things: Upon the Lord they fix their eyes expectantly, looking for supply, succour,
and safety from his hands, waiting that he may have mercy upon them. To him they look singly,
they have no other confidence, and they learn to look submissively, waiting patiently for the
Lord, seeking both in activity and suffering to glorify his name. When they are smitten with the
rod they turn their eyes imploringly to the hand which chastens, hoping that mercy will soon abate the rigor of the affliction. There is much more in the figure than we can display in this brief comment; perhaps it will be most profitable to suggest the question.—Are we thus trained to service? Though we are sons, have we learned the full obedience of servants? Have we surrendered self, and bowed our will before the heavenly Majesty? Do we desire in all things to be at the Lord's disposal? If so, happy are we. Though we are made joint heirs with Christ, yet for the present we differ little from servants, and may be well content to take them for our model.

3 Have mercy upon us, O LORD, have mercy upon us: for we are exceedingly filled with contempt.

123: 3 Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us. He hangs upon the word "mercy," and embodies it in a vehement prayer: the very word seems to hold him, and he harps upon it. It is well for us to pray about everything, and turn everything into prayer; and especially when we are reminded of a great necessity we should catch at it as a keynote, and pitch our tune to it. The reduplication of the prayer before us is meant to express the eagerness of the Psalmist's spirit and his urgent need: what he needed speedily he begs for importunately. Note that he has left the first person singular for the plural. All the saints need mercy; they all seek it; they shall all have it, therefore we pray—

"have mercy upon us". A slave when corrected looks to his master's hand that the punishment may cease, and even so we look to the Lord for mercy, and entreat for it with all our hearts. Our contemptuous opponents will have no mercy upon us; let us not ask it at their hands, but turn to the God of mercy, and seek his aid alone.

For we are exceedingly filled with contempt" and this is an acid which eats into the soul. Observe the emphatic words. Contempt is bitterness, wormwood mingled with gall; he that feels it may well cry for mercy to his God. Filled with contempt, as if the bitter wine had been poured in till it was up to the brim. This had become the chief thought of their minds, the peculiar sorrow of their hearts. Excluding all other feelings, a sense of scorn monopolized the soul and made it unutterably wretched. Another word is added adverbially—exceedingly filled. Filled even to running over, as if pressed down and then heaped up. A little contempt they could bear, but now they were satiated with it, and weary of it. Do we wonder at the threefold mention of mercy when this master evil was in the ascendant? Nothing is more wounding, embittering, festering than disdain. When our companions make little of us we are far too apt to make little of ourselves and of the consolations prepared for us. Oh to be filled with communion, and then contempt will run off from us, and never be able to fill us with its biting vinegar.

4 Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease, and with the contempt of the proud.

123: 4 Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease. Knowing no troubles of their own, the easy ones grow cruel and deride the people of the Lord. Having the godly already in secret contempt, they show it by openly scorning them. Note those who do this: they are not the poor, the humble, the troubled, but those who have a merry life of it, and are self
content. They are in easy circumstances; they are easy in heart through a deadened conscience, and so they easily come to mock at holiness; they are easy from needing nothing, and from having no severe toil exacted from them; they are easy as to any anxiety to improve, for their conceit of themselves is boundless. Such men take things easily, and therefore they scorn the holy carefulness of those who watch the hand of the Lord. They say, Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice? and then they turn round with a contemptuous look and sneer at those who fear the Lord. Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion; their contempt of the godly shall hasten and increase their misery. The injurious effect of freedom from affliction is singularly evident here. Place a man perfectly at ease and he derides the suffering godly, and becomes himself proud in heart and conduct.

And with the contempt of the proud. The proud think so much of themselves that they must needs think all the less of those who are better than themselves. Pride is both contemptible and contemptuous. The contempt of the great ones of the earth is often peculiarly acrid: some of them, like a well known statesman, are "masters of gibes and flouts and sneers", and never do they seem so much at home in their acrimony as when a servant of the Lord is the victim of their venom. It is easy enough to write upon this subject, but to be selected as the target of contempt is quite another matter. Great hearts have been broken and brave spirits have been withered beneath the accursed power of falsehood, and the horrible blight of contempt. For our comfort we may remember that our divine Lord was despised and rejected of men, yet he ceased not from his perfect service till he was exalted to dwell in the heavens. Let us bear our share of this evil which still rages under the sun, and let us firmly believe that the contempt of the ungodly shall turn to our honour in the world to come: even now it serves as a certificate that we are not of the world, for if we were of the world the world would love us as its own.

PSALM 124
A Song of degrees of David

TITLE. A Song of degrees of David. Of course the superfine critics have pounced upon this title as inaccurate, but we are at liberty to believe as much or as little of their assertions as we may please. They declare that there are certain ornaments of language in this little ode which were unknown in the Davidic period. It may be so; but in their superlative wisdom they have ventured upon so many other questionable statements that we are not bound to receive this dictum. Assuredly the manner of the song is very like to David's, and we are unable to see why he should be excluded from the authorship. Whether it be his composition or no, it breathes the same spirit as that which animates the unchallenged songs of the royal composer.
DIVISION. This short Psalm contains an acknowledgement of favour received by way of special deliverance (1-5), then a grateful act of worship in blessing Jehovah (6, 7), and, lastly, a declaration of confidence in the Lord for all future time of trial. May our experience lead us to the same conclusion as the saints of David's time. From all confidence in man may we be rescued by a holy reliance upon our God.

1 ¶ If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, now may Israel say;

124: 1 If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say. The opening sentence is abrupt, and remains a fragment. By such a commencement attention was aroused as well as feeling expressed: and this is ever the way of poetic fire—to break forth in uncontrollable flame. The many words in italics in our authorized version will show the reader that the translators did their best to patch up the passage, which, perhaps, had better have been left in its broken grandeur, and it would then have run thus:—

"Had it not been Jehovah! He was for us, oh let Israel say! Had it not been Jehovah! He who was for us when men rose against us." The glorious Lord became our ally; he took our part, and entered into treaty with us. If Jehovah were not our protector where should we be Nothing but his power and wisdom could have guarded us from the cunning and malice of our adversaries; therefore, let all his people say so, and openly give him the honour of his preserving goodness. Here are two "ifs," and yet there is no "if" in the matter. The Lord was on our side, and is still our defender, and will be so from henceforth, even for ever. Let us with holy confidence exult in this joyful fact: We are far too slow in declaring our gratitude, hence the exclamation which should be rendered,

"O let Israel say." We murmur without being stirred up to it, but our thanksgiving needs a spur, and it is well when some warm hearted friend bids us say what we feel. Imagine what would have happened if the Lord had left us, and then see what has happened because he has been faithful to us. Are not all the materials of a song spread before us? Let us sing unto the Lord.

2 If it had not been the LORD who was on our side, when men rose up against us:

124: 2 If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us. When all men combined, and the whole race of men seemed set upon stamping out the house of Israel, what must have happened if the covenant Lord had not interposed? When they stirred themselves, and combined to make an assault upon our quietude and safety, what should we have done in their rising if the Lord had not also risen? No one who could or would help was near, but the bare arm of the Lord sufficed to preserve his own against all the leagued hosts of adversaries. There is no doubt as to our deliverer, we cannot ascribe our salvation to any second cause, for it would not have been equal to the emergency; nothing less than omnipotence and omniscience
could have wrought our rescue. We set every other claimant on one side, and rejoice because the Lord was on our side.

3 Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us:

124: 3 *Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us.* They were so eager for our destruction that they would have made only one morsel of us, and have swallowed us up alive and whole in a single instant. The fury of the enemies of the church is raised to the highest pitch, nothing will content them but the total annihilation of God's chosen. Their wrath is like a fire which is kindled, and has taken such firm hold upon the fuel that there is no quenching it. Anger is never more fiery than when the people of God are its objects. Sparks become flames, and the furnace is heated seven times hotter when God's elect are to be thrust into the blaze. The cruel world would make a full end of the godly seed were it not that Jehovah bars the way.

When the Lord appears, the cruel throats cannot swallow, and the consuming fires cannot destroy. Ah, if it were not Jehovah, if our help came from all the creatures united, there would be no way of escape for us: it is only because the Lord liveth that his people are alive.

4 Then the waters had overwhelmed us, the stream had gone over our soul:

124: 4 *Then the waters had overwhelmed us.* Rising irresistibly, like the Nile, the flood of opposition would soon have rolled over our heads. Across the mighty waste of waters we should have cast an anxious eye, but looked in vain for escape. The motto of a royal house is, "*Tossed about but not submerged*": we should have needed an epitaph rather than an epigram, for we should have been driven by the torrent and sunken, never to rise again.

*The stream had gone over our soul.* The rushing torrent would have drowned our soul, our hope, our life. The figures seem to be the steadily rising flood, and the hurriedly rushing stream. Who can stand against two such mighty powers? Everything is destroyed by these unconquerable forces, either by being submerged or swept away. When the world's enmity obtains a vent it both rises and rushes, it rages and rolls along, and spares nothing. In the great water floods of persecution and affliction who can help but Jehovah? But for him where would we be at this very hour? We have experienced seasons in which the combined forces of earth and hell must have made an end of us had not omnipotent grace interfered for our rescue.

5 Then the proud waters had gone over our soul:

124: 5 *Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.* The figure represents the waves as proud, and so they seem to be when they overleap the bulwarks of a frail bark, and threaten every moment to sink her. The opposition of men is usually embittered by a haughty scorn which derides all our godly efforts as mere fanaticism or obstinate ignorance. In all the persecutions of the church a cruel contempt has largely mingled with the oppression, and this is overpowering to the soul. Had not God been with us our disdainful enemies would have made nothing of us, and dashed over us as a mountain torrent sweeps down the side of a hill, driving everything before it.
Not only would our goods and possessions have been carried off, but our soul, our courage, our hope would have been borne away by the impetuous assault, and buried beneath the insults of our antagonists. Let us pause here, and as we see what might have been, let us adore the guardian power which has kept us in the flood, and yet above the flood. In our hours of dire peril we must have perished had not our Preserver prevailed for our safe keeping.

6 ¶ Blessed be the LORD, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth.

124: 6. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to their teeth. Leaving the metaphor of a boiling flood, he compares the adversaries of Israel to wild beasts who desired to make the godly their prey. Their teeth are prepared to tear, and they regard the godly as their victims. The Lord is heartily praised for not permitting his servants to be devoured when they were between the jaws of the raging ones. It implies that none can harm us till the Lord permits: we cannot be their prey unless the Lord gives us up to them, and that our loving Lord will never do. Hitherto he has refused permission to any foe to destroy us, blessed be his name. The more imminent the danger the more eminent the mercy which would not permit the soul to perish in it. God be blessed for ever for keeping us from the curse. Jehovah be praised for checking the fury of the foe, and saving his own. The verse reads like a merely negative blessing, but no boon can be more positively precious. He has given us to his Son Jesus, and he will never give us to our enemies.

7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers: the snare is broken, and we are escaped.

124: 7 Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers. Our soul is like a bird for many reasons; but in this case the point of likeness is weakness, folly, and the ease with which it is enticed into the snare. Fowlers have many methods of taking small birds, and Satan has many methods of entrapping souls. Some are decoyed by evil companions, others are enticed by the love of dainties; hunger drives many into the trap, and fright impels numbers to fly into the net. Fowlers know their birds, and how to take them; but the birds see not the snare so as to avoid it, and they cannot break it so as to escape from it. Happy is the bird that hath a deliverer strong, and mighty, and ready in the moment of peril: happier still is the soul over which the Lord watches day and night to pluck its feet out of the net. What joy there is in this song, “our soul is escaped.” How the emancipated one sings and soars, and soars and sings again. Blessed be God, many of us can make joyous music with these notes, “our soul is escaped.” Escaped from our natural slavery; escaped from the guilt, the degradation, the habit, the dominion of sin; escaped from the vain deceits and fascinations of Satan; escaped from all that can destroy; we do indeed experience delight. What a wonder of grace it is! What a miraculous escape that we who are so easily misled should not have been permitted to die by the dread fowler’s hand. The Lord has heard the prayer which he taught us to pray, and he hath delivered us from evil. The snare is broken, and we are escaped. The song is worth repeating; it is well to dwell upon so great a mercy. The snare may be false doctrine, pride, lust, or a temptation to indulge in policy, or to despair, or to presume; what a high favour it is to have it broken before our eyes, so that it has no more power over us. We see not the mercy while we are in the snare; perhaps we are so foolish as to deplore the breaking of the Satanic charm; the
gratitude comes when the escape is seen, and when we perceive what we have escaped from, and by what hand we have been set free. Then our Lord has a song from our mouths and hearts as we make heaven and earth ring with the notes,

the snare is broken, and we are escaped. We have been tempted, but not taken; cast down, but not destroyed; perplexed, but not in despair; in deaths oft, but still alive: blessed be Jehovah! This song might well have suited our whole nation at the time of the Spanish Armada, the church in the days of the Jesuits, and each believer among us in seasons of strong personal temptation.

8 Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.

124: 8 Our help, our hope for the future, our ground of confidence in all trials present and to come.

Is in the name of the Lord. Jehovah's revealed character is our foundation of confidence, his person is our sure fountain of strength.

Who made heaven and earth. Our Creator is our preserver. He is immensely great in his creating work; he has not fashioned a few little things alone, but all heaven and the whole round earth are the works of his hands. When we worship the Creator let us increase our trust in our Comforter. Did he create all that we see, and can he not preserve us from evils which we cannot see. Blessed be his name, he that has fashioned us will watch over us; yea, he has done so, and rendered us help in the moment of jeopardy. He is our help and our shield, even he alone. He will to the end break every snare. He made heaven for us, and he will keep us for heaven; he made the earth, and he will succour us ripen it until the hour cometh for our departure. Every work of his hand preaches to us the duty and the delight of reposing upon him only. All nature cries,

"Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength."

"Wherefore comfort one another with these words." The following versification of the sense rather than the words of this psalm is presented to the reader with much diffidence:

```
“Had not the Lord, my soul may cry,
    Had not the Lord been on my side;
    Had he not brought deliverance nigh,
    Then must my helpless soul have died.

    Had not the Lord been on my side,
    My soul had been by Satan slain;
    And Tophet, opening large and wide,
    Would not have gaped for me in vain.
```
Lo, floods of wrath, and floods of hell,
In fierce impetuous torrents roll;
Had not the Lord defended well,
The waters had o'erwhelm'd my soul.

As when the fowler's snare is broke,
The bird escapes on cheerful wings;
My soul, set free from Satan's yoke,
With joy bursts forth, and mounts,
and sings.

She sings the Lord her Savior's praise;
Sings forth his praise with joy and mirth;
To him her song in heaven she'll raise,
To him that made both heaven
and earth.”

---

PSALM 125

A Song of degrees
TITLE. A Song of Degrees. Another step is taken in the ascent, another station in the pilgrimage is reached: certainly a rise in the sense is here perceptible, since full assurance concerning years to come is a higher form of faith than the ascription of farther escapes to the Lord. Faith has praised Jehovah for past deliverances, and here she rises to a confident jury in the present and future safety of believers. She asserts that they shall forever secure who trust themselves with the Lord. We can imagine the pilgrims chanting this song when perambulating the city walls.

We do not assert that David wrote this Psalm, but we have as much ground for doing so as others have for declaring that it was written after the captivity. It would seem provable that all the Pilgrim Psalms were composed, or, at least, compiled by the same writer, and as some of them are certainly by David, there is too conclusive reason for taking away the rest from him.

DIVISION. First we have a song of holy confidence (Psalm 125:1-2); then a promise, Psalm 125:3; followed by a prayer, Psalm 125:4; and a note of warning.

1 ¶They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion, which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.

125: 1 They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion. The emphasis lies upon the object of their trust, namely, Jehovah the Lord. What a privilege to be allowed to repose in God! How condescending is Jehovah to become the confidence of his people! To trust elsewhere is vanity; and the more implicit such misplaced trust becomes the more bitter will be the ensuing disappointment; but to trust in the living God is sanctified common sense which needs no excuse, its result shall be its best vindication. There is no conceivable reason why we should not trust in Jehovah, and there is every possible argument for so doing; but, apart from all argument, the end will prove the wisdom of the confidence. The result of faith is not occasional and accidental; its blessing comes, not to some who trust, but to all who trust in the Lord. Trusters in Jehovah shall be as fixed, firm, and stable as the mount where David dwelt, and where the ark abode. To move mount Zion was impossible: the mere supposition was absurd. Which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever.

but abideth for ever. Zion was the image of eternal steadfastness,—this hill which, according to the Hebrew,

"sits to eternity," neither bowing down nor moving to and fro. Thus doth the trusting worshipper of Jehovah enjoy a restfulness which is the mirror of tranquility; and this not without cause, for his hope is sure, and of his confidence he can never be ashamed. As the Lord sitteth King for ever, so do his people sit enthroned in perfect peace when their trust in him is firm. This is, and is to be our portion; we are, we have been, we shall be as steadfast as the hill of God. Zion cannot be removed, and does not remove; so the people of God can neither be moved passively nor actively, by force from without or fickleness from within. Faith in God is a settling and establishing virtue; he who by his strength setteth fast the mountains, by that same power stays the hearts of them that trust in him. This steadfastness will endure "for ever," and we may be assured therefore that no believer shall perish either in life or in death, in time or in eternity. We trust in an eternal God, and our safety shall be eternal.
2 As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.

125: 2 As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever. The hill of Zion is the type of the believer's constancy, and the surrounding mountains are made emblems of the all surrounding presence of the Lord. The mountains around the holy city, though they do not make a circular wall, are, nevertheless, set like sentinels to guard her gates. God doth not enclose his people within ramparts and bulwarks, making their city to be a prison; but yet he so orders the arrangements of his providence that his saints are as safe as if they dwelt behind the strongest fortifications. What a double security the two verses set before us! First, we are established, and then entrenched; settled, and then sentinelled: made like a mount, and then protected as if by mountains. This is no matter of poetry, it is so in fact; and it is no matter of temporary privilege, but it shall be so for ever. Date when we please, "from henceforth" Jehovah encircles his people: look on as far as we please, the protection extends "even for ever." Note, it is not said that Jehovah's power or wisdom defends believers, but he himself is round about them: they have his personality for their protection, his Godhead for their guard. We are here taught that the Lord's people are those who trust him, for they are thus described in the first verses: the line of faith is the line of grace, those who trust in the Lord are chosen of the Lord.

The two verses together prove the eternal safety of the saints: they must abide where God has placed them, and God must for ever protect them from all evil. It would be difficult to imagine greater safety than is here set forth.

3 For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous; lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity.

125: 3 For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous. The people of God are not to expect immunity from trial because the Lord surrounds them, for they may feel the power and persecution of the ungodly. Isaac, even in Abraham's family, was mocked by Ishmael. Assyria laid its sceptre even upon Zion itself. The graceless often bear rule and wield the rod; and when they do so they are pretty sure to make it fall heavily upon the Lord's believing people, so that the godly cry out by reason of their oppressors. Egypt's rod was exceeding heavy upon Israel, but the time came for it to be broken. God has set a limit to the woe of his chosen: the rod may light on their portion, but it shall not rest upon it. The righteous have a lot which none can take from them, for God has appointed them heirs of it by gracious entail: on that lot the rod of the wicked may fall, but over that lot it cannot have lasting sway. The saints abide for ever, but their troubles will not. Here is a good argument in prayer for all righteous ones who are in the hands of the wicked.

Lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity. The tendency of oppression is to drive the best of men into some hasty deed for self deliverance or vengeance. If the rack be too long used the patient sufferer may at last give way; and therefore the Lord puts a limit to the tyranny of the wicked. He ordained that an Israelite who deserved punishment should not be beaten without measure: forty stripes save one was the appointed limit. We may therefore expect that he will set a bound to the suffering of the innocent, and will not allow them to be pushed to the uttermost extreme.
Especially in point of time he will limit the domination of the persecutor, for length adds strength to oppression, and makes it intolerable; hence the Lord himself said of a certain tribulation, "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." It seems that even righteous men are in peril of sinning in evil days, and that it is not the will of the Lord that they should yield to the stress of the times in order to escape from suffering. The power and influence of wicked men when they are uppermost are used to lead or drive the righteous astray; but the godly must not accept this as an excuse, and yield to the evil pressure; far rather must they resist with all their might till it shall please God to stay the violence of their persecutor, and give his children rest. This the Lord here promises to do in due time.

4 ¶ Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.

125: 4 Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts. Men to be good at all must be good at heart. Those who trust in the Lord are good; for faith is the root of righteousness, and the evidence of uprightness. Faith in God is a good and upright thing, and its influence makes the rest of the man good and upright. To such God will do good: the prayer of the text is but another form of promise, for that which the Lord prompts us to ask he virtually promises to give. Jehovah will take off evil from his people, and in the place thereof will enrich them with all manner of good. When the rod of the wicked is gone his own rod and staff shall comfort us. Meanwhile it is for us to pray that it may be well with all the upright who are now among men. God bless them, and do them good in every possible form. We wish well to those who do well. We are so plagued by the crooked that we would pour benedictions upon the upright.

5 As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity: but peace shall be upon Israel.

125: 5 As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity. Two kinds of men are always to be found, the upright and the men of crooked ways. Alas, there are some who pass from one class to another, not by a happy conversion, turning from the twisting lanes of deceit into the highway of truth, but by an unhappy declension leaving the main road of honesty and holiness for the bypaths of wickedness. Such apostates have been seen in all ages, and David knew enough of them; he could never forget Saul, and Ahithophel, and others. How sad that men who once walked in the right way should turn aside from it! Observe the course of the false hearted: first, they look out for crooked ways; next, they choose them and make them "their crooked ways"; and then they turn aside into them. They never intend to go back unto perdition, but only to make a curve and drop into the right road again. The straight way becomes a little difficult, and so they make a circumbendibus, which all along aims at coming out right, though it may a little deviate from precision. These people are neither upright in heart, nor good, nor trusters in Jehovah, and therefore the Lord will deal otherwise with them than with his own people: when execution day comes these hypocrites and time servers shall be led out to the same gallows as the openly wicked. All sin will one day be expelled the universe, even as criminals
condemned to die are led out of the city; then shall secret traitors find themselves ejected with open rebels. Divine truth will unveil their hidden pursuits, and lead them forth, and to the surprise of many they shall be set in the same rank with those who avowedly wrought iniquity.

**But peace shall be upon Israel.** In fact the execution of the deceivers shall tend to give the true Israel peace. When God is smiting the unfaithful not a blow shall fall upon the faithful. The chosen of the Lord shall not only be like Salem, but they shall have salem, or peace. Like a prince, Israel has prevailed with God, and therefore he need not fear the face of man; his wrestlings are over, the blessing of peace has been pronounced upon him. He who has peace with God may enjoy peace concerning all things. Bind the first and last verses together: Israel trusts in the Lord Psalm 125:1, and Israel has peace Psalm 125:5.

---

**Psalm 126**

**A Song of degrees**

**TITLE. A Song of Degrees.** This is the seventh Step, and we may therefore expect to meet with some special perfection of joy in it; nor shall we look in vain. We see here not only that Zion abides, but that her joy returns after sorrow. Abiding is not enough, fruitfulness is added. The pilgrims went from blessing to blessing in their psalmody as they proceeded on their holy way. Happy people to whom ever ascent was a song, every halt a hymn. Here the trustor becomes a sower: faith works by love, obtains a present bliss, and secures a harvest of delight.

There is nothing in this psalm by which we can decide its date, further than this,—that it is a song after a great deliverance from oppression. "Turning captivity" by no means requires an actual removal into banishment to fill out the idea; rescue from any dire affliction or crushing tyranny would be fitly described as "captivity turned." Indeed, the passage is not applicable to captives in Babylon, for it is Zion itself which is in captivity and not a part of her citizens: the holy city was in sorrow and distress; though it could not be removed, the prosperity could be diminished. Some dark cloud lowered over the beloved capital, and its citizens prayed "Turn again our captivity. O Lord."

This psalm is in its right place and most fittingly follows its predecessor, for as in Psalm 125:1-5, we read that the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, we here see it removed from them to their great joy. The word "turn" would seem to be the keynote of the song: it is a Psalm of conversion—conversion from captivity; and it may well be used to set forth
the rapture of a pardoned soul when the anger of the Lord is turned away from it. We will call it, "Leading captivity captive."

DIVISIONS. The Psalm divides itself into a narrative (Psalm 126:1-2), a song (Psalm 126:3), a prayer (Psalm 126:4), and a promise (Psalm 126:5-6).

1 ¶When the LORD turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.

**126: 1 When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.** Being in trouble, the gracious pilgrims remember for their comfort times of national woe which were succeeded by remarkable deliverances. Then sorrow was gone like a dream, and the joy which followed was so great that it seemed too good to be true, and they feared that it must be the vision of an idle brain. So sudden and so overwhelming was their joy that they felt like men out of themselves, ecstatic, or in a trance. The captivity had been great, and great was the deliverance; for the great God himself had wrought it: it seemed too good to be actually true: each man said to himself,

"Is this a dream?  
O if it be a dream,  
Let me sleep on, and  
do not wake me yet."

It was not the freedom of an individual which the Lord in mercy had wrought, but of all Zion, of the whole nation; and this was reason enough for overflowing gladness. We need not instance the histories which illustrate this verse in connection with literal Israel; but it is well to remember how often it has been true to ourselves. Let us look to

the prison houses from which we have been set free. Ah, me, what captives we have been! At our first conversion what a turning again of captivity we experienced. Never shall that hour be forgotten. Joy! Joy! Joy! Since then, from multiplied troubles, from depression of spirit, from miserable backsliding, from grievous doubt, we have been emancipated, and we are not able to describe the bliss which followed each emancipation.

"When God reveal'd his gracious name  
And changed our mournful state,  
Our rapture seem'd, a pleasing dream,  
The grace appeared so great."

This verse will have a higher fulfillment in the day of the final overthrow of the powers of darkness when the Lord shall come forth for the salvation and glorification of his redeemed. Then in a fuller sense than even at Pentecost our old men shall see visions, and our young men shall dream dreams: yea, all things shall be so wonderful, so far beyond all expectation, that those who behold them shall ask themselves whether it be not all a dream. The past is ever a sure prognostic of the future; the thing which has been is the thing that shall be: we shall again and again find ourselves amazed at the wonderful goodness of the Lord. Let our hearts gratefully
remember the former loving kindnesses of the Lord: we were sadly low, sorely distressed, and completely past hope, but when Jehovah appeared he did not merely lift us out of despondency, he raised us into wondering happiness. The Lord who alone turns our captivity does nothing by halves: those whom he saves from hell he brings to heaven. He turns exile into ecstasy, and banishment into bliss.

2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing: then said they among the heathen, The LORD hath done great things for them.

126: 2 Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing. So full were they of joy that they could not contain themselves. They must express their joy and yet they could not find expression for it. Irrepressible mirth could do no other than laugh, for speech was far too dull a thing for it. The mercy was so unexpected, so amazing, so singular that they could not do less than laugh; and they laughed much, so that their mouths were full of it, and that because their hearts were full too. When at last the tongue could move articulately, it could not be content simply to talk, but it must needs sing; and sing heartily too, for it was full of singing. Doubtless the former pain added to the zest of the pleasure; the captivity threw a brighter color into the emancipation. The people remembered this joy flood for years after, and here is the record of it turned into a song. Note the when and the then. God's when is our then. At the moment when he turns our captivity, the heart turns from its sorrow; when he fills us with grace we are filled with gratitude. We were made to be as them that dream, but we both laughed and sang in our sleep. We are wide awake now, and though we can scarcely realize the blessing, yet we rejoice in it exceedingly.

Then said they among the heathen, the Load hath done great things for them. The heathen heard the songs of Israel, and the better sort among them soon guessed the cause of their joy. Jehovah was known to be their God, and to him the other nations ascribed the emancipation of his people, reckoning it to be no small thing which the Lord had thus done; for those who carried away the nations had never in any other instance restored a people to their ancient dwelling place.

These foreigners were no dreamers; though they were only lookers on, and not partakers in the surprising mercy, they plainly saw what had been done, and rightly ascribed it to the great Giver of all good. It is a blessed thing when saints set sinners talking about the lovingkindness of the Lord: and it is equally blessed when the saints who are hidden away in the world hear of what the Lord has done for his church, and themselves resolve to come out from their captivity and unite with the Lord's people. Ah, dear reader, Jehovah has indeed done marvelous things for his chosen, and these "great things" shall be themes for eternal praise among all intelligent creatures.

3 The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.

126: 3 The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. They did not deny the statement which reflected so much glory upon Jehovah: with exultation they admitted and repeated the statement of Jehovah's notable dealings with them. To themselves they appropriated the joyful assertion; they said
"The Lord hath done great things for us", and they declared their gladness at the fact. It is a poor modesty which is ashamed to own its joys in the Lord. Call it rather a robbery of God. There is so little of happiness abroad that if we possess a full share of it we ought not to hide our light under a bushel, but let it shine on all that are in the house. Let us avow our joy, and the reason of it, stating the "whereof" as well as the fact. None are so happy as those who are newly turned and returned from captivity; none can more promptly and satisfactorily give a reason for the gladness that is in them, the Lord himself has blessed us, blessed us greatly, blessed us individually, blessed assuredly; and because of this we sing unto his name. I heard one say the other day in prayer

"whereof we desire to be glad." Strange dilution and defilement of Scriptural language! Surely if God has done great things for us we are glad, and cannot be otherwise. No doubt such language is meant to be lowly, but in truth it is loathsome.

4 ¶ Turn again our captivity, O LORD, as the streams in the south.

126: 4 Turn again our captivity, O LORD. Remembering the former joy of a past rescue they cry to Jehovah for a repetition of it. When we pray for the turning of our captivity, it is wise to recall former instances thereof: nothing strengthens faith more effectually than the memory of a previous experience.

"The Lord hath done" harmonizes well with the prayer, "Turn again." The text shows us how wise it is to resort anew to the Lord, who in former times has been so good to us. Where else should we go but to him who has done such great things for us? Who can turn again our captivity but he who turned it before?

As the streams in the south. Even as the Lord sends floods down on the dry beds of southern torrents after long droughts, so can he fill our wasted and wearied spirits with floods of holy delight. This the Lord can do for any of us, and he can do it at once, for nothing is too hard for the Lord. It is well for us thus to pray, and to bring our suit before him who is able to bless us exceeding abundantly. Do not let us forget the past, but in the presence of our present difficulty let us resort unto the Lord, and beseech him to do that for us which we cannot possibly do for ourselves,—that which no other power can perform on our behalf. Israel did return from the captivity in Babylon, and it was even as though a flood of people hastened to Zion. Suddenly and plenteously the people filled again the temple courts. In streams they shall also in the latter days return to their own land, and replenish it yet again. Like mighty torrents shall the nations flow unto the Lord in the day of his grace. May the Lord hasten it in his own time.

5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.

126: 5 They that sow in tears shall reap in joy. Hence, present distress must not be viewed as if it would last for ever; it is not the end, by any means, but only a means to the end. Sorrow is our sowing, rejoicing shall be our reaping. If there were no sowing in tears there would be no reaping in joy. If we were never captives we could never lead our captivity captive. Our mouth had never been filled with holy laughter if it had not been first filled with the bitterness of grief. We must
sow: we may have to sow in the wet weather of sorrow; but we shall reap, and reap in the bright summer season of joy. Let us keep to the work of this present sowing time, and find strength in the promise which is here so positively given us. Here is one of the Lord's shalls and wills; it is freely given both to workers, waiters, and weepers, and they may rest assured that it will not fail:

"in due season they shall reap." This sentence may well pass current in the church as an inspired proverb. It is not every sowing which is thus insured against all danger, and guaranteed a harvest; but the promise specially belongs to sowing in tears. When a man's heart is so stirred that he weeps over the sins of others, he is elect to usefulness. Winners of souls are first weepers for souls. As there is no birth without travail, so is there no spiritual harvest without painful tillage. When our own hearts are broken with grief at man's transgression we shall break other men's hearts: tears of earnestness beget tears of repentance: "deep calleth unto deep."

6 He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.

126: 6 He. The general assurance is applied to each one in particular. That which is spoken in the previous verse in the plural—"they", is here repeated in the singular—"he."

He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him. He leaves his couch to go forth into the frosty air and tread the heavy soil; and as he goes he weeps because of past failures, or because the ground is so sterile, or the weather so unseasonable, or his corn so scarce, and his enemies so plentiful and so eager to rob him of his reward. He drops a seed and a tear, a seed and a tear, and so goes on his way. In his basket he has seed which is precious to him, for he has little of it, and it is his hope for the next year. Each grain leaves his hand with anxious prayer that it may not be lost: he thinks little of himself, but much of his seed, and he eagerly asks,

"Will it prosper? shall I receive a reward for my labour?" Yes, good husbandman, doubtless you will gather sheaves from your sowing. Because the Lord has written doubtless, take heed that you do not doubt. No reason for doubt can remain after the Lord has spoken. You will return to this field—not to sow, but to reap; not to weep, but to rejoice; and after awhile you will go home again with nimbler step than today, though with a heavier load, for you shall have sheaves to bear with you. Your handful shall be so greatly multiplied that many sheaves shall spring from it; and you shall have the pleasure of reaping them and bringing them home to the place from which you went out weeping. This is a figurative description of that which was literally described in the first three verses. It is the turning of the worker's captivity, when, instead of seed buried beneath black earth, he sees the waving crops inviting him to a golden harvest. It is somewhat singular to find this promise of fruitfulness in close contact with return from captivity; and yet it is so in our own experience, for when our own soul is revived the souls of others are blessed by our labours. If any of us, having been once lonesome and lingering captives, have now returned home, and have become longing and laboring sowers, may the Lord, who has already delivered us, soon transform us into glad hearted reapers, and to him shall be praise for ever and ever. Amen.
Psalm 127

A Song of degrees for Solomon

TITLE. A Song of Degrees for Solomon. It was meet that the builder of the holy house should be remembered by the pilgrims to its sacred shrine. The title probably indicates that David wrote it for his wise son, in whom he so greatly rejoiced, and whose name Jedidiah, or "beloved of the Lord", is introduced into the second verse. The spirit of his name, "Solomon, or peaceable", breathes through the whole of this most charming song. If Solomon himself was the author, it comes fitly from him who reared the house of the Lord. Observe how in each of these songs the heart is fixed upon Jehovah only. Read the first verses of these Psalms, from Psalm 120 to the present song, and they run thus:

"I cried unto the Lord",

"I will lift up mine eyes to the hills",

"Let us go unto the house of the Lord."

"Unto thee will I lift up mine eyes", "If it had not been the Lord",

"They that trust in the Lord."

"When the Lord turned again the captivity." The Lord and the Lord alone is thus lauded at each step of these songs of the ascents. O for a life whose every halting place shall suggest a new song unto the Lord!

SUBJECT. God's blessing on his people as their one great necessity and privilege is here spoken of. We are here taught that builders of houses and cities, systems and fortunes, empires and churches all labour in vain without the Lord; but under the divine favour they enjoy perfect rest. Sons, who are in the Hebrew called "builders", are set forth as building up families under the same divine blessing, to the great honour and happiness of their parents. It is THE BUILDER'S PSALM. "Every house is built by some man, but he that built all things is God", and unto God be praise.
1 ¶ Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it: except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain.

127: 1 Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it. The word vain is the keynote here, and we hear it ring out clearly three times. Men desiring to build know that they must labour, and accordingly they put forth all their skill and strength; but let them remember that if Jehovah is not with them their designs will prove failures. So was it with the Babel builders; they said,

"Go to, let us build us a city and a tower"; and the Lord returned their words into their own bosoms, saying,

"Go to, let us go down and there confound their language." In vain they toiled, for the Lord's face was against them. When Solomon resolved to build a house for the Lord, matters were very different, for all things united under God to aid him in his great undertaking: even the heathen were at his beck and call that he might erect a temple for the Lord his God. In the same manner God blessed him in the erection of his own palace; for this verse evidently refers to all sorts of house building. Without God we are nothing. Great houses have been erected by ambitious men; but like the baseless fabric of a vision they have passed away, and scarce a stone remains to tell where once they stood. The wealthy builder of a Non such Palace, could he revisit the glimpses of the moon, would be perplexed to find a relic of his former pride: he laboured in vain, for the place of his travail knows not a trace of his handiwork. The like may be said of the builders of castles and abbeys: when the mode of life indicated by these piles ceased to be endurable by the Lord, the massive walls of ancient architects crumbled into ruins, and their toil melted like the froth of vanity. Not only do we now spend our strength for nought without Jehovah, but all who have ever laboured apart from him come under the same sentence. Trowel and hammer, saw and plane are instruments of vanity unless the Lord be the Master builder.

Except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain. Around the wall the sentinels pace with constant step; but yet the city is betrayed unless the alert Watcher is with them. We are not safe because of watchmen if Jehovah refuses to watch over us. Even if the guards are wakeful, and do their duty, still the place may be surprised if God be not there.

"I, the Lord, do keep it", is better than an army of sleepless guards. Note that the Psalmist does not bid the builder cease from laboring, nor suggest that watchmen should neglect their duty, nor that men should show their trust in God by doing nothing: nay, he supposes that they will do all that they can do, and then he forbids their fixing their trust in what they have done, and assures them that all creature effort will be in vain unless the Creator puts forth his power, to render second causes effectual. Holy Scripture endorses the order of Oliver Cromwell—

"Trust in God, and keep your powder dry": only here the sense is varied, and we are told that the dried powder will not win the victory unless we trust in God. Happy is the man who hits the golden mean by so working as to believe in God, and so believing in God as to work without
fear. In Scriptural phrase a dispensation or system is called a house. Moses was faithful as a servant over all his house; and as long as the Lord was with that house it stood and prospered; but when he left it, the builders of it became foolish and their labour was lost. They sought to maintain the walls of Judaism, but sought in vain: they watched around every ceremony and tradition, but their care was idle. Of every church, and every system of religious thought, this is equally true: unless the Lord is in it, and is honored by it, the whole structure must sooner or later fall in hopeless ruin. Much can be done by man; he can both labour and watch; but without the Lord he has accomplished nothing, and his wakefulness has not warded off evil.

2 It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.

127: 2 It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows. Because the Lord is mainly to be rested in, all carking care is mere vanity and vexation of spirit. We are bound to be diligent, for this the Lord blesses; we ought not to be anxious, for that dishonors the Lord, and can never secure his favour. Some deny themselves needful rest; the morning sees them rise before they are rested, the evening sees them toiling long after the curfew has tolled the knell of parting day. They threaten to bring themselves into the sleep of death by neglect of the sleep which refreshes life. Nor is their sleeplessness the only index of their daily fret; they stint themselves in their meals, they eat the commonest food, and the smallest possible quantity of it, and what they do swallow is washed down with the salt tears of grief, for they fear that daily bread will fail them. Hard earned is their food, scantily rationed, and scarcely ever sweetened, but perpetually smeared with sorrow; and all because they have no faith in God, and find no joy except in hoarding up the gold which is their only trust. Not thus, not thus, would the Lord have his children live. He would have them, as princes of the blood, lead a happy and restful life. Let them take a fair measure of rest and a due portion of food, for it is for their health. Of course the true believer will never be lazy or extravagant; if he should be he will have to suffer for it; but he will not think it needful or right to be worried and miserly. Faith brings calm with it, and banishes the disturbers who both by day and by night murder peace.

For so he giveth his beloved sleep. Through faith the Lord makes his chosen ones to rest in him in happy freedom from care. The text may mean that God gives blessings to his beloved in sleep, even as he gave Solomon the desire of his heart while he slept. The meaning is much the same: those whom the Lord loves are delivered from the fret and fume of life, and take a sweet repose upon the bosom of their Lord. He rests them; blesses them while resting; blesses them more in resting than others in their moiling and toiling. God is sure to give the best thing to his beloved, and we here see that he gives them sleep—that is a laying aside of care, a forgetfulness of need, a quiet leaving of matters with God: this kind of sleep is better than riches and honour. Note how Jesus slept amid the hurly burly of a storm at sea. He knew that he was in his Father's hands, and therefore he was so quiet in spirit that the billows rocked him to sleep: it would be much oftener the same with us if we were more like HIM. It is to be hoped that those who built Solomon's temple were allowed to work at it steadily and joyfully. Surely such a house was not built by unwilling labourers. One would hope that the workmen were not called upon to hurry up in the morning nor to protract their labours far into the night; but we would fain believe that they went on steadily, resting duly, and eating their bread with joy. So, at least, should the spiritual temple be erected; though, truth to tell, the
workers upon its walls are all too apt to grow cumbered with much serving, all too ready to forget their Lord, and to dream that the building is to be done by themselves alone. How much happier might we be if we would but trust the Lord's house to the Lord of the house! What is far more important, how much better would our building and watching be done if we would but confide in the Lord who both builds and keeps his own church!

3 Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.

127: 3 Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD. This points to another mode of building up a house, namely, by leaving descendants to keep our name and family alive upon the earth. Without this what is a man's purpose in accumulating wealth! To what purpose does he build a house if he has none in his household to hold the house after him? What boots it that he is the possessor of broad acres if he has no heir? Yet in this matter a main is powerless without the Lord. The great Napoleon, with all his sinful care on this point, could not create a dynasty. Hundreds of wealthy persons would give half their estates if they could hear the cry of a babe born of their own bodies. Children are a heritage which Jehovah himself must give, or a man will die childless, and thus his house will be unbuilt.

And the fruit of the womb is his reward, or a reward from God. He gives children, not as a penalty nor as a burden, but as a favour. They are a token for good if men know how to receive them, and educate them. They are "doubtful blessings" only because we are doubtful persons. Where society is rightly ordered children are regarded, not as an encumbrance, but as an inheritance; and they are received, not with regret, but as a reward. If we are over crowded in England, and so seem to be embarrassed with too large an increase, we must remember that the Lord does not order us to remain in this narrow island, but would have us fill those boundless regions which wait for the axe and the plough. Yet even here, with all the straits of limited incomes, our best possessions are our own dear offspring, for whom we bless God every day.

4 As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.

127: 4 As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth. Children born to men in their early days, by God's blessing become the comfort of their riper years. A man of war is glad of weapons which may fly where he cannot: good sons are their father's arrows speeding to hit the mark which their sires aim at. What wonders a good man can accomplish if he has affectionate children to second his desires, and lend themselves to his designs! To this end we must have our children in hand while they are yet children, or they are never likely to be so when they are grown up; and we must try to point them and straighten them, so as to make arrows of them in their youth, lest they should prove crooked and unserviceable in after life. Let the Lord favour us with loyal, obedient, affectionate offspring, and we shall find in them our best helpers. We shall see them shot forth into life to our comfort and delight, if we take care from the very beginning that they are directed to the right point.
5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them: they shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate.

127: 5 Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them. Those who have no children bewail the fact; those who have few children see them soon gone, and the house is silent, and their life has lost a charm; those who have many gracious children are upon the whole the happiest. Of course a large number of children means a large number of trials; but when these are met by faith in the Lord it also means a mass of love, and a multitude of joys. The writer of this comment gives it as his own observation, that he has seen the most frequent unhappiness in marriages which are unfruitful; that he has himself been most grateful for two of the best of sons; but as they have both grown up, and he has no child at home, he has without a tinge of murmuring, or even wishing that he were otherwise circumstanced, felt that it might have been a blessing to have had a more numerous family: he therefore heartily agrees with the Psalmist's verdict herein expressed. He has known a family in which there were some twelve daughters and three sons, and he never expects to witness upon earth greater domestic felicity than fell to the lot of their parents, who rejoiced in all their children, as the children also rejoiced in their parents and in one another. When sons and daughters are arrows, it is well to have a quizzzer full of them; but if they are only sticks, knotty and useless, the fewer of them the better. While those are blessed whose quiver is full, there is no reason to doubt that many are blessed who have no quiver at all; for a quiet life may not need such a warlike weapon. Moreover, a quiver may be small and yet full; and then the blessing is obtained. In any case we may be sure that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of children that he possesseth.

They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the enemies in the gate. They can meet foes both in law and in fight. Nobody cares to meddle with a man who can gather a clan of brave sons about him. He speaks to purpose whose own sons make his words emphatic by the resolve to carry out their father's wishes. This is the blessing of Abraham, the old covenant benediction, "Thy seed shall possess the gate of his enemies"; and it is sure to all the beloved of the Lord in some sense or other. Doth not the Lord Jesus thus triumph in his seed? Looked at literally, this favour cometh of the Lord: without his will there would be no children to build up the house, and without his grace there would be no good children to be their parent's strength. If this must be left with the Lord, let us leave every other thing in the same hands. He will undertake for us and prosper our trustful endeavors, and we shall enjoy a tranquil life, and prove ourselves to be our Lord's beloved by the calm and quiet of our spirit. We need not doubt that if God gives us children as a reward he will also send us the food and raiment which he knows they need. He who is the father of a host of spiritual children is unquestionably happy. He can answer all opponents by pointing to souls who have been saved by his means. Converts are emphatically the heritage of the Lord, and the reward of the preacher's soul travail. By these, under the power of the Holy Ghost, the city of the church is both built up and watched, and the Lord has the glory of it.
Psalm 128

A Song of degrees

TITLE. A Song of Degrees. There is an evident ascent from the last Psalm: that did but hint at the way in which a house may be built up, but this draws a picture of that house built, and adorned with domestic bliss through the Lord's own benediction. There is clearly an advance in age, for here we go beyond children to children's children; and also a progress in happiness, for children which in the last Psalm were arrows are here Olive plants, and instead of speaking "with the enemies in the gate" we done with "peace upon Israel." Thus we rise step by step, and sing as we ascend.

SUBJECT. It is a family hymn, a song for a marriage, or a birth, or for any day in which a happy household has met to praise the Lord. Like all the songs of degrees, it has an eye to Zion and Jerusalem, which are both expressly mentioned, and it closes like Psalms 125, 130, and 131, with an allusion to Israel. It is a short Psalm, but exceedingly full and suggestive. Its poetry is of
the highest order. Perhaps in no country can it be better understood than in our own, for we above all nations delight to sing of "Home, sweet home."

1 ¶Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.

128: 1 Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord. The last Psalm ended with a blessing,—for the word there translated "happy" is the same as that which is here rendered "blessed": thus the two songs are joined by a catch word. There is also in them a close community of subject. The fear of God is the corner stone of all blessedness. We must reverence the ever blessed God before we can be blessed ourselves. Some think that this life is an evil, an infliction, a thing upon which rests a curse; but it is not so; the God fearing man has a present blessing resting upon him. It is not true that it would be to him "something better not to be." He is happy now, for he is the child of the happy God, the ever living Jehovah; and he is even here a joint heir with Jesus Christ, whose heritage is not misery, but joy. This is true of every one of the God fearing, of all conditions, in all ages: each one and every one is blessed. Their blessedness may not always be; seen by carnal reason, but it is always a fact, for God himself declares that it is so; and we know that those whom he blesses are blessed indeed. Let us cultivate that holy filial fear of Jehovah which is the essence of all true religion,—the fear of reverence, of dread to offend, of anxiety to please, and of entire submission and obedience. This fear of the Lord is the fit fountain of holy living: we look in vain for holiness apart from it: none but those who fear the Lord will ever walk in his ways.

That walketh in his ways. The religious life, which God declares to be blessed, must be practical as well as emotional. It is idle to talk of fearing the Lord if we act like those who have no care whether there be a God or no, God's ways will be our ways if we have a sincere reverence for him: if the heart is joined unto God, the feet will follow hard after him. A man's heart will be seen in his walk, and the blessing will come where heart and walk are both with God. Note that the first Psalm links the benediction with the walk in a negative way, "Blessed is the man that walketh not", etc.; but here we find it in connection with the positive form of our conversation. To enjoy the divine blessing we must be active, and walk; we must be methodical, and walk in certain ways; and we must be godly, and walk in the Lord's ways. God's ways are blessed ways; they were cast up by the Blessed One, they were trodden by him in whom we are blessed, they are frequented by the blessed, they are provided with means of blessing, they are paved with present blessings, and they lead to eternal blessedness: who would not desire to walk in them?

2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.

128: 2 For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands. The general doctrine in Psalm 128:1 here receives a personal application: note the change to the second person: "thou shalt eat", etc. This
is the portion of God's saints,—to work, and to find a reward in so doing. God is the God of labourers. We are not to leave our worldly callings because the Lord has called us by grace: we are not promised a blessing upon romantic idleness or unreasonable dreaming, but upon hard work and honest industry. Though we are in God's hands we are to be supported by our own hands. He will give us daily bread, but it must be made our own by labour. All kinds of labour are here included; for if one toils by the sweat of his brow, and another does so by the sweat of his brain, there is no difference in tile blessing; save that it is generally more healthy to work with the body than with the mind only. Without God it would be vain to labour; but when we are labourers together with God a promise is set before us. The promise is that labour shall be fruitful, and that he who performs it shall himself enjoy the recompense of it. It is a grievous ill for a man to slave his life away and receive no fair remuneration for his toil: as a rule, God's servants rise out of such bondage and claim their own, and receive it: at any rate, this verse may encourage them to do so.

"The labourers is worthy of his hire." Under the Theocracy the chosen people could see this promise literally fulfilled; but when evil rulers oppressed them their earnings were withheld by churls, and their harvests were snatched away from them by marauders. Had they walked in the fear of the Lord they would never have known such great evils. Some men never enjoy their labour, for they give themselves no time for rest. Eagerness to get takes from them the ability to enjoy. Surely, if it is worth while to labour, it is worth while to eat of that labour.

Happy shalt thou be, or, Oh, thy happinesses. Heaped up happinesses in the plural belong to that man who fears the Lord. He is happy, and he shall be happy in a thousand ways. The context leads us to expect family happiness. Our God is our household God. The Romans had their Lares and Penates, but we have far more than they in the one only living and true God.

And it shall be well with thee, or, good for thee. Yes, good is for the good; and it shall be well with those who do well.

"What cheering words are these!
Their sweetness who can tell?
In time, and to eternal days,
'Tis with the righteous well."

If we fear God we may dismiss all other fear. In walking in God's ways we shall be under his protection, provision, and approval; danger and destruction shall be far from us: all things shall work our good. In God's view it would not be a blessed thing for us to live without exertion, nor to eat the unearned bread of dependence: the happiest state on earth is one in which we have something to do, strength to do it with, and a fair return for what we have done. This, with the divine blessing, is all that we ought to desire, and it is sufficient for any man who fears the Lord and abhors covetousness. Having food and raiment, let us be there with content.

Note
**Lares** were Roman deities protecting the house and the family household gods. Lare are presumed to be the sons of Hermes and Lara and were deeply venerated by the ancient Romans by the making of small statues. The Lares were usually placed in higher places of the house, far from the floor. Some were placed on the roof.

**Penates.** In Roman mythology, the Penates ("the inner ones") were the patron gods of the storeroom. Later they gradually changed into patron gods for the entire household. They were worshipped at the hearth and were given their part of the daily meals. S.E.M.

3 Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house: thy children like olive plants round about thy table.

128: 3 Thy wife. To reach the full of earthly felicity a man must not be alone. A helpmeet was needed in Paradise, and assuredly she is not less necessary out of it. He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing. It is not every man that feareth the Lord who has a wife; but if he has, she shall share in his blessedness and increase it.

**Shall be as a fruitful vine.** To complete domestic bliss children are sent. They come as the lawful fruit of marriage, even as clusters appear upon the vine. For the grapes the vine was planted; for children was the wife provided. It is generally well with any creature when it fulfils its purpose, and it is so far well with married people when the great design of their union is brought about. They must not look upon fruitfulness as a burden, but as a blessing. Good wives are also fruitful in kindness, thrift, helpfulness, and affection: if they bear no children, they are by no means barren if they yield us the wine of consolation and the clusters of comfort. Truly blessed is the man whose wife is fruitful in those good works which are suitable to her near and dear position.

**By the sides of thine house.** She keeps to the house; she is a home bird. Some imagine that she is like a vine which is nailed up to the house wall; but they have no such custom in Palestine, neither is it pleasant to think of a wife as growing up by a wall, and as bound to the very bricks and mortar of her husband’s dwelling. No, she is a fruitful vine, and a faithful housekeeper; if you wish to find her, she is within the house: she is to be found both inside and outside the home, but her chief usefulness is in the inner side of the dwelling, which she adorns. Eastern houses usually have an open square in the centre, and the various rooms are ranged around the sides,—there shall the wife be found, busy in one room or another, as the hour of the day demands. She keeps at home, and so keeps the home. It is her husband’s house, and she is her husband’s; us the text puts it—

"thy wife", and "thy house"; but by her loving care her husband is made so happy that he is glad to own her as an equal proprietor with himself, for he is hers, and the house is hers too.

**Thy children like olive plants round about thy table.** Hundreds of times have I seen the young olive plants springing up around the parent stem, and it has always made me think of this verse. The Psalmist never intended to suggest the idea of olive plants round a table, but of young people...
springing up around their parents, even as olive plants surround the fine, well rooted tree. The figure is very striking, and would be sure to present itself to the mind of every observer in the olive country. How beautiful to see the gnarled olive, still bearing abundant fruit, surrounded with a little band of sturdy successors, any one of which would be able to take its place should the central olive be blown down, or removed in any other way. The notion of a table in a bower may suit a cockney in a tea garden, but would never occur to an oriental poet; it is not the olive plants, but the children, that are round about the table. Moreover, note that it is not olive branches, but plants,—a very different thing. Our children gather around our table to be fed, and this involves expenses: how much better is this than to see them pining upon beds of sickness, unable to come for their meals! What a blessing to have sufficient to put upon the table! Let us for this benefit praise the bounty of the Lord. The wife is busy all over the house, but the youngsters are busiest at meal times; and if the blessing of the Lord rest upon the family, no sight can be more delightful. Here we have the vine and the olive blended—joy from the fruitful wife, and solid comfort from the growing family; these are the choicest products earth can yield: our families are gardens of the Lord.

It may help us to value the privileges of our home if we consider where we should be if they were withdrawn. What if the dear partner of our life were removed from the sides of our house to the recesses of the sepulchre? What is the trouble of children compared with the sorrow of their loss? Think, dear father, what would be your grief if you had to cry with Job, "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when my children were about me."

4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.

128: 4 Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD. Mark this. Put a Nota Bene [note well] against it, for it is worthy of observation. It is not to be inferred that all blessed men are married, and are fathers; but that this is the way in which the Lord favors godly people who are placed in domestic life. He makes their relationships happy and profitable. In this fashion does Jehovah bless God fearing households, for he is the God of all the families of Israel.

We have seen this blessing scores of times, and we have never ceased to admire in domestic peace the sweetest of human felicity. Family blessedness comes from the Lord, and is a part of his plan for the preservation of a godly race, and for the maintenance of his worship in the land. To the Lord alone we must look for it. The possession of riches will not ensure it; the choice of a healthy and beautiful bride will not ensure it; the birth of numerous comely children will not ensure it: there must be the blessing of God, the influence of piety, the result of holy living.

5 The LORD shall bless thee out of Zion: and thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.

128: 5 The Loud shall bless thee out of Zion. A spiritual blessing shall be received by the gracious man, and this shall crown all his temporal mercies. He is one among the many who make up God's inheritance; his tent is part and parcel of the encampment around the tabernacle; and therefore, when the benediction is pronounced at the centre it shall radiate to him ill his place. The blessing of the house of God shall be upon his house. The priestly benediction which is recorded in Num. 6:24-26, runs thus: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and
give thee peace." This is it which shall come upon the head of the God fearing man. Zion was the centre of blessing, and to it the people looked when they sought for mercy: from the altar of sacrifice, from the mercy seat, from the Shekinah light, yea, from Jehovah himself, the blessing shall come to each one of his holy people.

*And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.* He shall have a patriot's joy as well as a patriarch's peace. God shall give him to see his country prosper, and its metropolitan city flourish. When tent mercies are followed by temple mercies, and these are attended by national mercies,—the man, the worshipper, the patriot is trebly favored of the Lord. This favour is to be permanent throughout the good man's life, and that life is to be a long one, for he is to see his sons' sons. Many a time does true religion bring such blessings to men; and when these good things are denied them, they have a greater reward as a compensation.

6 Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.

128: 6 *Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children.* This is a great pleasure. Men live their young lives over again in their grandchildren. Does not Solomon say that "children's children are the crown of old men?" So they are. The good man is glad that a pious stock is likely to be continued; he rejoices in the belief that other homes as happy as his own will be built up wherein altars to the glory of God shall smoke with the morning and evening sacrifice. This promise implies long life, and that life rendered happy by its being continued in our offspring. It is one token of the immortality of man that he derives joy from extending his life in the lives of his descendants.

*And peace upon Israel.* With this sweet word Psalm 126 was closed. It is a favorite formula. Let God's own heritage be at peace, and we are all glad of it. We count it our own prosperity for the chosen of the Lord to find rest and quiet. Jacob was sorely tossed about; his life knew little of peace; but yet the Lord delivered him out of all his tribulations, and brought him to a place of rest in Goshen for a while, and afterwards to sleep with his fathers in the cave of Machpelah. His glorious Seed was grievously afflicted and at last crucified; but he has risen to eternal peace, and in his peace we dwell. Israel's spiritual descendants still share his chequered conditions, but there remains a rest for them also, and they shall have peace from the God of peace. Israel was a praying petitioner in the days of his wrestling, but he became a prevailing prince, and therein his soul found peace. Yes, all around it is true—"Peace upon Israel! Peace upon Israel."
PSALM 129

A Song of degrees

TITLE. A Song of Degrees. I fail to see how this is a step beyond the previous Psalm; and yet it is clearly the song of an older and more tried individual, who looks back upon a life of affliction in which he suffered all along, even from his youth. Inasmuch as patience is a higher, or at least more difficult, grace than domestic love, the ascent or progress may perhaps be seen in that direction. Probably if we knew more of the stations on the road to the Temple we should see a reason for the order of these Psalms; but as that information cannot be obtained, we must take the songs as we find them, and remember that, as we do not now go on pilgrimages to Zion, it is our curiosity and not our necessity which is a loser by our not knowing the cause of the arrangement of the songs in this Pilgrim Psalter.

AUTHOR, ETC. It does not seem to us at all needful to ascribe this Psalm to a period subsequent to the captivity...indeed, it is more suitable to a time when as yet the enemy bad not so far prevailed as to have carried the people indo a distant land. It is a mingled hymn of sorrow and of strong resolve. Though sorely smitten, the afflicted one is heart whole, and scorns to yield in the least degree to the enemy. The poet sings the trials of Israel, Psalm 129:1-3; the
Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say:

1 ¶ Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say:

2 Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me.
"Cast down, but not destroyed", is the shout of a victor. Israel has wrestled, and has overcome in the struggle. Who wonders? If Israel overcame the angel of the covenant, what man or devil shall vanquish him? The fight was oft renewed and long protracted: the champion severely felt the conflict, and was at times fearful of the issue; but at length he takes breath, and cries, "Yet they have not prevailed against me."

"Many a time; "yes, "many a time", the enemy has had his opportunity and his vantage, but not so much as once has he gained the victory.

3 The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.

129: 3 The plowers plowed up on my back. The scourges tore the flesh as ploughmen furrow a field. The people were maltreated like a criminal given over to the lictors with their cruel whips; the back of the nation was scored and furrowed by oppression. It is a grand piece of imagery condensed into few words. A writer says the metaphor is muddled, but he is mistaken: there are several figures, like wheel within wheel, but there is no confusion. The afflicted nation was, as it were, lashed by her adversaries so cruelly that each blow left a long red mark, or perhaps a bleeding wound, upon her back and shoulders, comparable to a furrow which tears up the ground from one end of the field to the other. Many a heart has been in like case; smitten and sore wounded by them that use the scourge of the tongue; so smitten that their whole character has been cut up and scored by calumny. The true church has in every age had fellowship with her Lord under his cruel flagellations: his sufferings were a prophecy of what she would be called hereafter to endure, and the foreshadowing has been fulfilled. Zion has in this sense been ploughed as a field.

They made long their furrows:—as if delighting in their cruel labour. They missed not an inch, but went from end to end of the field, meaning to make thorough work of their congenial engagement. Those who laid on the scourge did it with a thoroughness which showed how hearty was their hate. Assuredly the enemies of Christ's church never spare pains to inflict the utmost injury: they never do the work of the devil deceitfully, or hold back their hand from blood. They smite so as to plough into the man; they plough the quivering flesh as if it were clods of clay; they plough deep and long with countless furrows; until they leave no portion of the church unfurrowed or unassailed. Ah me! Well did Latimer say that there was no busier ploughman in all the world than the devil: whoever makes short furrows, he does not. Whoever balks and shirks, he is thorough in all that he does. Whoever stops work at sundown, he never does. He and his children plough like practiced ploughmen; but they prefer to carry on their pernicious work upon the saints behind their backs, for they are as cowardly as they are cruel.

Note

Latimer. Hugh Latimer (b. approx. 1485/90, d. October 16, 1555) was a famous Protestant martyr. Born into a family of farmers he rose through the educational system to be ordained in the Roman Catholic Church. When the Protestant Reformation broke out he initially opposed the followers of Luther but was converted under the ministry of the clergyman Thomas Bilney. In 1510, he was elected a Fellow of Clare College, Cambridge and in 1522 became a universit
preacher and well known for teaching the reformed doctrine. During the reign of King Henry VIII was imprisoned twice in the Tower of London (1539 and 1546). During the reign of Henry's son Edward VI, he was restored to favour as the English church moved in a more Protestant direction. When Edward's sister Queen Mary I came to the throne, he was tried for his beliefs and teachings in Oxford and placed in prison. In October 1555 he was burned at the state outside Balliol College, Oxford.

Latimer was executed beside Nicolas Ridley. As the flames rose around them Latimer said to Ridley: “Be of good comfort, Master Ridley, and play the man; we shall this day light such a candle, by God's grace, in England, as I trust shall never be put out.”

4 The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.

129: 4 The LORD is righteous. Whatever men may be, Jehovah remains just, and will therefore keep covenant with his people and deal out justice to their oppressors. Here is the hinge of the condition: this makes the turning point of Israel's distress. The Lord bears with the long furrows of the wicked, but he will surely make them cease from their ploughing before he has done with them.

He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked. The rope which binds the oxen to the plough is cut; the cord which bound the victim is broken; the bond which held the enemies in cruel unity has snapped. As in Psalm 124:7 we read, "the snare is broken; we are escaped", so here the breaking of the enemies' instrument of oppression is Israel's release. Sooner or later a righteous God will interpose, and when he does so, his action will be most effectual; he does not unfasten, but cuts asunder, the harness which the ungodly use in their labour of hate. Never has God used a nation to chastise his Israel without destroying that nation when the chastisement has come to a close: he hates those who hurt his people even though he permits their hate to triumph for a while for his own purpose. If any man would have his harness cut, let him begin to plough one of the Lord's fields with the plough of persecution.

The shortest way to ruin is to meddle with a saint: the divine warning is, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."

5 ¶ Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.

129:5 Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion. And so say we right heartily: and in this case vox populi [voice of the people] is vox Dei [voice of God], for so it shall be. If this be an imprecation, let it stand; for our heart says "Amen" to it. It is but justice that those who hate, harass, and hurt the good should be brought to naught. Those who confound right and wrong ought to be confounded, and those who turn back from God ought to be turned back. Loyal subjects wish ill to those who plot against their king.

"Confound their politics, frustrate their knavish tricks," is but a proper wish, and contains within it no trace of personal ill will. We desire their welfare as men, their downfall as traitors. Let their conspiracies be confounded, their policies be turned back. How can we wish prosperity to those who would destroy that which is dearest to our hearts? This present age is so flippant that if a man loves the Saviour he is styled a fanatic, and if he hates the powers of evil he is named a bigot. As for ourselves, despite all objectors, we join heartily in this commination [threat]; and
would revive in our heart the old practice of Ebal and Gerizim, where those were blessed who bless God, and those were cursed who make themselves a curse to the righteous. We have heard men desire a thousand times that the gallows might be the reward of the assassins who murdered two inoffensive men in Dublin, and we could never censure the wish; for justice ought to be rendered to the evil as well as to the good. Besides, the church of God is so useful, so beautiful, so innocent of harm, so fraught with good, that those who do her wrong are wronging all mankind and deserve to be treated as the enemies of the human race. Study a chapter from the "Book of Martyrs", and see if you do not feel inclined to read an imprecatory Psalm over Bishop Bonner and Bloody Mary. It may be that some wretched nineteenth century sentimentalist will blame you: if so, read another over him.

6 Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up:

129: 6 Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up. Grass on the housetop is soon up and soon down. It sprouts in the heat, finds enough nutriment to send up a green blade, and then it dies away before it reaches maturity, because it has neither earth nor moisture sufficient for its proper development. Before it grows up it dies; it needs not to be plucked up, for it hastens to decay of itself. Such is and such ought to be the lot of the enemies of God's people. Transient is their prosperity; speedy is their destruction. The height of their position, as it hastens their progress, so it hurries their doom. Had they been lower in station they had perhaps been longer in being.

"Soon ripe, soon rotten", is an old proverb. Soon plotting and soon rotting, is a version of the old adage which will suit in this place. We have seen grass on the rustic thatch of our own country cottages which will serve for an illustration almost as well as that which comes up so readily on the flat roofs and domes of eastern habitations. The idea is—they make speed to success, and equal speed to failure. Persecutors are all sound and fury, flash and flame; but they speedily vanish—more speedily than is common to men. Grass in the field withers, but not so speedily as grass on the housetops. Without a mower the tufts of verdure perish from the roofs, and so do opposers pass away by other deaths than fall to tile common lot of men; they are gone, and none is the worse. If they are missed at all, their absence is never regretted. Grass on the housetop is a nonentity in the world; the house is not impoverished when the last blade is dried up: and, even so, the opposers of Christ pass away, and none lament them. One of the fathers said of the apostate emperor Julian,

"That little cloud will soon be gone"; and so it was. Every skeptical system of philosophy has much the same history; and the like may be said of each heresy. Poor, rootless things, they are and are not: they come and go, even though no one rises against them. Evil carries the seeds of dissolution within itself. So let it be.

7 Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.
129: 7 Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom. When with his sickle the husbandman would cut down the tufts, he found nothing to lay hold upon: the grass promised fairly enough, but there was no fulfillment, there was nothing to cut or to carry, nothing for the hand to grasp, nothing for the lap to gather. Easterners carry their corn in their bosoms, but in this case there was nothing to bear home. Thus do the wicked come to nothing. By God's just appointment they prove a disappointment. Their fire ends in smoke; their verdure turns to vanity; their flourishing is but a form of withering. No one profits by them, least of all are they profitable to themselves. Their aim is bad, their work is worse, their end is worst of all.

8 Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.

129: 8 Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD. In harvest times men bless each other in the name of the Lord; but there is nothing in the course and conduct of the ungodly man to suggest the giving or receiving of a benediction. Upon a survey of the sinner's life from beginning to end, we feel more inclined to weep than to rejoice, and we feel bound rather to wish him failure than success. We dare not use pious expressions as mere compliments, and hence we dare not wish God speed to evil men lest we be partakers of their evil deeds. When persecutors are worrying the saints, we cannot say, "The blessing of the Lord be upon you." When they slander the godly and oppose the doctrine of the cross, we dare not bless them in the name of the Lord. It would be infamous to compromise the name of the righteous Jehovah by pronouncing his blessing upon unrighteous deeds. See how godly men are roughly ploughed by their adversaries, and yet a harvest comes of it which endures and produces blessing; while the ungodly, though they flourish for a while and enjoy a complete immunity, dwelling, as they think, quite above the reach of harm, are found in a short time to have gone their way and to have left no trace behind. Lord, number me with thy saints. Let me share their grief if I may also partake of their glory. Thus would I make this Psalm my own, and magnify thy name, because thine afflicted ones are not destroyed, and thy persecuted ones are not forsaken.
PSALM 130

TITLE. A Song of Degrees. It would be hard to see any upward step from the preceding to the present Psalm, and therefore it is possible that the steps or ascents are in the song itself: certainly it does rise rapidly out of the depths of anguish to the heights of assurance. It follows well upon 129: when we have overcome the trials which arise from man we are the better prepared to meet those sharper sorrows which arise out of our matters towards God. He who has borne the scourges of the wicked is trained in all patience to wait the dealings of the Holy Lord. We name this the DE PROFUNDIS PSALM:

"Out of the depths" is the leading word of it: out of those depths we cry, wait, watch, and hope. In this Psalm we hear of the pearl of redemption, Psalm 130:7-8: perhaps the sweet singer would never have found that precious thing had he not been cast into the depths. "Pearls lie deep."

DIVISION. The first two verses (Psalm 130:1-2) reveal an intense desire; and the next two are a humble confession of repentance and faith, Psalm 130:3-4. In Psalm 130:5-6 waiting watchfulness is declared and resolved upon; and in Psalm 130:7-8 joyful expectation, both for himself and all Israel, finds expression.

1 ¶Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.
Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD. This is the Psalmist's statement and plea: he had never ceased to pray even when brought into the lowest state. The depths usually silence all they engulf, but they could not close the mouth of this servant of the Lord; on the contrary, it was in the abyss itself that he cried unto Jehovah. Beneath the floods prayer lived and struggled; yea, above the roar of the billows rose the cry of faith. It little matters where we are if we can pray; but prayer is never more real and acceptable than when it rises out of the worst places. Deep places beget deep devotion. Depths of earnestness are stirred by depths of tribulation. Diamonds sparkle most amid the darkness. Prayer de profundis [out of the deep] gives to God gloria in excelsis [glory in the highest]. The more distressed we are, the more excellent is the faith which trusts bravely in the Lord, and therefore appeals to him, and to him alone. Good men may be in the depths of temporal and spiritual trouble; but good men in such cases look only to their God, and they stir themselves up to be more instant and earnest in prayer than at other times. The depth of their distress moves the depths of their being; and from the bottom of their hearts an exceeding great and bitter cry rises unto the one living and true God. David had often been in the deep, and as often had he pleaded with Jehovah, his God, in whose hand are all deep places. He prayed, and remembered that he had prayed, and pleaded that he had prayed; hoping ere long to receive an answer. It would be dreadful to look back on trouble and feel forced to own that we did not cry unto the Lord in it; but it is most comforting to know that whatever we did not do, or could not do, yet we did pray, even in our worst times. He that prays in the depth will not sink out of his depth. He that cries out of the depths shall soon sing in the heights.

Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.

Lord, hear my voice. It is all we ask; but nothing less will content us. If the Lord will but hear us we will leave it to his superior wisdom to decide whether he will answer us or no. It is better for our prayer to be heard than answered. If the Lord were to make an absolute promise to answer all our requests it might be rather a curse than a blessing, for it would be casting the responsibility of our lives upon ourselves, and we should be placed in a very anxious position: but now the Lord hears our desires, and that is enough; we only wish him to grant them if his infinite wisdom sees that it would be for our good and for his glory. Note that the Psalmist spoke audibly in prayer: this is not at all needful, but it is exceedingly helpful; for the use of the voice assists the thoughts. Still, there is a voice in silent supplication, a voice in our weeping, a voice in that sorrow which cannot find a tongue: that voice the Lord will hear if its cry is meant for his ear.

Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication. The Psalmist's cry is a beggar's petition; he begs the great King and Lord to lend an ear to it. He has supplicated many times, but always with one voice, or for one purpose; and he begs to be noticed in the one matter which he has pressed with so much importunity. He would have the King hearken, consider, remember, and weigh his request. He is confused, and his prayer may therefore be broken, and difficult to understand; he begs therefore that his Lord will give the more earnest and compassionate heed to the voice of his many and painful pleadings. When we have already prayed over our troubles it is well to pray over our prayers. If we can find no more words, let us entreat the Lord to hear those petitions which we have already presented. If we have faithfully obeyed the precept by praying without ceasing, we may be confident that the Lord will faithfully fulfill the promise by helping
us without fall. Though the Psalmist was under a painful sense of sin, and so was in the depth, his faith pleaded in the teeth of conscious unworthiness; for well he knew that the Lord's keeping his promise depends upon his own character and not upon that of his erring creatures.

3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?

130: 3 If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand. If JAH, the all seeing, should in strict justice call every man to account for every want of conformity to righteousness, where would any one of us be? Truly, he does record all our transgressions; but as yet he does not act upon the record, but lays it aside till another day. If men were to be judged upon no system but that of works, who among us could answer for himself at the Lord's bar, and hope to stand clear and accepted? This verse shows that the Psalmist was Under a sense of sin, and felt it imperative upon him not only to cry as a suppliant but to confess as a sinner. Here he owns that he cannot stand before the great King in his own righteousness, and he is so struck with a sense of the holiness of God, and the rectitude of the law that he is convinced that no man of mortal race can answer for himself before a Judge so perfect, concerning a law so divine. Well does he cry, "O Lord, who shall stand?" None can do so: there is none that doeth good; no, not one. Iniquities are matters which are not according to equity: what a multitude we have of these! Jehovah, who sees all, and is also our Adonai, or Lord, will assuredly bring us into judgment concerning those thoughts, and words, and works which are not in exact conformity to his law. Were it not for the Lord Jesus, could we hope to stand? Dare we meet him in the dread day of account on the footing of law and equity? What a mercy it is that we need not do so, for the next verse sets forth another way of acceptance to which we flee.

4 But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.

130: 4 But there is forgiveness with thee. Blessed but. Free, full, sovereign pardon is in the hand of the great King: it is his prerogative to forgive, and he delights to exercise it. Because his nature is mercy, and because he has provided a sacrifice for sin, therefore forgiveness is with him for all that come to him confessing their sins. The power of pardon is permanently resident with God: he has forgiveness ready to his hand at this instant.

That thou mayest be feared. This is the fruitful root of piety. None fear the Lord like those who have experienced his forgiving love. Gratitude for pardon produces far more fear and reverence of God than all the dread which is inspired by punishment. If the Lord were to execute justice upon all, there would be none left to fear him; if all were under apprehension of his deserved wrath, despair would harden them against fearing him; it is grace which leads the way to a holy regard of God, and a fear of grieving him.

5 ¶ I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.

130: 5 I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait. Expecting him to come to me in love, I quietly wait for his appearing; I wait upon him in service, and for him in faith. For God I wait and for him only: if he will manifest himself I shall have nothing more to wait for; but until he shall
appear for my help I must wait on, hoping even in the depths. This waiting of mine is no mere formal act, my very soul is in it,—"my soul doth wait." I wait and I wait—mark the repetition!

"My soul waits", and then again, "My soul waits"; to make sure work of the waiting. It is well to deal with the Lord intensely. Such repetitions are the reverse of vain repetitions. If the Lord Jehovah makes us wait, let us do so with our whole hearts; for blessed are all they that wait for him. He is worth waiting for. The waiting itself is beneficial to us: it tries faith, exercises patience, trains submission, and endears the blessing when it comes. The Lord's people have always been a waiting people: they waited for the First Advent, and now they wait for the Second. They waited for a sense of pardon, and now they wait for perfect sanctification. They waited in the depths, and they are not now wearied with waiting in a happier condition. They have cried and they do wait; probably their past prayer sustains their present patience.

And in his word do I hope. This is the source, strength, and sweetness of waiting. Those who do not hope cannot wait; but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. God's word is a true word, but at times it tarries; if ours is true faith it will wait the Lord's time. A word from the Lord is as bread to the soul of the believer; and, refreshed thereby, it holds out through the night of sorrow expecting the dawn of deliverance and delight. Waiting, we study the word, believe the word, hope in the word, and live on the word; and all because it is "his word,"—the word of him who never speaks in vain. Jehovah's word is a firm ground for a waiting soul to rest upon.

6 My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning: I say, more than they that watch for the morning.

130: 6 My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning. Men who guard a city, and women who wait by the sick, long for daylight. Worshippers tarrying for the morning sacrifice, the kindling of the incense and the lighting of the lamps, mingle fervent prayers with their holy vigils, and pine for the hour when the lamb shall smoke upon the altar. David, however, waited more than these, waited longer, waited more longingly, waited more expectantly. He was not afraid of the great Adonai before whom none can stand in their own righteousness, for he had put on the righteousness of faith, and therefore longed for gracious audience with the Holy One. God was no more dreaded by him than light is dreaded by those engaged in a lawful calling. He pined and yearned after his God. I say, more than they that watch for the morning. The figure was not strong enough, though one can hardly think of anything more vigorous: he felt that his own eagerness was unique and unrivalled. Oh to be thus hungry and thirsty after God! Our version spoils the abruptness of the language; the original runs thus—

"My soul for the Lord more than those watching for the morning—watching for the morning." This is a fine poetical repeat. We long for the favour of the Lord more than weary sentinels long for the morning light which will release them from their tedious watch. Indeed this is true. He that has once rejoiced in communion with God is sore tried by the hidings of his face, and grows faint with strong desire for the Lord's appearing,
7 Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption.

8 And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

"When wilt thou come unto me, Lord? Until thou dost appear, I count each moment for a day, Each minute for a year."

70: 7 Let Israel hope in the LORD. Or, "Hope thou, Israel, in Jehovah." Jehovah is Israel's God; therefore, let Israel hope in him. What one Israelite does he wishes all Israel to do. That man has a just right to exhort others who is himself setting the example. Israel of old waited upon Jehovah and wrestled all the night long, and at last he went his way succored by the Hope of Israel: the like shall happen to all his seed. God has great things in store for his people, they ought to have large expectations.

For with the LORD there is mercy. This is in his very nature, and by the light of nature it may be seen. But we have also the light of grace, and therefore we see still more of his mercy. With us there is sin; but hope is ours, because

"with the Lord there is mercy." Our comfort lies not in that which is with us, but in that which is with our God. Let us look out of self and its poverty to Jehovah and his riches of mercy.

And with him is plenteous redemption. He can and will redeem all his people out of their many and great troubles; nay, their redemption is already wrought out and laid up with him, so that he can at any time give his waiting ones the full benefit thereof. The attribute of mercy, and the fact of redemption, are two most sufficient reasons for hoping in Jehovah; and the fact that there is no mercy or deliverance elsewhere should effectually wean the soul from all idolatry. Are not these deep things of God a grand comfort for those who are crying out of the depths? Is it not better to be in the deeps with David, hoping in God's mercy, than up on the mountain tops, boasting in our own fancied righteousness?

8 And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.

130: 7 Let Israel hope in the LORD. Or, "Hope thou, Israel, in Jehovah." Jehovah is Israel's God; therefore, let Israel hope in him. What one Israelite does he wishes all Israel to do. That man has a just right to exhort others who is himself setting the example. Israel of old waited upon Jehovah and wrestled all the night long, and at last he went his way succored by the Hope of Israel: the like shall happen to all his seed. God has great things in store for his people, they ought to have large expectations.

For with the LORD there is mercy. This is in his very nature, and by the light of nature it may be seen. But we have also the light of grace, and therefore we see still more of his mercy. With us there is sin; but hope is ours, because

"with the Lord there is mercy." Our comfort lies not in that which is with us, but in that which is with our God. Let us look out of self and its poverty to Jehovah and his riches of mercy.

And with him is plenteous redemption. He can and will redeem all his people out of their many and great troubles; nay, their redemption is already wrought out and laid up with him, so that he can at any time give his waiting ones the full benefit thereof. The attribute of mercy, and the fact of redemption, are two most sufficient reasons for hoping in Jehovah; and the fact that there is no mercy or deliverance elsewhere should effectually wean the soul from all idolatry. Are not these deep things of God a grand comfort for those who are crying out of the depths? Is it not better to be in the deeps with David, hoping in God's mercy, than up on the mountain tops, boasting in our own fancied righteousness?
"Now, Lord, what wait we for?" Is not this a clear prophecy of the coming of our Lord Jesus the first time? and may we not now regard it as the promise of his second and more glorious coming for the redemption of the body? For this our soul doth wait: yea, our heart and our flesh cry out for it with joyful expectation.

PSALM 131

A Song of degrees of David

TITLE. A Song of Degrees of David. It is both by David and of David: he is the author and the subject of it, and many incidents of his life may be employed to illustrate it. Comparing all the Psalms to gems, we should liken this to a pearl: how beautifully it will adorn the neck of patience. It is one of the shortest Psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn. It speaks of a young child, but it contains the experience of a man in Christ. Lowliness and humility are here seen in connection with a sanctified heart, a will subdued to the mind of God, and a hope looking to the Lord alone happy is the man who can without falsehood use these words as his own; for he wears about him the likeness of his Lord, who said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." The Psalm is in advance of all the Songs of Degrees which have preceded it; for loveliness is one of the highest attainments in the divine life. There are also steps in this Song of Degrees: it is a short ladder, if we count the words; but yet it rises to a great height, reaching from deep humility to fixed confidence. Le Blanc thinks that this is a song of the Israelites who returned from Babylon
with, humble hearts, weaned from their idols. At any rate, after any spiritual captivity let it be the expression of our hearts.

1 ¶ LORD, my heart is not haughty, nor mine eyes lofty: neither do I exercise myself in great matters, or in things too high for me.

131: 1 LORD, my heart is not haughty. The Psalm deals with the Lord, and is a solitary colloquy with him, not a discourse before men. We have a sufficient audience when we speak with the Lord, and we may say to him many things which were not proper for the ears of men. The holy man makes his appeal to Jehovah, who alone knows the heart: a man should be slow to do this upon any matter, for the Lord is not to be trifled with; and when anyone ventures on such an appeal he should be sure of his case. He begins with his heart, for that is the centre of our nature, and if pride be there it defiles everything; just as mire in the spring causes mud in all the streams. It is a grand thing for a man to know his own heart so as to be able to speak before the Lord about it. It is beyond all things deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it? Who can know it unless taught by the Spirit of God? It is a still greater thing if, upon searching himself thoroughly, a man can solemnly protest unto the Omniscient One that his heart is not haughty: that is to say, neither proud in his opinion of himself, contemptuous to others, nor self righteous before the Lord; neither boastful of the past, proud of the present, nor ambitious for the future.

Nor mine eyes lofty. What the heart desires the eyes look for. Where the desires run the glances usually follow. This holy man felt that he did not seek after elevated places where he might gratify his self esteem, neither did he look down upon others as being his inferiors. A proud look the Lord hates; and in this all men are agreed with him; yea, even the proud themselves hate haughtiness in the gestures of others. Lofty eyes are so generally hateful that haughty men have been known to avoid the manners natural to the proud in order to escape the ill will of their fellows. The pride which apes humility always takes care to east its eyes downward, since every man's consciousness tells him that contemptuous glances are the sure ensigns of a boastful spirit. In Psalm 121 David lifted up his eyes to the hills; but here he declares that they were not lifted up in any other sense. When the heart is right, and the eyes are right, the whole man is on the road to a healthy and happy condition. Let us take care that we do not use the language of this Psalm unless, indeed, it be true as to ourselves; for there is no worse pride than that which claims humility when it does not possess it.

Neither do I exercise myself in great matters. As a private man he did not usurp the power of the king or devise plots against him: he minded his own business, and left others to mind theirs. As a thoughtful man he did not pry into things unrevealed; he was not speculative, self conceited or opinionated. As a secular person he did not thrust himself into the priesthood as Saul had done before him, and as Uzziah did after him. It is well so to exercise ourselves unto godliness that we know our true sphere, and diligently keep to it. Many through wishing to be great have failed to be good: they were not content to adorn the lowly stations which the Lord appointed them, and so they have rushed at grandeur and power, and found destruction where they looked for
Or in things too high for me. High things may suit others who are of greater stature, and yet they may be quite unfit for us. A man does well to know his own size. Ascertaining his own capacity, he will be foolish if he aims at that which is beyond his reach, straining himself, and thus injuring himself. Such is the vanity of many men that if a work be within their range they despise it, and think it beneath them: the only service which they are willing to undertake is that to which they have never been called, and for which they are by no means qualified. What a haughty heart must he have who will not serve God at all unless he may be trusted with five talents at the least! His looks are indeed lofty who disdains to be a light among his poor friends and neighbours here below, but demands to be created a star of the first magnitude to shine among the upper ranks, and to be admired by gazing crowds. It is just on God's part that those who wish to be everything should end in being nothing. It is a righteous retribution from God when every matter turns out to be too great for the man who would only handle great matters, and everything proves to be too high for the man who exercised himself in things too high for him. Lord, make us lowly, keep us lowly, fix us for ever in lowliness. Help us to be in such a case that the confession of this verse may come from our lips as a truthful utterance which we dare make before the Judge of all the earth.

2 Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child.
3 Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever.
PSALM 132

A Song of degrees

TITLE. A Song of Degrees. A joyful song indeed: let all pilgrims to the New Jerusalem sing it often. The degrees or ascents are very visible; the theme ascends step by step from, "afflictions" to a "crown", from "remember David", to, "I will make the horn of David to bud." The latter half is like the over arching sky bending above "the fields of the wood" which are found in the resolves and prayers of the former portion.

DIVISION. Our translators have rightly divided this Psalm. It contains a statement of David's anxious care to build a house for the Lord (Psalm 132:1-7); a prayer at the removal of the Ark (Psalm 132:8-10); and a pleading of the divine covenant and its promises (Psalm 132:11-18).

1 ¶LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions:

132: 1 LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions. With David the covenant was made, and therefore his name is pleaded on behalf of his descendants, and the people who would be blessed by his dynasty. Jehovah, who changes not, will never forget one of his servants, or fail to keep his covenant; yet for this thing he is to be entreated. That which we are assured the Lord will do must, nevertheless, be made a matter of prayer. The request is that the Lord would remember, and this is a word full of meaning. We know that the Lord remembered Noah, and assuaged the flood; he remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of Sodom; he remembered Rachel, and Hannah, and gave them children; he remembered his mercy to the house of Israel, and delivered his people. That is a choice song wherein we sing,
"He remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever"; and this is a notable prayer,

"Lord remember me." The plea is urged with God that he would bless the family of David for the sake of their progenitor; how much stronger is our master argument in prayer that God would deal well with us for Jesus' sake! David had no personal merit; the plea is based upon the covenant graciously made With him: but Jesus has deserts which are his own, and of boundless merits these we may urge without hesitation. When the Lord was angry with the reigning prince, the people cried,

"Lord remember David"; and when they needed any special blessing, again they sang,

"Lord, remember David." This was good pleading, but it was not so good as ours, which runs on this wise,

"Lord, remember Jesus, and all his afflictions." The afflictions of David here meant were those which came upon him as a godly man his endeavors to maintain the worship of Jehovah, and to provide for its decent and suitable celebration. There was always an ungodly party in the nation, and these persons were never slow to slander, hinder, and molest the servant of the Lord. Whatever were David's faults, he kept true to the one, only, living, and true God; and for this he was a speckled bird among monarchs. Since he zealously delighted in the worship of Jehovah, his God, he was despised and ridiculed by those who could not understand his enthusiasm.

God will never forget what his people suffer for his sake. No doubt innumerable blessings descend upon families and nations through the godly lives and patient sufferings of the saints. We cannot be saved by the merits of others, but beyond all question we are benefited by their virtues. Paul saith,

"God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name." Under the New Testament dispensation, as well as under the Old, there is a full reward for the righteous. That reward frequently comes upon their descendants rather than upon themselves: they sow, and their successors reap. We may at this day pray—Lord, remember the martyrs and confessors of our race, who suffered for thy name's sake, and bless our people and nation with gospel grace for our fathers' sakes.

2 How he swore unto the LORD, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob;

132: 2 How he swore unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob. Moved by intense devotion, David expressed his resolve in the form of a solemn vow, which was sealed with an oath. The fewer of such vows the better under a dispensation whose great Representative has said, "swear not at all." Perhaps even in this case it had been wiser to have left the pious resolve in the hands of God in the form of a prayer; for the vow was not actually fulfilled as intended, since the Lord forbade David to build him a temple. We had better not swear to do anything before we know the Lord's mind about it, and then we shall not need to swear. The instance of David's vows shows that vows are allowable, but it does not prove that they are desirable.
Probably David went too far in his words, and it is well that the Lord did not hold him to the letter of his bond, but accepted the will for the deed, and the meaning of his promise instead of the literal sense of it. David imitated Jacob, that great maker of vows at Bethel, and upon him rested the blessing pronounced on Jacob by Isaac.

"God Almighty bless thee" (Gen. 28:3), which was remembered by the patriarch on his death bed, when he spoke of

"the mighty God of Jacob." God is mighty to hear us, and to help us in performing our vow. We should be full of awe at the idea of making any promise to the Mighty God: to dare to trifle with him would be grievous indeed. It is observable that affliction led both David and Jacob into covenant dealings with the Lord: many vows are made in anguish of soul. We may also remark that, if the votive obligations of David are to be remembered of the Lord, much more are the suretyship engagements of the Lord Jesus before the mind of the great Lord, to whom our soul turns in the hour of our distress. Note, upon this verse, that Jehovah was the God of Jacob, the same God evermore; that he had this for his attribute, that he is mighty—mighty to succour his Jacobs who put their trust in him, though their afflictions be many. He is, moreover, specially the Mighty One of his people; he is the God of Jacob in a sense in which he is not the God of unbelievers. So here we have three points concerning our God:—name, Jehovah; attribute, mighty; special relationship, "mighty God of Jacob." He it is who is asked to remember David and his trials, and there is a plea for that blessing in each one of the three points.

3 Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed;

4 I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids,
I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to wine eyelids. He could not enjoy sleep till he had done his best to provide a place for the ark. It is a strong expression, and it is not to be coolly discussed by us. Remember that the man was all on fire, and he was writing poetry also, and therefore his language is not that which we should employ in cold blood. Everybody can see what he means, and how intensely he means it. Oh, that many more were seized with sleeplessness because the house of the Lord lies waste? They can slumber fast enough, and not even disturb themselves with a dream, though the cause of God should be brought to the lowest ebb by their covetousness. What is to become of those who have no care about divine things, and never give a thought to the claims of their God?

5 Until I find out a place for the LORD, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.

Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands. It is a striking fact that true religion never flourished more in Israel than before the temple was built, and that from the day of the erection of that magnificent house the spirit of godliness declined. Good men may have on their hearts matters which seem to them of chief importance, and it may be acceptable with God that they should seek to carry them out; and yet in his infinite wisdom he may judge it best to prevent their executing their designs. God does not measure his people’s actions by their wisdom, or want of wisdom, but by the sincere desire for his glory which has led up to them. David’s resolution, though he was not allowed to fulfill it, brought a blessing upon him: the Lord promised to build the house of David, because he had desired to build the house of the Lord. Moreover, the King was allowed to prepare the treasure for the erection of the glorious edifice which was built by his son and successor. The Lord shows the acceptance of what we desire to do by permitting us to do something else which his infinite mind judges to be fitter for us, and more honourable to himself.

6 Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah: we found it in the fields of the wood.
Meanwhile, where was the habitation of God among men? He was wont to shine forth from between the cherubim, but where was the ark? It was like a hidden thing, a stranger in its own land.

Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah. Rumours came that it was somewhere in the land of Ephraim, in a temporary lodging; rather an object of dread than of delight. Is it not wonderful that so renowned a symbol of the presence of the Lord should be lingering in neglect—a neglect so great that it was remarkable that we should have heard of its whereabouts at all? When a man begins to think upon God and his service it is comforting that the gospel is heard of. Considering the opposition which it has encountered it is marvelous that it should be heard of, and heard of in a place remote from the central city; but yet we are sorrowful that it is only in connection with some poor despised place that we do hear of it. What is Ephratah Who at this time knows where it was? How could the ark have remained there so long? David instituted a search for the ark. It had to be hunted for high and low; and at last at Kirjath-jeirm, the forest city, he came upon it. How often do souls find Christ and his salvation in out of the way places! What matters where we meet with him so long as we do behold him, and final life in him? That is a blessed Eureka which is embedded in our text—"we found it." The matter began with hearing, led on to a search, and concluded in a joyful find.

We found it in the fields of the wood. Alas that there should be no room for the Lord in the palaces of kings, so that he must needs take to the woods.
If Christ be in a wood he will yet be found of those who seek for him. He is as near in the rustic home, embowered among the trees, as in the open streets of the city; yea, he will answer prayer offered from the heart of the black forest where the lone traveler seems out of all hope of hearing. The text presents us with an instance of one whose heart was set upon finding the place where God would meet with him; this made him quick of hearing, and so the cheering news soon reached him. The tidings renewed his ardor, and led him to stick at no difficulties in his search; and so it came to pass that, where he could hardly have expected it, he lighted upon the treasure which he so much prized.

7 We will go into his tabernacles: we will worship at his footstool.

We will go into his tabernacles. Having found the place where he dwells we will hasten thereto. He has many dwellings in one in the various courts of his house, and each of these shall receive the reverence due: in each the priest shall offer for us the appointed service; and our hearts shall go where our bodies may not enter. David is not alone, he is represented as having sought for the ark with others, for so the word "we" implies; and now they are glad to attend him in his pilgrimage to the chosen shrine, saying, "We found it, we will go." Because these are the Lord's courts we will resort to them.

We will worship at his footstool. The best ordered earthly house can be no more than the footstool of so great a King. His ark can only reveal the glories of his feet, according to his promise that he will make the place of his feet glorious: yet thither will we hasten with joy, in glad companionship, and there will we adorn him.
Where Jehovah is, there shall he be worshipped. It is well not only to go to the Lord's house, but to worship there: we do but profane his tabernacles if we enter them for any other purpose. Before leaving this verse let us note the ascent of this Psalm of degrees—"We heard...we found...we will go...we will worship."

8 Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.
9 Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness; and let thy saints shout for joy.
10 For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed.
11 ¶ The LORD hath sworn in truth unto David; he will not turn from it; Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.

132: 11 Here we come to a grand covenant pleading of the kind which is always prevalent with the Lord.

The LORD hath sworn in truth unto, David. We cannot urge anything with God which is equal to his own word and oath. Jehovah swears that our faith may have strong confidence in it: he cannot forswear himself. He swears in truth, for he means every word that he utters; men may be perjured, but none will be so profane as to imagine this of the God of truth. By Nathan this covenant of Jehovah was conveyed to David, and there was no delusion in it.

He will not turn from it. Jehovah is not a changeable being. He never turns from his purpose, much less from his promise solemnly ratified by oath. He turneth never. He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. What a rock they stand upon who have an immutable oath of God for their foundation! We know that this covenant was really made with Christ, the spiritual seed of David, for Peter quotes it at Pentecost, saying,

"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." Christ therefore sits on a sure throne for ever and ever, seeing that he has kept the covenant, and through him the blessing comes upon Zion, whose poor are blessed in him.

Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne. Jesus sprang from the race of David, as the evangelists are careful to record; he was "of the house and lineage of David": at this day he is the King of the Jews, and the Lord has also given him the heathen for his inheritance. He must reign, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. God himself has set him on the throne, and no rebellion of men or devils can shake his dominion. The honour of Jehovah is concerned in his reign, and therefore it is never in danger; for the Lord will not suffer his oath to be dishonored.

12 If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them, their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.
132: 12 If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them. There is a condition to the covenant so far as it concerned kings of David's line before the coming of the true Seed; but he has fulfilled that condition, and made the covenant indefeasible henceforth and for ever as to himself and the spiritual seed in him. Considered as it related to temporal things it was no small blessing for David's dynasty to be secured the throne upon good behaviour. These monarchs held their crowns from God upon the terms of loyalty to their superior Sovereign, the Lord who had elevated them to their high position. They were to be faithful to the covenant by obedience to the divine law, and by belief of divine truth, they were to accept Jehovah as their Lord and their Teacher, regarding him in both relations as in covenant with them. What a condescension on God's part to be their teacher! How gladly ought they to render intelligent obedience! What a proper, righteous, and needful stipulation for God to make that they should be true to him when the reward was the promise,

Their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore. If they will sit at his feet God will make them sit on a throne; if they will keep the covenant they shall keep the crown from generation to generation. The kingdom of Judah might have stood to this day had its kings been faithful to the Lord. No internal revolt or external attack could have overthrown the royal house of David: it fell by its own sin, and by nothing else. The Lord was continually provoked, but he was amazingly long suffering, for long after seceding Israel had gone into captivity, Judah still remained. Miracles of mercy were shown to her. Divine patience exceeded all limits, for the Lord's regard for David was exceeding great. The princes of David's house seemed set on ruining themselves, and nothing could save them; justice waited long, but it was bound at last to unsheathe the sword and strike. Still, if in the letter man's breach of promise caused the covenant to fail, yet in spirit and essence the Lord has been true to it, for Jesus reigns, and holds the throne for ever. David's seed is still royal, for he was the progenitor according to the flesh of him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. This verse shows us the need of family piety. Parents must see to it that their children know the fear of the Lord, and they must beg the Lord himself to teach them his truth. We have no hereditary right to the divine favour: the Lord keeps up his friendship to families from generation to generation, for he is loath to leave the descendants of his servants, and never does so except under grievous and long continued provocation. As believers, we are all in a measure under some such covenant as that of David: certain of us can look backward for four generations of saintly ancestors, and we are now glad to look forward and to see our children, and our children's children, walking in the truth. Yet we know that grace does not run in the blood, and we are filled with holy fear lest in any of our seed there should be an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion; he hath desired it for his habitation.

132: 13 For the LORD hath chosen Zion. It was no more than any other Canaanite town till God chose it, David captured it, Solomon built it, and the Lord dwelt in it. So was the church a mere Jebusite stronghold till grace chose it, conquered it, rebuilt it, and dwelt in it. Jehovah has chosen his people, and hence they are his people. He has chosen the church, and hence it is what it is. Thus in the covenant David and Zion, Christ and his people, go together. David is for Zion, and Zion for David: the interests of Christ and his people are mutual.
He hath desired it for his habitation. David's question is answered. The Lord has spoken: the site of the temple is fixed: the place of the divine manifestation is determined. Indwelling follows upon election, and arises out of it: Zion is chosen, chosen for a habitation of God. The desire of God to dwell among the people whom he has chosen for himself is very gracious and yet very natural: his love will not rest apart from those upon whom he has placed it. God desires to abide with those whom he has loved with an everlasting love; and we do not wonder that it should be so, for we also desire the company of our beloved ones. It is a double marvel, that the Lord should choose and desire such poor creatures as we are: the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in believers is a wonder of grace parallel to the incarnation of the Son of God. God in the church is the wonder of heaven, the miracle of eternity, the glory of infinite love.

14 This is my rest for ever: here will I dwell; for I have desired it.

132: 14 This is my rest for ever. Oh, glorious words! It is God himself who here speaks. Think of rest for God! A Sabbath for the Eternal and a place of abiding for the Infinite. He calls Zion my rest. Here his love remains and displays itself with delight. "He shall rest in his love." And this forever. He will not seek another place of repose, nor grow weary of his saints. In Christ the heart of Deity is filled with content, and for his sake he is satisfied with his people, and will be so world without end. These august words declare a distinctive choice—this and no other; a certain choice—this which is well known to me; a present choice—this which is here at this moment. God has made his election of old, he has not changed it, and he never will repent of it: his church was his rest and is his rest still. As he will not turn from his oath, so he will never turn from his choice. Oh, that we may enter into his rest, may be part and parcel of his church, and yield by our loving faith a delight to the mind of him who taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy.

Here will I dwell; for I have desired it. Again are we filled with wonder that he who fills all things should dwell in Zion—should dwell in his church. God does not unwillingly visit his chosen; he desires to dwell with them; he desires them. He is already in Zion, for he says here, as one upon the spot. Not only will he occasionally come to his church, but he will dwell in it, as his fixed abode. He cared not for the magnificence of Solomon's temple, but he determined that at the mercy seat he would be found by suppliants, and that thence he would shine forth in brightness of grace among the favored nation. All this, however, was but a type of the spiritual house, of which Jesus is foundation and cornerstone, upon which all the living stones are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Oh, the sweetness of the thought that God desires to dwell in his people and rest among them! Surely if it be his desire he will cause it to be so. If the desire of the righteous shall be granted much more shall the desire of the righteous God be accomplished. This is the joy of our souls, for surely we shall rest in God, and certainly our desire is to dwell in him. This also is the end of our fears for the church of God; for if the Lord dwell in her, she shall not be moved; if the Lord desire her, the devil cannot destroy her.

15 I will abundantly bless her provision: I will satisfy her poor with bread.

132: 15 I will abundantly bless her provision. It must be so. How can we be without a blessing when the Lord is among us? We live upon his word, we are clothed by his charity, we are armed
by his power: all sorts of provision are in him, and how can they be otherwise than blessed? The provision is to be abundantly blessed; then it will be abundant and blessed. Daily provision, royal pie vision, satisfying provision, overflowingly joyful provision the church shall receive; and the divine benediction shall cause us to receive it with faith, to feed upon it by experience, to grow upon it by sanctification, to be strengthened by it to labour, cheered by it to patience, and built up by it to perfection.

I will satisfy her poor with bread. The citizens of Zion are poor in themselves, poor in spirit, and often poor in pocket, but their hearts and souls shall dwell in such abundance that they shall neither need more nor desire more. Satisfaction is the crown of experience. Where God rests his people shall be satisfied. They are to be satisfied with what the Lord himself calls "bread", and we may be sure that he knows what is really bread for souls. He will not give us a stone. The Lord's poor shall "have food convenient for them": that which will suit their palate, remove their hunger, fill their desire, build up their frame, and perfect their growth. The breadth of earth is "the bread that perisheth", but the bread of God endureth to life eternal. In the church where God rests his people shall not starve; the Lord would never rest if they did. He did not take rest for six days till he had prepared the world for the first man to live in; he would not stay his hand till all things were ready; therefore, we may be sure if the Lord rests it is because "it is finished", and the Lord hath prepared of his goodness for the poor. Where God finds his desire his people shall find theirs; if he is satisfied, they shall be. Taking the two clauses together, we see that nothing but an abundant blessing in the church will satisfy the Lord's poor people: they are naked and miserable till that comes. All the provision that Solomon himself could make would not have satisfied the saints of his day: they looked higher, and longed for the Lord's own boundless blessing, and hungered for the bread which came down from heaven. Blessed be the Lord, they had in this verse two of the "I wills" of God to rest upon, and nothing could be a better support to their faith.

16 I will also clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall shout aloud for joy.

132: 16 More is promised than was prayed for. See how the ninth verse asks for the priests to be clad in righteousness, and the answer is,

I will also clothe her priests with salvation. God is wont to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or even think. Righteousness is but one feature of blessing, salvation is the whole of it. What cloth of gold is this! What more than regal array! Garments of salvation! we know who has woven them, who has dyed them, and who has given them to his people. These are the best robes for priests and preachers, for princes and people; there is none like them; give them me. Not every priest shall be thus clothed, but only her priests, those who truly belong to Zion by faith which is in Christ Jesus who hath made them priests unto God. These, are clothed by the Lord himself, and none can clothe as he does. It even the grass of the field is so clothed by the Creator as to out do Solomon in all his glory, how must his own children be clad? Truly he shall be admired in his saints; the liveries of his servants shall be the wonder of heaven.
And her saints shall shout aloud for joy. Again we have a golden answer to a silver prayer. The Psalmist would have the "saints shout for joy." "That they shall do", saith the Lord, "and aloud too"; they shall be exceedingly full of delight; their songs and shouts shall be so hearty that they shall sound as the noise of many waters, and as great thunders. These joyful ones are not, however, the mimic saints of superstition, but her saints, saints of the Most High, "sanctified in Christ Jesus." These shall be so abundantly blessed and so satisfied, and so appareled that they can do no otherwise than shout to show their astonishment, their triumph, their gratitude, their exultation, their enthusiasm, their joy in the Lord. Zion has no dumb saints. The sight of God at rest among his chosen is enough to make the most silent shout. If the morning stars sang together when the earth and heavens were made, much more will all the sons of God shout for joy when the new heavens and the new earth are finished, and the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride for her husband. Meanwhile, even now the dwelling of the Lord among us is a perennial fountain of sparkling delight to all holy minds. This shouting for joy is guaranteed to Zion's holy ones: God says they shall shout aloud, and depend upon it they will: who shall stop them of this glorying? The Lord hath said by his Spirit, "let them shout aloud": who is he that shall make them hold their peace? The Bridegroom is with them, and shall the children of the bride chamber fast?: Nay, verily, we rejoice, yea and will rejoice.

17 There will I make the horn of David to bud: I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.

132: 17 There will I make the horn of David to bud. In Zion David's dynasty shall develop power and glory. In our notes from other authors we have included a description of the growth of the horns of stags, which is the natural fact from which we conceive the expression in the text to be borrowed. As the stag is made noble and strong by the development of his horns, so the house of David shall advance from strength to strength. This was to be by the work of the Lord—"there will I make", and therefore it would be sure and solid growth. When God makes us to bud none can cause us to fade. When David's descendants left the Lord and the worship of his house, they declined in all respects, for it was only through the Lord, and in connection with his worship that their horn would bud.

I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. David's name was to be illustrious, and brilliant as a lamp; it was to continue shining like a lamp in the sanctuary; it was thus to be a comfort to the people, and an enlightenment to the nations. God would not suffer the light of David to go out by the extinction of his race: his holy ordinances had decreed that the house of his servant should remain in the midst of Israel. What a lamp is our Lord Jesus! A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. As the anointed—the true Christ, he shall be the light of heaven itself.

Oh for grace to receive our illumination and our consolation from Jesus Christ alone.
18 His enemies will I clothe with shame: but upon himself shall his crown flourish.

132:18 *His enemies will I clothe with shame.* They shall be utterly defeated, they shall loathe their evil design, they shall be despised for having hated the Ever Blessed One. Their shame they will be unable to hide, it shall cover them: God will array them in it for ever, and it shall be their convict dress to all eternity.

*But upon himself shall his crown flourish.* Green shall be his laurels of victory. He shall win and wear the crown of honour, and his inherited diadem shall increase in splendor. Is it not so to this hour with Jesus? His kingdom cannot fail, his imperial glories cannot fade. It is himself that we delight to honour; it is to himself that the honour comes, and upon himself that it flourishes. If others snatch at his crown their traitorous aims are defeated; but he in his own person reigns with ever growing splendor.

"Crown him, crown him,
Crowns become the victor's brow."
PSALM 133

A Song of degrees of David

TITLE. A Song of Degrees of David. We see no reason for depriving David of the authorship of this sparkling sonnet. He knew by experience the bitterness occasioned by divisions in families, and was well prepared to celebrate in choicest Psalmody the blessing of unity for which he sighed. Among the "songs of degrees", this hymn has certainly attained unto a good degree, and even in common literature it is frequently quoted for its perfume and dew. In this Psalm there is no wry word, all is "sweetness and light",—a notable ascent from Psalm 110 with which the Pilgrims set out. That is full of war and lamentation, but this sings of peace and pleasantness. The visitors to Zion were about to return, and this may have been their hymn of joy because they had seen such union among the tribes who had gathered at the common altar. The previous Psalm, which sings of the covenant, had also revealed the center of Israel's unity in the Lord's anointed and the promises made to him. No wonder that brethren dwell in unity when God dwells among them, and finds his rest in them. Our translators have given to this Psalm an admirable explanatory heading, "The benefit of the communion of saints." These good men often hit off the meaning of a passage in a few words.

1 ¶ Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!

133:1. Behold. It is a wonder seldom seen, therefore behold it! It may be seen, for it is the characteristic of real saints,—therefore fail not to inspect it! It is well worthy of admiration; pause and gaze upon it! It will charm you into imitation, therefore note it well! God looks on with approval, therefore consider it with attention.

How good and holy pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! No one can tell the exceeding excellence of such a condition; and so the Psalmist uses the word "how" twice;—Behold how good! And how pleasant! He does not attempt to measure either the good or the pleasure, but invites us to behold for ourselves. The combination of the two adjectives "good" and "pleasant", is more remarkable than the conjunction of two stars of the first magnitude: for a thing to be "good" is good, but for it also to be pleasant is better. All men love pleasant things, and yet it frequently happens that the pleasure is evil; but here the condition is as good as it is pleasant, as pleasant as it is good, for the same "how" is set before each qualifying word. For brethren according to the flesh to dwell together is not always wise; for experience teaches that they are better a little apart, and it is shameful for them to dwell together in disunion. They had much better part in peace like Abraham and Lot, than dwell together in envy like Joseph's
brothers. When brethren can and do dwell together in unity, then is their communion worthy to be gazed upon and sung of in holy Psalmody. Such sights ought often to be seen among those who are near of kin, for they are brethren, and therefore should be united in heart and aim; they dwell together, and it is for their mutual comfort that there should be no strife; and yet how many families are rent by fierce feuds, and exhibit a spectacle which is neither good nor pleasant! As to brethren in spirit, they ought to dwell together in church fellowship, and in that fellowship one essential matter is unity. We can dispense with uniformity if we possess unity: oneness of life, truth, and way; oneness in Christ Jesus; oneness of object and spirit—these we must have, or our assemblies will be synagogues of contention rather than churches of Christ. The closer the unity the better; for the more of the good and the pleasant there will be. Since we are imperfect beings, somewhat of the evil and the unpleasant is sure to intrude; but this will readily be neutralized and easily ejected by the true love of the saints, if it really exists. Christian unity is good in itself, good for ourselves, good for the brethren, good for our converts, good for the outside world; and for certain it is pleasant; for a loving heart must have pleasure and give pleasure in associating with others of like nature. A church united for years in earnest service of the Lord is a well of goodness and joy to all those who dwell round about it.

2 It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, 

**even** Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments;

133: 2 *It is like the precious ointment upon the head*. In order that we may the better behold brotherly unity David gives us a resemblance, so that as in a glass we may perceive its blessedness. It has a sweet perfume about it, comparable to that precious ointment with which the first High Priest was anointed at his ordination. It is a holy thing, and so again is like the oil of consecration which was to be used only in the Lord's service. What a sacred thing must brotherly love be when it can be likened to an oil which must never be poured on any man but on the Lord's high priest alone! It is a diffusive thing: being poured on his head the fragrant oil flowed down upon Aaron's head, and thence dropped upon his garments till the utmost hem was anointed therewith; and even so doth brotherly love extend its benign power and bless all who are beneath its influence. Hearty concord brings a benediction upon all concerned; its goodness and pleasure are shared in by the lowliest members of the household; even the servants are the better and the happier because of the lovely unity among the members of the family. It has a special use about it; for as by the anointing oil Aaron was set apart for the special service of Jehovah, even so those who dwell in love are the better fitted to glorify God in his church. The Lord is not likely to use for his glory those who are devoid of love; they lack the anointing needful to make them priests unto the Lord.

*That ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard.* This is a chief point of comparison, that as the oil did not remain confined to the place where it first fell, but flowed down the High Priest's hair and bedewed his beard, even so brotherly love descending from the head distils and descends, anointing as it runs, and perfuming all it lights upon.

*That went down to the skirts of his garments.* Once set in motion it would not cease from flowing. It might seem as if it were better not to smear his garments with oil, but the sacred unguent could not be restrained, it flowed over his holy robes; even thus does brotherly love not
only flow over the hearts upon which it was first poured out, and descend to those who are an inferior part of the mystical body of Christ, but it runs where it is not sought for, asking neither leave nor license to make its way. Christian affection knows no limits of parish, nation, sect, or age. Is the man a believer in Christ? Then he is in the one body, and I must yield him an abiding love. Is he one of the poorest, one of the least spiritual, one of the least lovable? Then he is as the skirts of the garment, and my heart's love must fall even upon him. Brotherly love comes from the head, but falls to the feet. Its way is downward. It "ran down", and it" went down": love for the brethren condescends to men of low estate, it is not puffed up, but is lowly and meek. This is no small part of its excellence: oil would not anoint if it did not flow down, neither would brotherly love diffuse its blessing if it did not descend.

3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore.

133: 3 As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion. From the loftier mountains the moisture appears to be wafted to the lesser hills: the dews of Hermon fall on Zion. The Alpine Lebanon ministers to the minor elevation of the city of David; and so does brotherly love descend from the higher to the lower, refreshing and enlivening in its course. Holy concord is as dew, mysteriously blessed, full of life and growth for all plants of grace. It brings with it so much benediction that it is as no common dew, but As that of Hermon which is specially copious, and far reaching. The proper rendering is, "As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion”, and this tallies with the figure which has been already used; and sets forth by a second simile the sweet descending diffusiveness of brotherly unity.

For there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for evermore. That is, in Zion, or better still, in the place where brotherly love abounds. Where love reigns God reigns. Where love wishes blessing, there God commands the blessing. God has but to command, and it is done. He is so pleased to see his dear children happy in one another that he fails not to make them happy in himself.

He gives especially his best blessing of eternal life, for love is life; dwelling together in love we have begun the enjoyments of eternity, and these shall not be taken from us. Let us love for evermore, and we shall live for evermore. This makes Christian brotherhood so good and pleasant; it has Jehovah's blessing resting upon it, and it cannot be otherwise than sacred like "the precious ointment", and heavenly like "the dew of Hermon." O for more of this rare virtue! Not the love which comes and goes, but that which dwells; not that spirit which separates and secludes, but that which dwells together; not that mind which is all for debate and difference, but that which dwells together in unity. Never shall we know the full power of the anointing till we are of one heart and of one spirit; never will the sacred dew of the Spirit descend in all its fullness till we are perfectly joined together in the same mind; never will the covenanted and commanded blessing come forth from the Lord our God till once again we shall have "one Lord,
one faith, one baptism." Lord, lead us into this most precious spiritual unity, for thy Son's sake. Amen.

PSALM 134

A Song of degrees

TITLE. A Song of Degrees. We have now reached the last of the Gradual Psalms. The Pilgrims are going home, and are singing the last song in their Psalter. They leave early in the morning, before the day has fully commenced, for the journey is long for many of them. While yet the night lingers they are on the move. As soon as they are outside the gates they see the guards upon the temple wall, and the lamps shining from the windows of the chambers which surround the sanctuary; therefore, moved by the sight, they chant a farewell to the perpetual attendants upon the holy shrine. Their parting exhortation arouses the priests to pronounce upon them a blessing out of the holy place: this benediction is contained in the third verse. The priests as good as say, "You have desired us to bless the Lord, and now we pray the Lord to bless you."

The Psalm teaches us to pray for those who are continually ministering before the Lord, and it invites all ministers to pronounce benedictions upon their loving and prayerful people.

1 ¶Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD.

134: 1 Behold. By this call the pilgrims bespeak the attention of the night watch. They shout to them—Behold! The retiring pilgrims stir up the holy brotherhood of those who are appointed to keep the watch of the house of the Lord. Let them look around them upon the holy place, and everywhere "behold" reasons for sacred praise. Let them look above them at night and magnify him that made heaven and earth, and lighted the one with stars and the other with his love. Let them see to it that their hallelujahs never come to an end. Their departing brethren arouse them with the shrill cry of "Behold!"—see, take care, be on the watch, diligently mind your work, and incessantly adore and bless Jehovah's name.

Bless ye the LORD. Think well of Jehovah, and speak well of him. Adore him with reverence, draw near to him with love, delight in him with exultation. Be not content with praise, such as all his works render to him; but, as his saints, see that ye "bless" him. He blesses you; therefore, be zealous to bless him. The word "bless" is the characteristic word of the Psalm. The first two verses stir us up to bless Jehovah, and in the last verse Jehovah's blessing is invoked upon the people. Oh to abound in blessing! May blessed and blessing be the two words which describe our lives. Let others flatter their fellows, or bless their stars, or praise themselves; as for us, we will bless Jehovah, from whom all blessings flow.

All ye servants of the LORD. It is your office to bless him; take care that you lead the way therein. Servants should speak well of their masters. Not one of you should serve him as of
compulsion, but all should bless him while you serve him; yea, bless him for permitting you to serve him, fitting you to serve him, and accepting your service.

To be a servant of Jehovah is an incalculable honour, a blessing beyond all estimate. To be a servant in his temple, a domestic in his house, is even more a delight and a glory; if those Who are ever with the Lord, and dwell in his own temple, do not bless the Lord, who will?

Which by night stand in the house of the LORD. We can well understand how the holy pilgrims half envied those consecrated ones who guarded the temple, and attended to the necessary offices thereof through the hours of night. To the silence and solemnity of night there was added the awful glory of the place where Jehovah had ordained that his worship should be celebrated, blessed were the priests and Levites who were ordained to a service so sublime. That these should bless the Lord throughout their nightly vigils was most fitting: the people would have them mark this, and never fail in the duty. They were not to move about like so many machines, but to put their hearts into all their duties, and worship spiritually in the whole course of their duty. It would be well to watch, but better still to be "watching unto prayer" and praise. When night settles down on a church the Lord has his watchers and holy ones still guarding his truth, and these must not be discouraged, but must bless the Lord even when the darkest hours draw on. Be it ours to cheer them, and lay upon them this charge—to bless the Lord at all times, and let his praise be continually in their mouths.

2 Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.

134: 2. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary. In the holy place they must be busy, full of strength, wide awake, energetic, and moved with holy ardor. Hands, heart, and every other part of their manhood must be upraised, elevated, and consecrated to the adoring service of the Lord. As the angels praise God day without night, so must the angels of the churches be instant in season and out of season.

And bless the LORD. This is their main business. They are to bless men by their teaching, but they must yet more bless Jehovah with their worship. Too often men look at public worship only from the side of its usefulness to the people; but the other matter is of even higher importance: we must see to it that the Lord God is adored, extolled, and had in reverence. For a second time the word "bless" is used, and applied to Jehovah. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let every other soul bless him. There will be no drowsiness about even midnight devotion if the heart is set upon blessing God in Christ Jesus, which is the gospel translation of God in the sanctuary.

3 The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.

134: 3 This last verse is the answer from the temple to the pilgrims preparing to depart as the day breaks. It is the ancient blessing of the high priest condensed, and poured forth upon each individual pilgrim.

The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion. Ye are scattering and going to your homes one by one; may the benediction come upon you one by one. You have been up to Jehovah's city and temple at his bidding; return each one with such a benediction as only he can
give—divine, infinite, effectual, eternal. You are not going away from Jehovah's works or glories, for he made the heaven above you and the earth on which you dwell. He is your Creator, and he can bless you with untold mercies; he can create joy and peace in your hearts, and make for you a new heaven and a new earth. May the Maker of all things make you to abound in blessings. The benediction comes from the City of the Great King, from his appointed ministers, by virtue of his covenant, and so it is said to be "out of Zion." To this day the Lord blesses each one of his people through his church, his gospel, and the ordinances of his house. It is in communion with the saints that we receive untold benisons. May each one of us obtain yet more of the blessing which cometh from the Lord alone. Zion cannot bless us; the holiest ministers can only wish us a blessing; but Jehovah can and will bless each one of his waiting people. So may it be at this good hour. Do we desire it? Let us then bless the Lord ourselves. Let us do it a second time. Then we may confidently hope that the third time we think of blessing we shall find ourselves conscious receivers of it from the Ever blessed One. Amen.

PSALM 135

GENERAL REMARKS. This Psalm has no title. It is mainly made up of selections from other Scriptures. It has been called a mosaic, and compared to a tessellated pavement. At the outset, its first two verses (Psalm 135:1-2) are taken from Psalm 134:1-3; while the latter part of Psalm 135:2 and the commencement of Psalm 135:3 put us in mind of Psalm 116:19; and Psalm 135:4 suggests De 7:6. Does not Psalm 135:5 remind us of Psalm 95:3? As for Psalm 135:7, it is almost identical with Jer 10:13, which may have been taken from it. The passage contained in Psalm 135:13 is to be found in Ex 3:15, and Psalm 135:14 in De 32:36. The closing verses, Psalm 135:8-12, are in Psalm 136. From Psalm 135:15 to the end the strain is a repetition of Psalm 115:1-18. This process of tracing the expressions to other sources might be pushed further without straining the quotations; the whole Psalm is a compound of many choice extracts, and yet it has all the continuity and freshness of an original poem. The Holy Spirit occasionally repeats himself; not because he has any lack of thoughts or words, but because it is expedient for
us that we hear the same things in the same form. Yet, when our great Teacher uses repetition, it is usually with instructive variations, which deserve our careful attention.

**DIVISION.** The first fourteen verses contain an exhortation to praise Jehovah for his goodness (Psalm 135:3), for his electing love (Psalm 135:4), his greatness (Psalm 135:5-7) his judgments (Psalm 135:8-12), his unchanging character (Psalm 135:13), and his love towards his people. This is followed by a denunciation of idols (Psalm 135:15-18), and a further exhortation to bless the name of the Lord. It is a song full of life, vigor, variety, and devotion.

1 ¶ Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the name of the LORD; praise him, O ye servants of the LORD.

135: 1 *Praise ye the Lord,* or, *Hallelujah.* Let those who are themselves full of holy praise labour to excite the like spirit in others. It is not enough for us to praise God ourselves, we are quite unequal to such a work; let us call in all our friends and neighbours, and if they have been slack in such service, let us stir them up to it with loving exhortations.

*Praise ye the name of the Lord.* Let his character be extolled by you, and let all that he has revealed concerning himself be the subject of your song; for this is truly his name. Specially let his holy and incommunicable name of “Jehovah” be the object of your adoration. By that name he sets forth his self-existence, and his immutability; let these arouse your praises of his Godhead. Think of him with love, admire him with heartiness, and then extol him with ardor. Do not only magnify the Lord because he is God; but study his character and his doings, and thus render intelligent, appreciative praise.

*Praise him, O ye servants of the Lord.* If others are silent, you must not be; you must be the first to celebrate his praises. You are “servants”, and this is part of your service; his "name" is named upon you, therefore celebrate his name with praises; you know what a blessed Master he is, therefore speak well of him. Those who shun his service are sure to neglect his praise; but as grace has made you his own personal servants, let your hearts make you his court musicians. Here we see the servant of the Lord arousing his fellow servants by three times calling upon them to praise. Are we, then, so slow in such a sweet employ? Or is it that when we do our utmost it is all too little for such a Lord? Both are true. We do not praise enough; we cannot praise too much. We ought to be always at it; answering to the command here given—Praise, Praise, Praise. Let the Three-in-one have the praises of our spirit, soul, and body. For the past, the present, and the future, let us render threefold hallelujahs.

2 Ye that stand in the house of the LORD, in the courts of the house of our God,
others in the excellent duty of adoration? Should not all of every degree who wait even in his 
outer courts unite in his worship? Ought not the least and feeblest of his people to proclaim his 
praises, in company with those who live nearest to him? Is it not a proper thing to remind them 
of their obligations? Is not the Psalmist wise when he does so in this case and in many others? 
Those who can call Jehovah "our God" are highly blessed, and therefore should abound in the 
work of blessing him. Perhaps this is the sweetest word in these two verses.

"This God is our God for ever and ever." "Our God" signifies possession, communion in 
possession, assurance of possession, delight in possession. Oh the unutterable joy of calling God 
our own!

3 Praise the LORD; for the LORD is good: sing praises unto his name; for it is 
pleasant.

135: 3 Praise the LORD. Do it again; continue to do it; do it better and more heartily; do it in 
growing numbers; do it at once. There are good reasons for praising the Lord, and among the 
first is this—

for the LORD is good. He is so good that there is none good in the same sense or degree. He is 
so good that all good is found in him, flows from him, and is rewarded by him. The word God is 
brief for good; and truly God is the essence of goodness. Should not his goodness be well spoken 
of? Yea, with our best thoughts, and words, and hymns let us glorify his name.

Sing praises unto his name, for it is pleasant. The adjective may apply to the singing and to the 
name—they are both pleasant. The vocal expression of praise by sacred song is one of our 
greatest delights. We were created for this purpose, and hence it is a joy to us. It is a charming 
duty to praise the lovely name of our God. All pleasure is to be found in the joyful worship of 
Jehovah; all joys are in his sacred name as perfumes lie slumbering in a garden of flowers. The 
mind expands, the soul is lifted up, the heart warms, the whole being is filled with delight when 
we are engaged in singing the high praises of our Father, Redeemer, Comforter. When in any 
occupation goodness and pleasure unite, we 
do well to follow it up without stint: yet it is to be feared that few of us sing to the Lord at all in 
proportion as we talk to men.

4 For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself, and Israel for his peculiar 
treasure.

135: 4 For the LORD hath chosen Jacob unto himself. Jehovah hath chosen Jacob. Should not 
the sons of Jacob praise him who has so singularly favored them Election is one of the most 
forcible arguments for adoring love. Chosen! chosen unto himself!—who can be grateful enough 
for being concerned in this privilege

"Jacob have I loved", said Jehovah, and he gave no reason for his love except that he chose to 
love. Jacob had then done neither good nor evil, yet thus the Lord determined, and thus he spake. 
If it be said that the choice was made upon foresight of Jacob's character, it is, perhaps, even
more remarkable; for there was little enough about Jacob that could deserve special choice. By nature Jacob was by no means the most lovable of men. No, it was sovereign grace which dictated the choice. But, mark, it was not a choice whose main result was the personal welfare of Jacob's seed: the nation was chosen by God unto himself, to answer the divine ends and purposes in blessing all mankind. Jacob's race was chosen to be the Lord's own, to be the trustees of his truth, the maintainers of his worship, the mirrors of his mercy. Chosen they were; but mainly for this end, that they might be a peculiar people, set apart unto the service of the true God.

**And Israel for his peculiar treasure.** God's choice exalts; for here the name is changed from Jacob, the supplanter, to Israel, the prince. The love of God gives a new name and imparts a new value; for the comparison to a royal treasure is a most honourable one. As kings have a special regalia, and a selection of the rarest jewels, so the Lord deigns to reckon his chosen nation as his wealth, his delight, his glory. What an honour to the spiritual Israel that they are all this to the Lord their God! We are a people near and dear unto him; precious and honourable in his sight. How can we refuse our loudest, heartiest, sweetest music? If we did not extol him, the stones in the street would cry out against us.

5 ¶ For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods.

135: 5 For I know that the LORD is great, and that our Lord is above all gods. The greatness of God is as much a reason for adoration as his goodness, when we are once reconciled to him. God is great positively great comparatively, and great superlatively—

"above all gods." Of this the Psalmist had an assured personal persuasion. He says positively, "I know." It is knowledge worth possessing. He knew by observation, inspiration, and realization; he was no agnostic, he was certain and clear upon the matter. He not only knows the greatness of Jehovah, but that as the Adonai, or Ruler, "our Lord" is infinitely superior to all the imaginary deities of the heathen, and to all great ones besides.

"Let princes hear, let angels know, How mean their natures seem; Those gods on high, and gods below, When once compared with him."

Many have thought to worship Jehovah, and other gods with him; but this holy man tolerated no such notion. Others have thought to combine their religion with obedience to the unrighteous laws of tyrannical princes; this, also, the sweet singer of Israel denounced; for he regarded the living God as altogether above all men, who as magistrates and princes have been called gods. Observe here the fourth of the five "fors." Psalm 135:3-5,14 contain reasons for praise, each set forth with "for." A fruitful meditation might be suggested by this.

6 Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places.
Whatsoever the LORD pleased, that did he in heaven, and in earth, in the seas, and all deep places. His will is carried out throughout all space. The king's warrant runs in every portion of the universe. The heathen divided the great domain; but Jupiter does not rule in heaven, nor Neptune on the sea, nor Pluto in the lower regions; Jehovah rules over all. His decree is not defeated, his purpose is not frustrated: in no one point is his good pleasure set aside. The word "whatsoever" is of the widest range and includes all things, and the four words of place which are mentioned comprehend all space; therefore the declaration of the text knows neither limit nor exception. Jehovah works his will: he pleases to do, and he performs the deed. None can stay his hand. How different this from the gods whom the heathen fabled to be subject to all the disappointments, failures, and passions of men! How contrary even to those so called Christian conceptions of God which subordinate him to the will of man, and make his eternal purposes the football of human caprice.

Our theology teaches us no such degrading notions of the Eternal as that he can be baffled by man.

"His purpose shall stand, and he will do all his pleasure." No region is too high, no abyss too deep, no land too distant, no sea too wide for his omnipotence: his divine pleasure travels post over all the realm of nature, and his behests are obeyed.

He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth; he maketh lightnings for the rain; he bringeth the wind out of his treasuries.

He causeth the vapors to ascend from the ends of the earth. Here we are taught the power of God in creation. The process of evaporation is passed by unnoticed by the many, because they see it going on all around them; the usual ceases to be wonderful to the thoughtless, but it remains a marvel to the instructed. When we consider upon what an immense scale evaporation is continually going on, and how needful it is for the existence of all life, we may well admire the wisdom and the power which are displayed therein. All around us from every point of the horizon the vapor rises, condenses into clouds, and ultimately descends as rain. Whence the vapors originally ascended from which our showers are formed it would be impossible to tell; most probably the main part of them comes from the tropical regions, and other remote places at "the ends of the earth." It is the Lord who causes them to rise, and not a mere law. What is law without a force at the back of it?

He maketh lightnings for the rain. There is an intimate connection between lightning and rain, and this would seem to be more apparent in Palestine than even with ourselves; for we constantly read of thunderstorms in that country as attending heavy down pours of rain. Lightning is not to be regarded as a lawless force, but as a part of that wonderful machinery by which the earth is kept in a fit condition: a force as much under the control of God as any other, a force most essential to our existence. The ever changing waters, rains, winds, and electric currents circulate as if they were the life blood and vital spirits of the universe.

He bringeth the wind out of his treasuries. This great force which seems left to its own wild will is really under the supreme and careful government of the Lord. As a monarch is specially
master of the contents of his own treasure, so is our God the Lord of the tempest and hurricane; and as princes do not spend their treasure without taking note and count of it, so the Lord does not permit the wind to be wasted, or squandered without purpose. Everything in the material world is under the immediate direction and control of the Lord of all. Observe how the Psalmist brings before us the personal action of Jehovah:

"he causeth", "he maketh", "he bringeth." Everywhere the Lord worketh all things, and there is no power which escapes his supremacy. It is well for us that it is so: one bandit force wandering through the Lord's domains defying his control would cast fear and trembling over all the provinces of providence. Let us praise Jehovah for the power and wisdom with which he rules clouds, and lightnings, and winds, and all other mighty and mysterious agencies.

8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast.

135: 8 Who smote the firstborn of Egypt, both of man and beast. Herein the Lord is to be praised; for this deadly smiting was an act of justice against Egypt, and of love to Israel. But what a blow it was! All the firstborn slain in a moment! How it must have horrified the nation, and cowed the boldest enemies of Israel! Beasts because of their relationship to man as domestic animals are in many ways made to suffer with him. The firstborn of beasts must die as well as the firstborn of their owners, for the blow was meant to astound and overwhelm, and it accomplished its purpose. The firstborn of God had been sorely smitten, and they were set free by the Lord's meting out to their oppressors the like treatment.

9 Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants.

135: 9 Who sent tokens and wonders into the midst of thee, O Egypt, upon Pharaoh, and upon all his servants. The Lord is still seen by the Psalmist as sending judgments upon rebellious men; he keeps before us the personal action of God, "who sent tokens", etc. The more distinctly God is seen the better. Even in plagues he is to be seen, as truly as in mercies. The plagues were not only terrible wonders which astounded men, but forcible tokens or signs by which they were instructed. No doubt the plagues were aimed at the various deities of the Egyptians, and were a grand exposure of their impotence; each one had its own special significance. The judgments of the Lord were no side blows, they struck the nation at the heart; he sent his bolts "into the midst of thee, O Egypt!" These marvels happened in the centre of the proud and exclusive nation of Egypt, which thought itself far superior to other lands; and many of these plagues touched the nation in points upon which it prided itself. The Psalmist addresses that haughty nation, saying, "O Egypt", as though reminding it of the lessons which it had been taught by the Lord's right hand. Imperious Pharaoh had been the ringleader in defying Jehovah, and he was made personally to smart for it; nor did his flattering courtiers escape, upon each one of them the scourge fell heavily. God's servants are far better off than Pharaoh's servants: those who stand in the courts of Jehovah are delivered, but the courtiers of Pharaoh are smitten all of them, for they
were all partakers in his evil deeds. The Lord is to be praised for thus rescuing his own people, and causing their cruel adversaries to bite the dust. Let no true Israelite forget the song of the Red Sea, but anew let us hear a voice summoning us to exulting praise: "Sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously."

10 Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings;

135: 10 Who smote great nations, and slew mighty kings. The nations of Canaan joined in the desperate resistance offered by their monarchs, and so they were smitten; while their kings, the ringleaders of the fight, were slain. Those who resist the divine purpose will find it hard to kick against the pricks The greatness of the nations and the might of the kings availed nothing against the Lord. He is prepared to mete out vengeance to those who oppose his designs: those who dream of him as too tender to come to blows have mistaken the God of Israel. He intended to bless the world through his chosen people, and he would not be turned from his purpose: cost what it might, he would preserve the candle of truth which he had lighted, even though the blood of nations should be spilt in its defense. The wars against the Canaanite races were a price paid for the setting up of a nation which was to preserve for the whole world the lively oracles of God.

11 Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan, and all the kingdoms of Canaan:

135: 11 Sihon king of the Amorites, and Og king of Bashan. These two kings were the first to oppose, and they were amongst the most notable of the adversaries: their being smitten is therefore a special object of song for loyal Israelites. The enmity of these two kings was wanton and unprompted, and hence their overthrow was the more welcome to Israel. Sihon had been victorious in his war with Moab, and thought to make short work with Israel, but he was speedily overthrown: Og was of the race of the giants, and by his huge size inspired the tribes with dread; but they were encouraged by the previous overthrow of Sihon, and soon the giant king fell beneath their sword.

And all the kingdoms Of Canaan. Many were these petty principalities, and some of them were populous and valiant; but they all fell beneath the conquering hand of Joshua, for the Lord was with him. Even so shall all the foes of the Lord's believing people in these days be put to the rout: Satan and the world shall be overthrown, and all the hosts of sin shall be destroyed, for our greater Joshua leads forth our armies, conquering and to conquer. Note that in this verse we have the details of matters which were mentioned in the bulk in the previous stanza: it is well when we have sting of mercies in the gross to consider them one by one, and give to each individual blessing a share in our song. It is well to preserve abundant memorials of the Lord's deliverance, so that we not only sing of mighty kings as a class but also of "Sihon king of the Amorites and Og king of Bashan" as distinct persons.

12 And gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people.
And gave their land for an heritage, an heritage unto Israel his people. Jehovah is Lord Paramount, and permits men to hold their lands upon lease, terminable at his pleasure. The nations of Canaan had become loathsome with abominable vices, and they were condemned by the great Judge of all the earth to be cut off from the face of the country which they defiled. The twelve tribes were charged to act as their executioners, and as their fee they were to receive Canaan as a possession. Of old the Lord had given this land to Abraham and his seed by a covenant of salt, but he allowed the Amorites and other tribes to sojourn in it till their iniquity was full, and then he bade his people come and take their own out of the holders' hands. Canaan was their heritage because they were the Lord's heritage, and he gave it to them actually because he had long before given it to them by promise. The Lord's chosen still have a heritage from which none can keep them back. Covenant blessings of inestimable value are secured to them; and, as surely as God has a people, his people shall have a heritage. To them it comes by gift, though they have to fight for it. Often does it happen when they slay a sin or conquer a difficulty that they are enriched by the spoil: to them even evils work for good, and trials ensure triumphs. No enemy shall prevail so as to really injure them, for they shall find a heritage where once they were opposed by "all the kingdoms of Canaan."

13 Thy name, O LORD, endureth for ever; and thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations.

And thy memorial, O LORD, throughout all generations. Never shall men forget thee, O Lord. The ordinances of thine house shall keep thee in men's memories, and thine everlasting gospel and the grace which goes therewith shall be abiding reminders of thee. Grateful hearts will for ever beat to thy praise, and enlightened minds shall continue to marvel at all thy wondrous works. Men's memorials decay, but the memorial of the Lord abideth evermore. What a comfort to desponding minds, trembling for the ark of the Lord! No, precious Name, thou shalt never perish! Fame of the Eternal, thou shalt never grow dim! This verse must be construed in its connection, and it teaches us that the honour and glory gained by the Lord in the overthrow of the mighty kings would never die out. Israel for long ages reaped the benefit of the prestige which the divine victories had brought to the nation. Moreover, the Lord in thus keeping his covenant which he made with Abraham, when he promised to give the land to his seed, was making it clear that his memorial contained in promises and covenant would never be out of his sight. His name endures in all its truthfulness, for those who occupied Israel's land were driven out that the true heirs might dwell therein in peace.

14 For the LORD will judge his people, and he will repent himself concerning his servants.
For the LORD will judge his people. He will exercise personal discipline over them, and not leave it to their foes to maltreat them at pleasure. When the correction is ended he will arise and avenge them of their oppressors, who for a while were used by him as his rod. He may seem to forget his people, but it is not so; he will undertake their cause and deliver them. The judges of Israel were also her deliverers, and such is the Lord of hosts: in this sense—as ruling, preserving, and delivering his chosen—Jehovah will judge his people.

And he will repent himself concerning his servants. When he has smitten them, and they lie low before him, he will pity them as a father pitieth his children, for he doth not afflict willingly. The Psalm speaks after the manner of men: the nearest description that words can give of the Lord's feeling towards his suffering servants is that he repents the evil which he inflicted upon them. He acts as if he had changed his mind and regretted smiting them. It goes to the heart of God to see his beloved ones oppressed by their enemies: though they deserve all they suffer, and more than all, yet the Lord cannot see them smart without a pang. It is remarkable that the nations by which God has afflicted Israel have all been destroyed as if the tender Father hated the instruments of his children's correction. The chosen nation is here called, first, "his people", and then "his servants:" as his people he judges them, as his servants he finds comfort in them, for so the word may be read. He is most tender to them when he sees their service; hence the Scripture saith, "I will spare them, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him." Should not the "servants" of God praise him? He plagued Pharaoh's servants; but as for his own he has mercy upon them, and returns to them in love after he has in the truest affection smitten them for their iniquities. "Praise him, O ye servants of the Lord."

15 ¶ The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands.

The idols of the heathen are silver and gold, the work of men's hands. Their essential material is dead metal, their attributes are but the qualities of senseless substances, and what of form and fashion they exhibit they derive from the skill and labour of those who worship them. It is the height of insanity to worship metallic manufactures. Though silver and gold are useful to us when we rightly employ them, there is nothing about them which can entitle them to reverence and worship. If we did not know the sorrowful fact to be indisputable, it would seem to be impossible that intelligent beings could bow down before substances which they must themselves refine from the ore, and fashion into form. One would think it less absurd to worship one's own hands than to adore that which those hands have made. What great works can these mock deities perform for man when they are themselves the works of man? Idols are fitter to be played with, like dolls by babes, than to be adored by grown up men. Hands are better used in breaking than in making objects which can be put to such an idiotic use. Yet the heathen love their abominable deities better than silver and gold: it were well if we could say that some professed believers in the Lord had as much love for him.

16 They have mouths, but they speak not; eyes have they, but they see not;
135: 16 They have mouths. For their makers fashioned them like themselves. An opening is made where the mouth should be, and yet it is no mouth, for they eat not, they speak not. They cannot communicate with their worshippers; they are dumb as death. If they cannot even speak, they are not even so worthy of worship as our children at school. Jehovah speaks, and it is done; but these images utter never a word. Surely, if they could speak, they would rebuke their votaries. Is not their silence a still more powerful rebuke? When our philosophical teachers deny that God has made any verbal revelation of himself they also confess that their god is dumb.

Eyes have they, but they see not. Who would adore a blind man—how can the heathen be so mad as to bow themselves before a blind image? The eyes of idols have frequently been very costly; diamonds have been used for that purpose; but of what avail is the expense, since they see nothing? If they cannot even see us, how can they know our wants, appreciate our sacrifices, or spy out for us the means of help! What a wretched thing, that a man who can see should bow down before an image which is blind! The worshipper is certainly physically in advance of his god, and yet mentally he is on a level with it; for assuredly his foolish heart is darkened, or he would not so absurdly play the feel.

17 They have ears, but they hear not; neither is there any breath in their mouths.

135: 17 They have ears, and very large ones, too, if we remember certain of the Hindu idols. But they hear not. Useless are their ears; in fact, they are mere counterfeits and deceits. Ears which men make are always deaf: the secret of hearing is wrapped up with the mystery of life, and both are in the unsearchable mind of the Lord. It seems that these heathen gods are dumb, and blind, and deaf—a pretty bundle of infirmities to be found in a deity!

Neither is there any breath in their mouths; they are dead, no sign of life is perceptible; and breathing, which is of the essence of animal life, they never knew. Shall a man waste his breath in crying to an idol which has no breath? Shall life offer up petitions to death? Verily, this is a turning of things upside down.

18 They that make them are like unto them: so is every one that trusteth in them.

135: 18 They that make them are like unto them. they are as blockish, as senseless, as stupid as the gods they have made, and, like them they are the objects of divine abhorrence, and shall be broken in pieces in due time.

So is every one that trusteth in them. The idol worshippers are as bad as the idol makers; for if there were none to worship, there would be no market for the degrading manufacture. Idolaters are spiritually dead, they are the mere images of men, their best being is gone, they are not what
they seem. Their mouths do not really pray, their eyes see not the truth, their ears hear not the voice of the Lord, and the life of God is not in them. Those who believe in their own inventions in religion betray great folly, and an utter absence of the quickening Spirit. Gracious men can see the absurdity of forsaking the true God and setting up rivals in his place; but those who perpetrate this crime think not so: on the contrary, they pride themselves upon their great wisdom, and boast of "advanced thought" and "modern culture." Others there are who believe in a baptismal regeneration which does not renew the nature, and they make members of Christ and children of God who have none of the spirit of Christ, or the signs of adoption. May we be saved from such mimicry of divine work lest we also become like our idols.

19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel: bless the LORD, O house of Aaron:

135: 19 Bless the LORD, O house of Israel. All of you, in all your tribes, praise the one Jehovah. Each tribe, from Reuben to Benjamin, has its own special cause for blessing the Lord, and the nation as a whole has substantial reasons for pouring out benedictions upon his name. Those whom God has named "the house of Israel", a family of prevailing princes, ought to show their loyalty by thankfully bowing before their sovereign Lord.

Bless the LORD, O house of Aaron. These were elected to high office and permitted to draw very near to the divine presence; therefore they beyond all others were bound to bless the Lord. Those who are favored to be leaders in the church should be foremost in adoration. In God's house the house of Aaron should feel bound to speak well of his name before all the house of Israel.

20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi: ye that fear the LORD, bless the LORD.

135: 20 Bless the LORD, O house of Levi. These helped the priests in other things, let them aid them in this also. The house of Israel comprehends all the chosen seed; then we come down to the smaller but more central ring of the house of Aaron, and now we widen out to the whole tribe of Levi. Let reverence and adoration spread from man to man until the whole lump of humanity shall be leavened. The house of Levi had choice reasons for blessing God: read the Levite story and see. Remember that the whole of the Levites were set apart for holy service, and supported by the tribes allotted to them; therefore they were in honour bound above all others to worship Jehovah with cheerfulness.

21 Blessed be the LORD out of Zion, which dwelleth at Jerusalem. Praise ye the LORD.
PSALM 136

We know not by whom this Psalm was written, but we do know that it was sung in Solomon's temple (2 Chronicles 7:3,6), and by the armies of Jehoshaphat when they sang themselves into victory in the wilderness of Tekoa. From the striking form of it we should infer that it was a popular hymn among the Lord's ancient people. Most hymns with a solid, simple chorus become favorites with congregations, and this is sure to have been one of the best beloved. It contains nothing but praise. It is tuned to rapture, and can only be fully enjoyed by a devoutly grateful heart.

It commences with a threefold praise to the Triune Lord (Psalm 136:1-3), then it gives us six notes of praise to the Creator (Psalm 136:4-9), six more upon deliverance from Egypt (Psalm 134:10-15), and seven upon the journey through the wilderness and the entrance into Canaan. Then we have two happy verses of personal gratitude for present mercy (Psalm 134:23-24), one (Psalm 134:25) to tell of the Lord's universal providence, and a closing verse to excite to never ending praise.

1 ¶ O give thanks unto the LORD; for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136: 1 O give thanks unto the LORD. The exhortation is intensely earnest: the Psalmist pleads with the Lord's people with an "O", three times repeated. Thanks are the least that we can offer, and these we ought freely to give. The inspired writer calls us to praise Jehovah for all his goodness to us, and all the greatness of his power in blessing his chosen. We thank our parents, let us praise our heavenly Father; we are grateful to our benefactors, let us give thanks unto the Giver of all good.

For he is good. Essentially he is goodness itself, practically all that he does is good, relatively he is good to his creatures. Let us thank him that we have seen, proved, and tasted that he is good. He is good beyond all others: indeed, he alone is good in the highest sense; he is the source of good, the good of all good, the sustainer of good, the Perfector of good, and the rewarder of good. For this he deserves the constant gratitude of his people.

For his mercy endureth for ever. We shall have this repeated in every verse of this song, but not once too often. It is the sweetest stanza that a man can sing. What joy that there is mercy, mercy with Jehovah, enduring mercy, mercy enduring for ever. We are ever needing it, trying it, praying for it, receiving it: therefore let us for ever sing of it.

"When all else is changing
within and around,
In God and his mercy
no change can be found."
2 O give thanks unto the God of gods: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

136: 2 *O give thanks unto the God of gods.* If there be powers in heaven or on earth worthy of the name of gods he is the God of them; from him their dominion comes, their authority is derived from him, and their very existence is dependent upon his will. Moreover, for the moment assuming that the deities of the heathen were gods, yet none of them could be compared with our Elohim, who is infinitely beyond what they are fabled to be. Jehovah is our God, to be worshipped and adored, and he is worthy of our reverence to the highest degree. If the heathen cultivate the worship of their gods with zeal, how much more intently should we seek the glory of the God of gods—the only true and real God. Foolish persons have gathered from this verse that the Israelites believed in the existence of many gods, at the same time believing that their Jehovah was the chief among them; but this is an absurd inference, since gods who have a God over them cannot possibly be gods themselves. The words are to be understood after the usual manner of human speech, in which things are often spoken of not as they really are, but as they profess to be. God as God is worthy of our warmest thanks,

*for his mercy endureth for ever.* Imagine supreme Godhead without everlasting mercy! It would then have been as fruitful a source of terror as it is now a fountain of thanksgiving. Let the Highest be praised in the highest style, for right well do his nature and his acts deserve the gratitude of all his creatures.

"Praise your God with right good will,
    For his love endureth still."

3 O give thanks to the Lord of lords: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

136: 3 *O give thanks to the Lord of lords.* There are lords many, but Jehovah is the Lord of them. All lordship is vested in the Eternal. He makes and administers law, he rules and governs mind and matter, he possesses in himself all sovereignty and power. All lords in the plural are summed up in this Lord in the singular; he is more lordly than all emperors and kings condensed into one. For this we may well be thankful, for we know the superior Sovereign will rectify the abuses of the underlings who now lord it over mankind. He will call these lords to his bar, and reckon with them for every oppression and injustice. He is as truly the Lord of lords as he is Lord over the meanest of the land, and he rules with a strict impartiality, for which every just man should give heartiest thanks.

*For his mercy endureth for ever.* Yes, he mingles mercy with his justice, and reigns for the benefit of his subjects. He pities the sorrowful, protects the helpless, provides for the needy, and pardons the guilty; and this he does from generation to generation, never wearying of his grace,

"because he delighteth in mercy." Let us arouse ourselves to laud our glorious Lord! A third time let us thank him who is our Jehovah, our God, and our Lord; and let this one reason suffice us for three thanksgivings, or for three thousand—
"For his mercy shall endure,  
Ever faithful, ever sure."

4 To him who alone doeth great wonders: for his mercy **endureth** for ever.

136: 4 **To him who alone doeth great wonders.** Jehovah is the great Thaumaturge, the unrivalled Wonder worker. None can be likened unto him, he is alone in wonderland, the Creator and Worker of true marvels, compared with which all other remarkable things are as child's play. His works are all great in wonder even when they are not great in size; in fact, in the minute objects of the microscope we behold as great wonders as even the telescope can reveal. All the works of his unrivalled skill are wrought by him alone and unaided, and to him, therefore, must be undivided honour. None of the gods or the lords helped Jehovah in creation, or in the redemption of his people: his own right hand and his holy arm have wrought for him these great deeds. What have the gods of the heathen done? If the question be settled by doings, Jehovah is indeed "alone." It is exceedingly wonderful that men should worship gods who can do nothing, and forget the Lord who alone doeth great wonders. Even when the Lord uses men as his instruments, yet the wonder of the work is his alone; therefore let us not trust in men, or idolize them, or tremble before them. Praise is to be rendered to Jehovah, for his mercy **endureth** for ever. The mercy of the wonder is the wonder of the mercy; and the enduring nature of that mercy is the central wonder of that wonder. The Lord causes us often to sit down in amazement as we see what his mercy has wrought out and prepared for us: "wonders of grace to God belong", yea, great wonders and unsearchable. Oh the depth! Glory be to his name world without end!

“Doing wondrous deeds alone,  
Mercy sits upon his throne.”

5 To him that by wisdom made the heavens: for his mercy **endureth** for ever.

136: 5 **To him that by wisdom made the heavens.** His goodness appears in creating the upper regions. He set his wisdom to the task of fashioning a firmament, or an atmosphere suitable for a world upon which mortal men should dwell. What a mass of wisdom lies hidden in this one creating act! The discoveries of our keenest observers have never searched out all the evidences of design which are crowded together in this work of God's hands. The lives of plants, animals, and men are dependent upon the fashioning of our heavens: had the skies been other than they are we had not been here to praise God. Divine foresight planned the air and the clouds, with a view to the human race.
For his mercy endureth for ever The Psalmist's details of mercy begin in the loftiest regions, and gradually descend from the heavens to "our low estate" (Psalm 134:23); and this is an ascent, for mercy becomes greater as its objects become less worthy. Mercy is far reaching, long enduring, all encompassing. Nothing is too high for its reach, as nothing is beneath its stoop.

High as heaven his wisdom reigns,
Mercy on the throne remains.

6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136: 6 To him that stretched out the earth above the waters. Lifting it up from the mingled mass, the dank morass, the bottomless bog, of mixed land and sea; and so fitting it to be the abode of man. Who but the Lord could have wrought this marvel? Few even think of the divine wisdom and power which performed all this of old; yet, if a continent can be proved to have risen or fallen an inch within historic memory, the fact is recorded in the "transactions" of learned societies, and discussed at every gathering of philosophers.

For his mercy endureth for ever, as is seen in the original upheaval and perpetual upstanding of the habitable land, so that no deluge drowns the race. By his strength he sets fast the mountains and consolidates the land upon which we sojourn.

"From the flood he lifts the land:
Firm his mercies ever stand."

7 To him that made great lights: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136: 7 To him that made great lights. This also is a creating miracle worthy of our loudest thanks. What could men have done without light? Though they had the heavens above them, and dry land to move upon, yet what could they see, and where could they go without light? Thanks be to the Lord, who has not consigned us to darkness. In great mercy he has not left us to an uncertain, indistinct light, floating about fitfully, and without order; but he has concentrated light upon two grand luminaries, which, as far as we are concerned, are to us "great lights." The Psalmist is making a song for common people, not for your critical sayings,—and so he sings of the sun and moon as they appear to us,—the greatest of lights. These the Lord created in the beginning; and for the present age of man made or constituted them light bearers for the world.

For his mercy endureth for ever. Mercy gleams in every ray of light, and it is most clearly seen in the arrangement by which it is distributed with order and regularity from the sun and moon.

"Lamps he lit in heaven's heights,
For in mercy he delights."

8 The sun to rule by day: for his mercy endureth for ever:
136: 8 *The sun to rule by day.* We cannot be too specific in our praises; after mentioning great lights, we may sing of each of them, and yet not outwear our theme. The influences of the sun are too many for us to enumerate them all, but untold benefits come to all orders of beings by its light, warmth, and other operations. Whenever we sit in the sunshine, our gratitude should be kindled. The sun is a great ruler, and his government is pure beneficence, because by God's mercy it is moderated to our feebleness; let all who rule take lessons from the sun which rules to bless. By day we may well give thanks, for God gives cheer. The sun rules because God rules; it is not the sun which we should worship, like the Parsees; but the Creator of the sun, as he did who wrote this sacred song.

*For his mercy endureth for ever.* Day unto day uttereth speech concerning the mercy of the Lord; every sunbeam is a mercy, for it falls on undeserving sinners who else would sit in doleful darkness, and find earth a hell. Milton puts it well:

"*He, the golden tressed sun*
*Caused all day his course to run;*
*For his mercy shall endure*
*Ever faithful, ever sure."

9 The moon and stars to rule by night: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

136: 9 *The moon and stars to rule by night.* No hour is left without rule. Blessed be God, he leaves us never to the doom of anarchy. The rule is one of light and benediction. The moon with her charming changes, and the stars in their fixed spheres gladden the night. When the season would be dark and dreary because of the absence of the sun, forth come the many minor comforters. The sun is enough alone; but when he is gone a numerous band cannot suffice to give more than a humble imitation of his radiance. Jesus, the Sun of Righteousness, alone, can do more for us than all his servants put together. He makes our day. When he is hidden, it is night, and remains night, let our human comforters shine at their full. What mercy is seen in the lamps of heaven gladdening our landscape at night! What equal mercy in all the influences of the moon upon the tides, those life floods of the earth! The Lord is the Maker of every star, be the stars what they may; he calleth them all by their names, and at his bidding each messenger with his torch enlightens our darkness.

*For his mercy endureth for ever.* Let our thanks be as many as the stars, and let our lives reflect the goodness of the Lord, even as the moon reflects the light of the sun. The nightly guides and illuminators of men on land and sea are not for now and then, but for all time. They shone on Adam, and they shine on us. Thus they are tokens and pledges of undying grace to men; and we may sing with our Scotch friends—

"*For certainly*
*His mercies dure*
*Most firm and sure*
*Eternally."
10 ¶ To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

**136: 10** We have heard of the glory of the world's creation, we are now to praise the Lord for the creation of his favored nation by their Exodus from Egypt. Because the monarch of Egypt stood in the way of the Lord's gracious purposes it became needful for the Lord to deal with him in justice; but the great design was mercy to Israel, and through Israel mercy to succeeding ages, and to all the world.

*To him that smote Egypt in their firstborn.* The last and greatest of the plagues struck all Egypt to the heart. The sorrow and the terror which it caused throughout the nation it is hardly possible to exaggerate. From king to slave each one was wounded in the most tender point. The joy and hope of every household was struck down in one moment, and each family had its own wailing. The former blows had missed their aim compared with the last; but that "smote Egypt." The Lord's firstborn had been oppressed by Egypt, and at last the Lord fulfilled his threatening, "I will slay thy son, even thy firstborn." Justice lingered but it struck home at last.

*For his mercy endureth for ever.* Yes, even to the extremity of vengeance upon a whole nation the Lord's mercy to his people endured. He is slow to anger, and judgment is his strange work; but when mercy to men demands severe punishments he will not hold back his hand from the needful surgery. What were all the firstborn of Egypt compared with those divine purposes of mercy to all generations of men which were wrapped up in the deliverance of the elect people? Let us even when the Lord's judgments are abroad in the earth continue to sing of his unfailing grace.

"*For evermore his love shall last,*
*For ever sure, for ever fast.*"

11 And brought out Israel from among them: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

**136:11** And brought out Israel from among them. Scattered as the tribes were up and down the country, and apparently held in a grasp which would never be relaxed, the Lord wrought their deliverance, and severed them from their idolatrous task masters. None of them remained in bondage. The Lord brought them out; brought them all out; brought them out at the very hour when his promise was due; brought them out despite their being mingled among the Egyptians; brought them out never to return. Unto his name let us give thanks for this further proof of his favour to the chosen ones,

*For his mercy endureth for ever.* Once the Israelites did not care to go out, but preferred to bear the ills they had rather than risk they knew not what; but the Lord's mercy endured that test also, and ceased not to stir up the nest till the birds were glad to take to their wings. He turned the land of plenty into a house of bondage, and the persecuted nation was glad to escape from slavery.
The unfailing mercy of the Lord is gloriously seen in his separating his elect from the world. He brings out his redeemed and they are henceforth a people who show forth his praise.

"For God doth prove 
Our constant friend; 
His boundless love 
Shall never end."

12 With a strong hand, and with a stretched out arm: for his mercy endureth for ever.

13 To him which divided the Red sea into parts: for his mercy endureth for ever:
it another way: the Lord can do precisely what he wills, and he wills to do anything which is ten
the deliverance of his people.

*For his mercy endureth for ever,* and therefore it endures through the sea as well as over the dry
land. He will do a new thing to keep his old promise. His way is in the sea, and he will make a
way for his people in the same pathless region.

“*Lo, the Red Sea he divides,*
   *For his mercy sure abides.*”

14 And made Israel to pass through the midst of it: for his mercy *endureth* for ever:

136: 14 *And made Israel to pass through the midst of it.* HE gave the people courage to follow
the predestined track through the yawning abyss, which might well have terrified a veteran host.
It needed no little generalship to conduct so vast and motley a company along a way so novel
and apparently so dangerous. He made them to pass, by the untrodden road; he led them down
into the deep and up again on the further shore in perfect order, keeping their enemies back by
the thick darkness of the cloudy pillar.
Herein is the glory of God set forth, as all his people see it in their own deliverance from sin. By
faith we also give up all reliance upon works and trust ourselves to pass by a way which we have
not known, even by the way of reliance upon the atoning blood: thus are we effectually sundered
from the Egypt of our former estate, and our sins themselves are drowned. The people marched
dry shod through the heart of the sea. Hallelujah!

*For his mercy endureth for ever.* Mercy cleared the road, mercy cheered the host, mercy led
them down, and mercy brought them up again. Even to the depth of the sea mercy reaches,—
there is no end to it, no obstacle in the way of it, no danger to believers in it, while Jehovah is all
around.

"*Forward?"* be our watchword as it was that of Israel of old, for mercy doth compass us about;

   “*Through the fire or through the sea*
   *Still his mercy guards thee.*”

15 But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea: for his mercy *endureth* for ever.

136: 15 *But overthrew Pharaoh and his host in the Red sea.* Here comes the thunder clap.
Though we hear them sounding peal upon peal, yet the judgments of the Lord were only loud
mouthed mercies speaking confusion to the foe, that the chosen might tremble before him no
longer. The chariots were thrown over, the horses were overthrown. The King and his warriors
were alike overwhelmed; they were hurled from their chariots as locusts are tossed to and fro in the wind.

Broken was the power and conquered was the pride of Egypt. Jehovah had vanquished the enemy.

"Art thou not it which cut Rahab and wounded crocodile?" None are too great for the Lord to subdue, none too high for Lord to abase. The enemy in his fury drove after Israel into the sea, but his wrath found a terrible recompense beneath the waves.

For his mercy endureth for ever. Yes, mercy continued to protect its children, and therefore called in the aid of justice to fulfill the capital sentence on their foes. Taken red handed, in the very act of rebellion against their sovereign Lord, the adversaries met the fate which they had themselves invited. He that goes into the midst of the sea asks to be drowned. Sin is self damnation. The sinner goes downward of his own choice, and if he finds out too late that he return, is not his blood upon his own head? The finally impenitent, terrible their doom, will not be witnesses against mercy; but rather this shall aggravate their misery, that they went on in defiance of mercy, and would yield themselves to him whose mercy endureth for ever. To the Israelites as they sung this song their one thought would be of the rescue of their fathers from fierce oppressor. Taken like a lamb from between the teeth of the lion, justly praises her Deliverer and chants aloud:

"Evermore his love shall reign;
Pharaoh and his host are slain."

16 To him which led his people through the wilderness: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136: 16 To him which led his people through the wilderness. He led them into it, and therefore he was pledged to lead them through it. They were "his people", and yet they must go into the wilderness, and the wilderness must remain as barren as ever it was; but in the end they must come out of it into the promised land. God's dealings are mysterious, but they must be right, simply because they are his. The people knew nothing of the way, but they were led; they were a vast host, yet they were all led; there were neither roads nor tracks, but being led by unerring wisdom they never lost their way. He who brought them out of Egypt, also led them through the wilderness. By Moses, and Aaron, and Jethro, and the pillar of cloud he led them. What a multitude of mercies are comprehended in the conduct of such an enormous host through a region wherein there was no provision even for single travelers; yet the Lord by his infinite power and wisdom conducted a whole nation for forty years through a desert land, and their feet did not swell, neither did their garments wax old in all the journey.

For his mercy endureth for ever. Their conduct in the wilderness tested his mercy most severely, but it bore the strain; many a time he forgave them; and though he smote them for their transgressions, yet he waited to be gracious and speedily turned to them in compassion. Their
faithfulness soon failed, but his did not: the fiery, cloudy pillar which never ceased to lead the van was the visible proof of his immutable love—

"For his, mercy, changing never,  
Still endureth, sure for ever."

17 To him which smote great kings: for his mercy **endureth** for ever:

136: 17 *To him which smote great kings.* Within sight of their inheritance Israel had to face powerful enemies. Kings judged to be great because of the armies at their back blocked up their road. This difficulty soon disappeared, for the Lord smote their adversaries, and a single stroke sufficed for their destruction. He who had subdued the really mighty ruler of Egypt made short work of these petty sovereigns, great though they were in the esteem of neighboring princes.

**For his mercy endureth for ever.** Mercy, which had brought the chosen tribes so far, would not be balked by the opposition of boastful foes. The Lord who smote Pharaoh at the beginning of the wilderness march, smote Sihon and Og at the close of it. How could these kings hope to succeed when even mercy itself was in arms against them.

> "Evermore his mercy stands  
> Saving from the foe man's hands."

18 And slew famous kings: for his mercy **endureth** for ever:

136: 18 *And slew famous kings.* What good was their fame to them? As they opposed God they became infamous rather than famous. Their deaths made the Lord's fame to increase among the nations while their fame ended in disgraceful defeat.

**For his mercy endureth for ever.** Israelitish patriots felt that they could never have too much of this music; God had protected their nation, and they chanted his praises with unwearied iteration.

> "Kings he smote despite their fame,  
> For his mercy's still the same."

19 Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy **endureth** for ever:

136: 19 *Sihon king of the Amorites.* Let the name be mentioned that the mercy may be the better remembered. Sihon smote Moab, but he could not smite Israel, for the Lord smote him. He was valiant and powerful, so as to be both great and famous; but as he willfully refused to give a peaceful passage to the Israelites, and fought against them in malice, there was no choice for it but to let him run into that destruction which he courted. His fall was speedy and final, and the chosen people were so struck with it that they sung of his overthrow in their national songs.
For his mercy endureth for ever. His mercy is no respecter of persons, and neither the greatness nor the fame of Sihon could protect him after he had dared to attack Israel. The Lord will not forsake his people because Sihon blusters.

“Come what may
By night or day,
Still most sure,
His love shall dure.”

20 And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136: 20 And Og the king of Bashan. He was of the race of the giants, but he was routed like a pygmy when he entered the lists with Israel's God. The Lord's people were called upon to fight against him, but it was God who won the victory. The fastnesses of Bashan were no defense against Jehovah. Og was soon ousted from his stronghold when the captain of the Lord's host led the war against him.

He had to exchange his bedstead of iron for a bed in the dust, for he fell on the battle field.

“Glory be to the divine conqueror,
for his mercy endureth for ever.
Giant kings before him yield,
Mercy ever holds the field.”

If Sihon could not turn the Lord from his purpose we may be sure that Og could not. He who delivers us out of one trouble will rescue us out of another, and fulfill all the good pleasure of his grace in us.

21 And gave their land for an heritage: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136: 21 And gave their land for an heritage. As Lord of the whole earth he transferred his estate from one tenant to another. The land did not become the property of the Israelites by their own sword and bow, but by a grant from the throne. This was the great end which all along had been aimed at from Egypt to Jordan. He who brought his people out also brought them in. He who had promised the land to the seed of Abraham also saw to it that the deed of gift did not remain a dead letter. Both our temporal and our spiritual estates come to us by royal charter. What God gives us is ours by the best of titles. Inheritance by God's gift is tenure which even Satan cannot dispute.

For his mercy endureth for ever. Faithful love endures without end, and secures its own end.

"Thou wilt surely bring them in", said the prophet poet; and here we see the deed complete.

“Till they reach the promised land
Mercy still the same must stand.”
22 Even an heritage unto Israel his servant: for his mercy endureth for ever.

136: 22 Even an heritage unto Israel his servant. Repetitions are effective in poetry, and the more so if there be some little variation in them, bringing out into fuller light some point which else had not been noticed. The lands of the heathen kings were given to "Israel", the name by which the chosen seed is here mentioned for the third time in the Psalm, with the addition of the words, "his servant." The leasehold of Canaan to Israel after the flesh was made dependent upon suit and service rendered to the Lord of the manor by whom the lease was granted. It was a country worth singing about, richly justifying the two stanzas devoted to it. The division of the country by lot, and the laws by which the portions of ground were reserved to the owners and their descendants for a perpetual inheritance were fit subjects for song. Had other nations enjoyed land laws which ensured to every family a plot of ground for cultivation, much of the present discontent would never have arisen, beggary would soon have become uncommon, and poverty itself would have been rare.

For his mercy endureth for ever. Yes, mercy fights for the land, mercy divides the spoil among its favored ones, and mercy secures each man in his inheritance. Glory be to God the faithful One.

"For his mercy full and free.
Wins us full felicity."

23 ¶ Who remembered us in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever:

136: 23 Who remembered us in our low estate. Personal mercies awake the sweetest song—

"he remembered us." Our prayer is, "Lord, remember me", and this is our encouragement—he has remembered us. For the Lord even to think of us is a wealth of mercy. Ours was a sorry estate,—an estate of bankruptcy and mendicancy. Israel rested in its heritage, but we were still in bondage, groaning in captivity: the Lord seemed to have forgotten us, and left us in our sorrow; but it was not so for long: he turned again in his compassion, bethinking himself of his afflicted children. Our state was once so low as to be at hell's mouth; since then it has been low in poverty, bereavement, despondency, sickness, and heart sorrow, and we fear, also, sinfully low in faith, and love, and every other grace; and yet the Lord has not forgotten us as a dead thing out of mind; but he has tenderly remembered us still. We thought ourselves too small and too worthless for his memory to burden itself about us, yet he remembered us.

For his mercy endureth for ever. Yes, this is one of the best proofs of the immutability of his mercy, for if he could have changed towards any, it would certainly have been towards us who have brought ourselves low, kept ourselves low, and prepared ourselves to sink yet lower. It is memorable mercy to remember us in our low estate: in our highest joys we will exalt Jehovah's name, since of this we are sure,—he will not now desert us—For his mercy full and free Lasteth to eternity.
24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies: for his mercy **endureth** for ever.

**136: 24 And hath redeemed us from our enemies.** Israel's enemies brought the people low; but the Lord intervened, and turned the tables by a great redemption. The expression implies that they had become like slaves, and were not set free without price and power; for they needed to be "redeemed." In our case the redemption which is in Christ Jesus is an eminent reason for giving thanks unto the Lord. Sin is our enemy, and we are redeemed from it by the atoning blood; Satan is our enemy, and we are redeemed from him by the Redeemer's power; the world is our enemy, and we are redeemed from it by the Holy Spirit. We are ransomed, let us enjoy our liberty; Christ has wrought our redemption, let us praise his name.

**For his mercy endureth for ever.** Even to redemption by the death of his Son did divine mercy stretch itself. What more can be desired? What more can be imagined? Many waters could not quench love, neither could the floods drown it.

"E'en to death upon the tree 
Mercy dureth faithfully."

25 Who giveth food to all flesh: for his mercy **endureth** for ever.

**136: 25 Who giveth food to all flesh.** Common providence, which cares for all living things, deserves our most devout thanks. If we think of heavenly food, by which all saints are supplied, our praises rise to a still greater height; but meanwhile the universal goodness of God in feeding all his creatures is as worthy of praise as his special favors to the elect nation. Because the Lord feeds all life therefore we expect him to take special care of his own family.

**For his mercy endureth for ever.** Reaching downward even to beasts and reptiles, it is, indeed, a boundless mercy, which knows no limit because of the meanness of its object.

"All things living he doth feed, 
His full hand supplies their need; 
For his mercy shall endure, 
Ever faithful, ever sure."

26 O give thanks unto the God of heaven: for his mercy **endureth** for ever.

**136: 26. O give thanks unto the God of heaven.** The title is full of honour. The Lord is God in the highest realms, and among celestial beings. His throne is set in glory, above all, out of reach of foes, in the place of universal oversight. He who feeds ravens and sparrows is yet the glorious God of the highest realms. Angels count it their glory to proclaim his glory in every heavenly street. See herein the greatness of his nature, the depth of his condescension, and the range of his love. Mark the one sole cause of his bounty—
For his mercy endureth for ever. He hath done all things from this motive; and because his mercy never ceases, he will continue to multiply deeds of love world without end. Let us with all our powers of heart and tongue give thanks unto the holy name of Jehovah for ever and ever.

"Change and decay in all around I see,
O thou who changest not,
abide with me."

PSALM 137

This plaintive ode is one of the most charming compositions in the whole Book of Psalms for its poetic power. If it were not inspired it would nevertheless occupy a high place in poesy, especially the former portion of it, which is tender and patriotic to the highest degree. In the later verses (Psalm 137:7-9), we have utterances of burning indignation against the chief adversaries of Israel,—an indignation as righteous as it was fervent. Let those find fault with it who have never seen their temple burned, their city ruined, their wives ravished, and after children slain; they might not, perhaps, be quite so velvet mouthed if they had suffered after this fashion. It is one thing to talk of the bitter feeling which moved captive Israelites in Babylon, and quite another thing to be captives ourselves under a savage and remorseless power, which knew not how to show mercy, but delighted in barbarities to the defenseless. The song is such as might fitly be sung in the Jews' wailing place. It is a fruit of the Captivity in Babylon, and often has it furnished expression for sorrows which else had been unutterable. It is an opalesque [opal gemstone] Psalm within whose mild radiance there glows afire which strikes the beholder with wonder.

1 ¶ By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down, yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion.

137: 1 By the rivers of Babylon, there we sat down. Water courses were abundant in Babylon, wherein were not only natural streams but artificial canals: it was place of broad rivers and streams. Glad to be away from the noisy streets, the captives sought the river side, where the flow of the waters seemed to be in sympathy with their tears. It was some slight comfort to be out of the crowd, and to have a little breathing room, and therefore they sat down, as if to rest a while and solace themselves in their sorrow. In little groups they sat down and made common lamentation, mingling their memories and their tears. The rivers were well enough, but, alas, they were the rivers of Babylon, and the ground whereon the sons of Israel sat was foreign soil, and therefore they wept. Those who came to interrupt their quiet were citizens of the destroying city, and their company was not desired. Everything reminded Israel of her banishment from the
holy city, her servitude beneath the shadow of the temple of Bel, her helplessness under a cruel enemy; and therefore her sons and daughters sat down in sorrow,

_Yea, we wept, when we remembered Zion._ Nothing else could have subdued their brave spirits; but the remembrance of the temple of their God, the palace of their king, and the centre of their national life, quite broke them down. Destruction had swept down all their delights, and therefore they wept—the strong men wept, the sweet singers wept! They did not weep when they remembered the cruelties of Babylon; the memory of fierce oppression dried their tears and made their hearts burn with wrath: but when the beloved city of their solemnities came into their minds they could not refrain from floods of tears. Even thus do true believers mourn when they see the church despoiled, and find themselves unable to succour her: we could bear anything better than this.

In these our times the Babylon of error ravages the city of God, and the hearts of the faithful are grievously wounded as they see truth fallen in the streets, and unbelief rampant among the professed servants of the Lord. We bear our protests, but they appear to be in vain; the multitude are mad upon their idols. Be it ours to weep in secret for the hurt of our Zion: it is the least thing we can do; perhaps in its result it may prove to be the best thing we can do. Be it ours also to sit down and deeply consider what is to be done. Be it ours, in any case, to keep upon our mind and heart the memory of the church of God which is so dear to us. The frivolous may forget, but Zion is graven on our hearts, and her prosperity is our chief desire.

2 We hanged our harps upon the willows in the midst thereof.

The drooping branches appeared to weep as we did, and so we gave to them our instruments of music; the willows could as well make melody as we, for we had no mind for minstrelsy. In the midst of the willows, or in the midst of the rivers, or in the midst of Babylon, it matters little which, they hung their harps aloft—those harps which once in Zion's halls the soul of music shed. Better to hang them up than to dash them down: better to hang them on willows than profane them to the service of idols. Sad indeed is the child of sorrow when he grows weary of his harp, from which in better days he had been able to draw sweet solaces. Music hath charms to give unquiet spirits rest; but when the heart is sorely sad it only mocks the grief which flies to it. Men put away their instruments of mirth when a heavy cloud darkens their souls.

3 For there they that carried us away captive required of us a song; and they that wasted us _required of us_ mirth, _saying_, Sing us one of the songs of Zion.

It was ill to be a singer at all when it was demanded that this talent should go into bondage to an oppressor's will. Better be dumb than be forced to please an enemy with forced song. What cruelty to make a people sigh, and then require them to sing! Shall men be carried away from home and all that is dear to them, and yet chant merrily for the pleasure of their unfeeling captors? This is studied torture: the iron enters into the soul. It is indeed "woe to the conquered" when they are forced to sing to increase the triumph of their conquerors. Cruelty herein reached a refinement seldom thought of. We do not wonder that the captives sat them down to weep when thus insulted.
And they that wasted us required of us mirth. The captives must not only sing but smile, and add merriment to their music. Blind Samson in former days must be brought forth to make sport for Philistines, and now the Babylonians prove themselves to be loaves of the same leaven. Plundered, wounded, fettered, carried into captivity and poverty, yet must the people laugh as if it were all a play, and they must sport as if they felt no sorrow. This was worm wood and gall to the true lovers of God and his chosen land.

Saying, Sing us one of the songs of Zion. Nothing would serve their turn but a holy hymn, and a tune sacred to the worship of Jehovah. Nothing will content the Babylonian mockers but one of Israel’s Psalms when in her happiest days she sang unto the Lord whose mercy endureth for ever: this would make rare fun for their persecutors, who would deride their worship and ridicule their faith in Jehovah. In this demand there was an insult to their God as well as a mockery of themselves, and this made it the more intensely cruel. Nothing could have been more malicious, nothing more productive of grief. These wanton persecutors had followed the captives into their retirement, and had remarked upon their sorrowful appearance, and "there" and then they bade the mourners make mirth for them. Could they not let the sufferers alone? Were the exiles to have no rest? The daughter of Babylon seemed determined to fill up her cup of iniquity, by torturing the Lord's people. Those who had been the most active agents of Israel's undoing must needs follow up their ferocities by mockeries.

"The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel." Worse than the Egyptians, they asked not labour which their victims could have rendered, but they demanded mirth which they could not give, and holy songs which they dared not profane to such a purpose, sufferings of the weary and oppressed exiles by their mirth and their indecency. We are sorry to say that the resemblance still holds betwixt the Jews in a state of captivity and the Christians in the state of their pilgrimage. We have also to sustain the mockery of the profane and the unthinking. Ridicule and disdain are often the fate of sincere piety in this world. Fashion and frivolity and false philosophy have made a formidable combination against us; and the same truth, the same honesty, the same integrity of principle, which in any other cause would be esteemed as manly and respectable, is despised and laughed at when attached to the cause of the gospel and its sublime interests.—Thomas Chalmers.

4 How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?

137: 3-4 St. John Chrysostom observes the improvement such tribulation effected in the Jews, who previously derided, nay, even put to death, some of the prophets; but now that they were captives in a foreign land, they would not attempt to expose their sacred hymns to the ridicule of the Gentiles.—Robert Bellarmine.

137: 4 How shall we sing the LORD's song in a strange land How shall they sing at all? sing in a strange land? sing Jehovah's song among the uncircumcised? No, that must not be; it shall not be. With one voice they refuse, but the refusal is humbly worded by being put in the form of a question. If the men of Babylon were wicked enough to suggest the defiling of holy things for the gratification of curiosity, or for the creation of amusement, the men of Zion had not so
hardened their hearts as to be willing to please them at such a fearful cost. There are many things
which the ungodly could do, and think nothing of the doing thereof, which gracious men cannot
venture upon. The question

"How can I?" or "How shall we?" comes of a tender conscience and denotes an inability to sin
which is greatly to be cultivated.

5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning.

137: 5 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my right hand forget her cunning. To sing Zion's songs
for the pleasure of Zion's foes, would be to forget the Holy City Each Jew declares for himself
that he will not do this; for the pronoun alters from "we" to "I." Individually the captives pledge
themselves to fidelity to Jerusalem,

and each one asserts that he had sooner forget the art which drew music from his harp strings
than use it for Babel's delectation. Better far that the right hand should forget its usual handicraft,
and lose all its dexterity, than that it should fetch music for rebels out of the Lord's instruments,
or accompany with sweet skill a holy Psalm desecrated into a common song for fools to laugh at.
Not one of them will thus dishonour Jehovah to glorify Belus and gratify his votaries. Solemnly
they imprecate vengeance upon themselves should they so false, so faithless prove.

6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I
prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.

137: 6 If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth. Thus the
singers imprecate eternal silence upon their mouths if they forget Jerusalem to gratify Babylon.
The players on instruments and the sweet songsters are of one mind: the enemies of the Lord will
get no mirthful tune or song from them.

If I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy. The sacred city must ever be first in their thoughts,
the queen of their souls; they had sooner be dumb than dishonour her sacred hymns, and give
occasion to the oppressor to ridicule her worship. If such the attachment of a banished Jew to his
native land, how much more should we love the church of God of which we are children and
citizens. How jealous should we be of her honour, how zealous for her prosperity. Never let us
find jests in the words of Scripture, or make amusement out of holy things, lest we be guilty of
forgetting the Lord and his cause. It is to be feared that
many tongues have lost all power to charm the rogations of the saints because they have
forgotten the gospel, and God has forgotten them.

7 ¶ Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem; who
said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof.

137: 7 Remember, O LORD, the children of Edom in the day of Jerusalem. The case is left in
Jehovah's hands. He is a God of recompenses, and will deal out justice with impartiality. The
Edomites ought to have been friendly with the Israelites, from kinship; but there was a deep
hatred and cruel spite displayed by them. The elder loved not to serve the younger, and so when Jacob's day of tribulation came, Esau was ready to take advantage of it. The captive Israelites being moved by grief to lodge their complaints with God, also added a prayer for his visitation of the nation which meanly sided with their enemies, and even Urged the invaders to more than their usual cruelty.

Who said, Rase it, rase it, even to the foundation thereof. They wished to see the last of Jerusalem and the Jewish state; they would have no stone left standing, they desired to see a clean sweep of temple, palace, wall, and habitation. It is horrible for neighbours to be enemies, worse for them to show their enmity in times of great affliction, worst of all for neighbours to egg others on to malicious deeds. Those are responsible for other men's sins who would use them as the tools of their own enmity. It is a shame for men to incite the wicked to deeds which they are not able to perform themselves. The Chaldeans were ferocious enough without being excited to greater fury; but Edom's hate was insatiable.
Those deserve to be remembered by vengeance who in evil times do not remember mercy; how much more those who take advantage of calamities to wreak revenge upon sufferers. When Jerusalem's day of restoration comes Edom will be remembered and wiped out of existence.

8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed; happy shall he be, that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us.

137: 8 O daughter of Babylon, who art to be destroyed. Or the destroyer: let us accept the word either way, or both ways: the destroyer would be destroyed, and the Psalmist in vision saw her as already destroyed. It is usual to speak of a city as a virgin daughter. Babylon was in her prime and beauty, but she was already doomed for her crimes.

Happy shall he be that rewardeth thee as thou hast served us. The avenger would be fulfilling an honourable calling in overthrowing a power so brutal, so inhuman. Assyrian and Chaldean armies had been boastfully brutal in their conquests; it was meet that their conduct should be measured back into their own bosoms. No awards of punishment can be more unanswerably just than those which closely follow the lex talionis, even to the letter. Babylon must fall, as she caused Jerusalem to fall; and her sack and slaughter must be such as she appointed for other cities. The patriot poet sitting sorrowfully in his exile, finds a solace in the prospect of the overthrow of the empress city which holds him in bondage, and he accounts Cyrus right happy to be ordained to such a righteous work. The whole earth would bless the conqueror for ridding the nations of a tyrant; future generations would call him blessed for enabling men to breathe again, and for once more making liberty possible upon the earth. We may rest assured that every unrighteous power is doomed to destruction, and that from the throne of God justice will be measured out to all whose law is force, whose rule is selfishness, and whose policy is oppression. Happy is the man who shall help in the overthrow of the spiritual Babylon, which, despite its riches and power, is "to be destroyed." Happier still shall he be who shall see it sink like a millstone in the flood, never to rise again. What that spiritual Babylon is none need enquire. There is but one city upon earth which can answer to the name.

9 Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones.
Happy shall he be, that taketh and dasheth thy little ones against the stones. Fierce was the heart of the Jew who had seen his beloved city the scene of such terrific butchery. His heart pronounced like sentence upon Babylon. She should be scourged with her own whip of wire. The desire for righteous retribution is rather the spirit of the law than of the gospel; and yet in moments of righteous wrath the old fire will burn; and while justice survives in the human breast it will not lack for fuel among the various tyrannies which still survive. We shall be wise to view this passage as a prophecy. History informs us that it was literally fulfilled: the Babylonian people in their terror agreed to destroy their own offspring, and men thought themselves happy when they had put their own wives and children to the sword. Horrible as was the whole transaction, it is a thing to be glad of if we take a broad view of the world's welfare; for Babylon, the gigantic robber, had for many a year slaughtered nations without mercy, and her fall was the rising of many people to a freer and safer state. The murder of innocent infants can never be sufficiently deplored, but it was an incident of ancient warfare which the Babylonians had not omitted in their massacres, and, therefore, they were not spared it themselves. The revenges of providence may be slow, but they are ever sure; neither can they be received with regret by those who see God's righteous hand in them. It is a wretched thing that a nation should need an executioner; but yet if men will commit murders tears are more fitly shed over their victims than over the assassins themselves. A feeling of universal love is admirable, but it must not be divorced from a keen sense of justice. The captives in Babylon did not make music, but they poured forth their righteous maledictions, and these were far more in harmony with their surroundings than songs and laughter could have been. Those who mock the Lord's people will receive more than they desire, to their own confusion: they shall have little enough to make mirth for them, and more than enough to fill them with misery. The execrations of good men are terrible things, for they are not lightly uttered, and they are heard in heaven.

"The curse causeless shall not come; " but is there not a cause? Shall despots crush virtue beneath their iron heel and never be punished? Time will show.

PSALM 138

A Psalm of David

TITLE. A Psalm of David. This Psalm is wisely placed. Whoever edited and arranged these sacred poems, he had an eye to apposition and contrast; for if in Psalm 137:1-9 we see the need of silence before revilers, here we see the excellence of a brave confession. There is a time to be
silent, lest we cast pearls before swine; and there is a time to speak openly, lest we be found guilty of cowardly not confessing. The Psalm is evidently of a Davidic character, exhibiting all the fidelity, courage, and decision of that King of Israel and Prince of Psalmists. Of course the critics have tried to rend the authorship from David on account of the mention of the temple, though it so happens that in one of the Psalms which is allowed to be David's the same word occurs. Many modern critics are to the word of God what blowflies are to the food of men: they cannot do any good, and unless relentlessly driven away they do great harm.

DIVISION. In full confidence David is prepared to own his God before the gods of the heathen, or before angels or rulers (Psalm 138:1-3); he declares that he will instruct and convert kings and nations, till on very highway men shall sing the praises of the Lord (Psalm 138:4-5). Having thus spoken, he utters his personal confidence in Jehovah, who will help his lowly servant, and preserve him from all the malice of wrathful foes.

1 ¶I will praise thee with my whole heart: before the gods will I sing praise unto thee.

138: 1 I will praise thee with my whole heart. His mind is so taken up with God that he does not mention his name: to him there is no other God, and Jehovah is so perfectly realized and so intimately known, that the Psalmist, in addressing him, no more thinks of mentioning his name than we should do if we were speaking to a father or a friend. He sees God with his mind's eye, and simply addresses him with the pronoun "thee." He is resolved to praise the Lord, and to do it with the whole force of his life, even with his whole heart. He would not submit to act as one under restraint, because of the opinions of others; but in the presence of the opponents of the living God he would be as hearty in worship as if all were friends and would cheerfully unite with him. If others do not praise the Lord, there is all the more reason why we should do so, and should do so with enthusiastic eagerness. We need a broken heart to mourn our own sins, but a whole heart to praise the Lord's perfections. If ever our heart is whole and wholly occupied with one thing, it should be when we are praising the Lord.

Before the gods will I sing praise unto thee. Why should these idols rob Jehovah of his praises? The Psalmist will not for a moment suspend his songs because there are images before him, and their foolish worshippers might not approve of his music. I believe David referred to the false gods of the neighboring nations, and the deities of the surviving Canaanites. He was not pleased that such gods were set up; but he intended to express at once his contempt of them, and his own absorption in the worship of the living Jehovah by continuing most earnestly to sing wherever he might be. It would be paying these dead idols too much respect to cease singing because they were perched aloft. In these days when new religions are daily excogitated, and new gods are set up, it is well to know how to act. Bitterness is forbidden, and controversy is apt to advertise the heresy; the very best method is to go on personally worshipping the Lord with unvarying zeal, singing with heart and voice his royal praises. Do they deny the Divinity of our Lord? Let us the more fervently adore him. Do they despise the atonement? Let us the more constantly proclaim it. Had half the time spent in councils and controversies been given to praising the Lord, the church would have been far sounder and stronger than she is at this day. The Hallelujah Legion will win the day. Praising and singing are our armour against the
idolatries of heresy, our comfort under the depression caused by insolent attacks upon the truth, and our weapons for defending the gospel. Faith when displayed in cheerful courage, has about it a sacred contagion: others learn to believe in the Most High when they see his servant.

"Calm 'mid the bewildering cry,  
Confident of victory."

2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, and praise thy name for thy lovingkindness and for thy truth: for thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name.

138: 2 I will worship toward thy holy temple, or the place of God's dwelling, where the ark abode. He would worship God in God's own way. The Lord had ordained a centre of unity, a place of sacrifice, a house of his indwelling; and David accepted the way of worship enjoined by revelation. Even so, the true hearted believer of these days must not fall into the will worship of superstition, or the wild worship of skepticism, but reverently worship as the Lord himself prescribes. The idol gods had their temples; but David averts his glance from them, and looks earnestly to the spot chosen of the Lord for his own sanctuary. We are not only to adore the true God, but to do so in his own appointed way: the Jew looked to the temple, we are to look to Jesus, the living temple of the Godhead.

And praise thy name for thy loving kindness and for thy truth. Praise would be the main part of David's worship; the name or character of God the great object of his song; and the special point of his praise the grace and truth which shone so conspicuously in that name. The person of Jesus is the temple of the Godhead, and therein we behold the glory of the Father,

"full of grace and truth." It is upon these two points that the name of Jehovah is at this time assailed—his grace and his truth. He is said to be too stern, too terrible, and therefore "modern thought" displaces the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and sets up an effeminate deity of its own making. As for us, we firmly believe that God is love, and that in the summing up of all things it will be seen that hell itself is not inconsistent with the beneficence of Jehovah, but is, indeed, a necessary part of his moral government now that sin has intruded into the universe. True believers hear the thunders of his justice, and yet they do not doubt his lovingkindness. Especially do we delight in God's great love to his own elect, such as he showed to Israel as a race, and more especially to David and his seed when he entered into covenant with him. Concerning this there is abundant room for praise. But not only do men attack the lovingkindness of God, but the truth of God is at this time assailed on all sides; some doubt the truth of the inspired record as to its histories, others challenge the doctrines, many sneer at the prophecies; in fact, the infallible word of the Lord is at this time treated as if it were the writing of impostors, and only worthy to be carped at. The swine are trampling on the pearls at this time, and nothing restrains them; nevertheless, the pearls are pearls still, and shall yet shine about our Monarch's brow. We sing the lovingkindness and truth of the God of the Old Testament,—
"the God of the whole earth shall he be called." David before the false gods first sang, then worshipped, and then proclaimed the grace and truth of Jehovah; let us do the same before the idols of the New Theology.

For thou hast magnified thy word above all thy name. The word of promise made to David was in his eyes more glorious than all else that he had seen of the Most High. Revelation excels creation in the clearness, definiteness, and fullness of its teaching. The name of the Lord in nature is not so easily read as in the Scriptures, which are a revelation in human language, specially adapted to the human mind, treating of human need, and of a Saviour who appeared in human nature to redeem humanity. Heaven and earth shall pass away, but the divine word will not pass away, and in this respect especially it has a preeminence over every other form of manifestation. Moreover, the Lord lays all the rest of his name under tribute to his word: his wisdom, power, love, and all his other attributes combine to carry out his word. It is his word which creates, sustains, quickens, enlightens, and comforts. As a word of command it is supreme; and in the person of the incarnate Word it is set above all the works of God's hands. The sentence in the text is wonderfully full of meaning. We have collected a vast mass of literature upon it, but space will not allow us to put it all into our notes.

Let us adore the Lord who has spoken to us by his word, and by his Son; and in the presence of unbelievers let us both praise his holy name and extol his holy word.

3 In the day when I cried thou answerest me, and strengthenedst me with strength in my soul.

138: 3 In the day when I cried thou answerest me. No proof is so convincing as that of experience. No man doubts the power of prayer after he has received an answer of peace to his supplication. It is the distinguishing mark of the true and living God that he hears the pleadings of his people, and answers them; the gods hear not and answer not, but Jehovah's memorial is—

"the God that heareth prayer." There was some special day in which David cried more vehemently than usual; he was weak, wounded, worried, and his heart was wearied; then like a child he "cried"—cried unto his Father. It was a bitter, earnest, eager prayer, as natural and as plaintive as the cry of a babe. The Lord answered it, but what answer can there be to a cry?—to a mere inarticulate wail of grief? Our heavenly Father is able to interpret tears, and cries, and he replies to their inner sense in such a way as fully meets the case. The answer came in the same day as the cry ascended: so speedily does prayer rise to heaven, so quickly does mercy return to earth. The statement of this sentence is one which all believers can make, and as they can substantiate it with many facts, they ought boldly to publish it, for it is greatly to God's glory. Well might the Psalmist say, "I will worship" when he felt bound to say "thou answerest me." Well might he glory before the idols and their worshippers when he had answers to prayer to look back upon. This also is our defense against modern heresies: we cannot forsake the Lord, for he has heard our prayers.

And strengthenedst me with strength in my soul. This was a true answer to his prayer. If the burden was not removed, yet strength was given wherewith to bear it, and this is an equally effective method of help. It may not be best for us that the trial should come to an end; it may be
far more to our advantage that by its pressure we should learn patience. Sweet are the uses of adversity, and our prudent Father in heaven will not deprive us of those benefits. Strength imparted to the soul is an inestimable boon; it means courage, fortitude, assurance, heroism. By his word and Spirit the Lord can make the trembler brave, the sick whole, the weary bright. This soul might will continue: the man having been strengthened for one emergency remains vigorous for life, and is prepared for all future labours and sufferings; unless, indeed, he throw away his force by unbelief, or pride, or some other sin. When God strengthens, none can weaken. Then is our soul strong indeed when the Lord infuses might into us.

4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O LORD, when they hear the words of thy mouth.

138: 4 All the kings of the earth shall praise thee, O Lord, when they hear the words of thy mouth. Kings have usually small care to hear the word of the Lord; but King David feels assured that if they do hear it they will feel its power. A little piety goes a long way in courts; but brighter days are coming, in which rulers will become hearers and worshippers: may the advent of such happy times be hastened. What an assembly!—"all the kings of the earth!" What a purpose! Gathered to hear the words of Jehovah's mouth. What a preacher! David himself rehearses the words of Jehovah. What praise! when they all in happy union lift up their songs unto the Lord. Kings are as gods below, and they do well when they worship the God above. The way of conversion for kings is the same as for ourselves: faith to them also cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. Happy are those who can cause the word of the Lord to penetrate palaces; for the occupants of thrones are usually the last to know the joyful sounds of the gospel. David, the king, cared for kings' souls, and it will be wise for each man to look first after those who are of his own order. He went to his work of testimony with fall assurance of success: he meant to speak only the words of Jehovah's mouth, and he felt sure that the kings would hear and praise Jehovah.

5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD: for great is the glory of the LORD.

138: 5 Yea, they shall sing in the ways of the LORD. Here is a double wonder—kings in God's ways, and kings singing there. Let a man once know the ways of Jehovah, and he will find therein abundant reason for song; but the difficulty is to bring the great ones of the earth into ways so little attractive to the carnal mind. Perhaps when the Lord sends us a King David to preach, we shall yet see monarchs converted and hear their voices raised in devout adoration.

For great is the glory of the LORD. This glory shall overshadow all the greatness and glory of all kings: they shall be stirred by a sight of it to obey and adore. O that Jehovah's glory were revealed even now! O that the blind eyes of men could once behold it, then their hearts would be subdued to joyful reverence. David, under a sense of Jehovah's glory, exclaimed, "I will sing" (Psalm 138:1), and here he represents the kings as doing the same thing.
6 ¶ Though the LORD be high, yet hath he respect unto the lowly: but the proud he knoweth afar off.

138: 6 Though the Lord be high. In greatness, dignity, and power, Jehovah is higher than the highest. His nature is high above the comprehension of his creatures, and his glory even exceeds the loftiest soarings of imagination.

Yet hath he respect unto the lowly. He views them with pleasure, thinks of them with care, listens to their prayers, and protects them from evil. Because they think little of themselves he thinks much of them. They reverence him, and he respects them. They are low in their own esteem, and he makes them high in his esteem.

But the proud he knoweth afar off. He does not need to come near them in order to discover their utter vanity: a glance from afar reveals to him their emptiness and offensiveness. He has no fellowship with them, but views them from a distance; he is not deceived, but knows the truth about them, despite their blustering; he has no respect unto them, but utterly abhors them. To a Cain's sacrifice, a Pharaoh's promise, a Rabshakeh's threat, and a Pharisee's prayer, the Lord has no respect. Nebuchadnezzar, when far off from God, cried, "Behold this great Babylon which I have builded"; but the Lord knew him, and sent him grazing with cattle. Proud men boast loudly of their culture and "the freedom of thought", and even dare to criticize their Maker: but he knows them from afar, and will keep them at arm's length in this life, and shut them up in hell in the next.

7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me: thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me.

138: 7 Though I walk in the midst of trouble, thou wilt revive me. If I am walking there now, or shall be doing so in years to come, I have no cause for fear; for God is with me, and will give me new life. When we are somewhat in trouble it is bad enough, but it is worse to penetrate into the centre of that dark continent and traverse its midst: yet in such a case the believer makes progress, for he walks; he keeps to a quiet pace, for he does no more than walk; and he is not without the best of company, for his God is near to pour fresh life into him. It is a happy circumstance that, if God be away at any other time, yet he is pledged to be with us in trying hours:

"when thou passest through the rivers I will be with thee." He is in a blessed condition who can confidently use the language of David,—

"thou wilt revive me." He shall not make his boast of God in vain: he shall be kept alive, and made more alive than ever. How often has the Lord quickened us by our sorrows! Are they not his readiest means of exciting to fullness of energy the holy life which dwells within us? If we receive reviving, we need not regret affliction. When God revives us, trouble will never harm us.
Thou shalt stretch forth thine hand against the wrath of mine enemies, and thy right hand shall save me. This is the fact which would revive fainting David. Our foes fall when the Lord comes to deal with them; he makes short work of the enemies of his people,—with one hand he routs them. His wrath soon quenches their wrath; his hand stays their hand. Adversaries may be many, and malicious, and mighty; but our glorious Defender has only to stretch out his arm and their armies vanish. The sweet singer rehearses his assurance of salvation, and sings of it in the ears of the Lord, addressing him with this confident language. He will be saved,—saved dexterously, decidedly, divinely; he has no doubt about it. God's right hand cannot forget its cunning; Jerusalem is his chief joy, and he will defend his own elect.

8 The LORD will perfect that which concerneth me: thy mercy, O LORD, endureth for ever: forsake not the works of thine own hands.

138: 8 The Lord will perfect that which concerneth me. All my interests are safe in Jehovah's hands.

"The work which his goodness began, The arm of his strength will complete; His promise is yea and Amen, And never was forfeited yet." God is concerned in all that concerns his servants. He will see to it that none of their precious things shall fail of completion; their life, their strength, their hopes, their graces, their pilgrimage, shall each and all be perfected. Jehovah himself will see to this and therefore it is most sure.

Thy mercy, O Lord, endureth for ever. The refrain of the former Psalm is in his ears, and he repeats it as his own personal conviction and consolation. The first clause of the verse is the assurance of faith, and this second one reaches to the full assurance of understanding. God's work in us will abide unto perfection because God's mercy towards us thus abideth.

Forsake not the works of thine own hands. Our confidence does not cause us to live without prayer, but encourages us to pray all more. Since we have it written upon our hearts that God will perfect his work in us, and we see it also written in Scripture that his mercy changeth not, with holy earnestness entreat that we may not be forsaken. If there be anything good in us, it is the work Of God's own hands: will he leave it? Why has he wrought so much in us if he means to give us up?—it will be a sheer effort. He who has gone so far will surely persevere with us to the end. Our hope for the final perseverance of the believer lies in the final perseverance of believer's God. If the Lord begins to build, and does not finish, it will not be his honour. He will have a desire to the work of his hands, for he knows it has cost him already, and he will not throw away a vessel upon which he has expended so much of labour and skill. Therefore do we praise him with our, whole heart, even in the presence of those who depart from his Holy Word, and, set up another God and another gospel; which are not another, but there be some that trouble us.
PSALM 139

One of the most notable of the sacred hymns. It sings the omniscience and omnipresence of God, inferring from these the overthrow of the powers of wickedness, since he who sees and hears the abominable deeds and words of the rebellious will surely deal with them according to his justice. The brightness of this Psalm is like unto a sapphire stone, or Ezekiel's "terrible crystal"; it flames out with such flashes of light as to turn night into day. Like a Pharos, this holy song casts a clear light even to the uttermost parts of the sea, and warns its against that practical atheism which ignores the presence of God, and so makes shipwreck of the soul.

TITLE. To the Chief Musician. The fast time this title occurred was in Psalm 109:1-31. This sacred song is worthy of the most excellent of the singers, and is fitly dedicated to the leader of the Temple Psalmody, that he might set it to music, and see that it was devoutly sung in the solemn worship of the Most High.

A Psalm of David. It bears the image and superscription of King David, and could have come from no other mint than that of the son of Jesse. Of course the critics take this composition away from David, on account of certain Aramaic expressions in it. We believe that upon the principles of criticism now in vogue it would be extremely easy to prove that Milton did not write Paradise Lost. We have yet to learn that David could not have used expressions belonging to "the language of the patriarchal ancestral house." Who knows how much of the antique speech may have been purposely retained among those nobler minds who rejoiced in remembering the descent of their race? Knowing to what wild inferences the critics have run in other matters, we have lost nearly all faith in them, and prefer to believe David to be the author of this Psalm, from internal evidences of style and matter, rather than to accept the determination of men whose modes of judgment are manifestly unreliable.
1 ¶ To the chief Musician, A Psalm of David. O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me.

139: 1 O LORD, thou hast searched me, and known me. He invokes in adoration Jehovah the all knowing God, and he proceeds to adore him by proclaiming one of his peculiar attributes. If we would praise God aright we must draw the matter of our praise from himself—

"O Jehovah, thou hast." No pretended god knows aught of us; but the true God, Jehovah, understands us, and is most intimately acquainted with our persons, nature, and character. How well it is for us to know the God who knows us! The divine knowledge is extremely thorough and searching; it is as if he had searched us, as officers search a man for contraband goods, or as pillagers ransack a house for plunder. Yet we must not let the figure run upon all fours, and lead us further than it is meant to do: the Lord knows all things naturally and as a matter of course, and not by any effort on his part. Searching ordinarily implies a measure of ignorance which is removed by observation; of course this is not the case with the Lord: but the meaning of the Psalmist is, that the Lord knows us as thoroughly as if he had examined us minutely, and had pried into the most secret corners of our being. This infallible knowledge has always existed—"Thou hast searched me"; and it continues unto this day, since God cannot forget that which he has once known. There never was a time in which we were unknown to God, and there never will be a moment in which we shall be beyond his observation. Note how the Psalmist makes his doctrine personal: he saith not, "O God, thou knowest all things"; but, "thou hast known me." It is ever our wisdom to lay truth home to ourselves. How wonderful the contrast between the observer and the observed! Jehovah and me! Yet this most intimate connection exists, and therein lies our hope. Let the reader sit still a while and try to realize the two poles of this statement,—the Lord and poor puny man—and he will see much to admire and wonder at.

2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off.

139: 2 Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising. Me thou knowest, and all that comes of me. I am observed when I quietly sit down, and marked when I resolutely rise up. My most common and casual acts, my most needful and necessary movements, are noted by time, and thou knowest the inward thoughts which regulate them. Whether I sink in lowly self renunciation, or ascend in pride, thou seest the motions of my mind, as well as those of my body. This is a fact to be remembered every moment: sitting down to consider, or rising up to act, we are still seen, known, and read by Jehovah our Lord.

Thou understandest my thought afar off. Before it is my own it is foreknown and comprehended by thee. Though my thought be invisible to the sight, though as yet I be not myself cognizant of the shape it is assuming, yet thou hast it under thy consideration, and thou perceivest its nature, its source, its drift, its result. Never dost thou misjudge or wrongly interpret me: my inmost thought is perfectly understood by
thine impartial mind. Though thou shouldest give but a glance at my heart, and see me as one sees a passing meteor moving afar, yet thou wouldst by that glimpse sum up all the meanings of my soul, so transparent is everything to thy piercing glance.

3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways.

139: 3 Thou compassest my path and my lying down. My path and my pallet, my running and my resting, are alike within the circle of thine observation. Thou dost surround me even as the air continually surrounds all creatures that live. I am shut up within the wall of thy being; I am encircled within the bounds of thy knowledge. Waking or sleeping I am still observed of thee. I may leave thy path, but you never leave mine. I may sleep and forget thee, but thou dost never slumber, nor fall into oblivion concerning thy creature. The original signifies not only surrounding, but winnowing and sifting. The Lord judges our active life and our quiet life; he discriminates our action and our repose, and marks that in them which is good and also that which is evil. There is chaff in all our wheat, and the Lord divides them with unerring precision. And art acquainted with all my ways. Thou art familiar with all I do; nothing is concealed from thee, nor surprising to thee, nor misunderstood by thee. Our paths may be habitual or accidental, open or secret, but with them all the Most Holy One is well acquainted. This should fill us with awe, so that we sin not; with courage, so that we fear not; with delight, so that we mourn not.

4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether.

139: 4 For there is not a word in my tongue, but lo, O LORD, thou knowest it altogether. The unformed word, which lies within the tongue like a seed in the soil, is certainly and completely known to the Great Searcher of hearts. A negative expression is used to make the positive statement all the stronger: not a word is unknown is a forcible way of saying that every word is well known. Divine knowledge is perfect, since not a single word is unknown, nay, not even an unspoken word, and each one is altogether or wholly known. What hope of concealment can remain when the speech with which too many conceal their thoughts is itself transparent before the Lord? O Jehovah, how great art thou! If thine eye hath such power, what must be the united force of thine whole nature!

5 Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me.

139: 5 Thou hast beset me behind and before. As though we were caught in an ambush, or besieged by an army which has wholly beleaguered the city walls, we are surrounded by the Lord. God has set us where we be, and beset us wherever we be. Behind us there is God recording our sins, or in grace blotting out the remembrance of them; and before us there is God foreknowing all our deeds, and providing for all our wants. We cannot turn back and so escape him, for he is behind; we cannot go forward and outmarch him, for he is before. He not only beholds us, but he besets us; and lest there should seem any chance of escape, or lest we should imagine that the surrounding presence is yet a distant one, it is added,—
And laid thine hand upon me. The prisoner marches along surrounded by a guard, and gripped by an officer. God is very near; we are wholly in his power; from that power there is no escape. It is not said that God will thus beset us and arrest us, but it is done—"Thou hast beset me." Shall we not alter the figure, and say that our heavenly Father has folded his arms around us, and caressed us with his hand It is even so with those who are by faith the children of the Most High.

6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it.

139: 6 Such knowledge is too wonderful for me. I cannot grasp it. I can hardly endure to think of it. The theme overwhelms me. I am amazed and astounded at it. Such knowledge not only surpasses my comprehension, but even my imagination.

It is high, I cannot attain unto it. Mount as I may, this truth is too lofty for my mind. It seems to be always above me, even when I soar into the loftiest regions of spiritual thought. Is it not so with every attribute of God? Can we attain to any idea of his power, his wisdom, his holiness? Our mind has no line with which to measure the Infinite. Do we therefore question? Say, rather, that we therefore believe and adore. We are not surprised that the Most Glorious God should in his knowledge be high above all the knowledge to which we can attain: it must of necessity be so, since we are such poor limited beings; and when we stand a tip toe we cannot reach to the lowest step of the throne of the Eternal.

7 ¶ Whither shall I go from thy spirit? or whither shall I flee from thy presence?

139: 7 Here omnipresence is the theme,—a truth to which omniscience naturally leads up.

Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Not that the Psalmist wished to go from God, or to avoid the power of the divine life; but he asks this question to set forth the fact that no one can escape from the all pervading being and observation of the Great Invisible Spirit. Observe how the writer makes the matter personal to himself—

“Whither shall I go?” It were well if we all thus applied truth to our own cases. It were wise for each one to say—The spirit of the Lord is ever around me: Jehovah is omnipresent to me.

Or whither spirit I flee from thy presence? If, full of dread, I hastened to escape from that nearness of God which had become my terror, which way could I turn?

"Whither?" "Whither?" He repeats his cry. No answer comes back to him. The reply to his first

"Whither?" is its echo,—a second "Whither?" From the sight of God he cannot be hidden, but that is not all,—from the immediate, actual, constant presence of God he cannot be withdrawn. We must be, whether we will it or not, as near to God as our soul is to our body. This makes it dreadful work to sin; for we offend the Almighty to his face, and commit acts of treason at the very foot of his throne. Go from him, or flee from him we cannot: neither by patient travel nor by
hasty flight can we withdraw from the all surrounding Deity. His mind is in our mind; himself within ourselves. His spirit is over our spirit; our presence is ever in his presence.

8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there.

139: 8 If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there. Filling the loftiest region with his yet loftier presence, Jehovah is in the heavenly place, at home, upon his throne. The ascent, if it were possible, would be unavailing for purposes of escape; it would, in fact, be a flying into the centre of the fire to avoid the heat. There would he be immediately confronted by the terrible personality of God. Note the abrupt words—"THOU, THERE."

If I make my bed in hell, behold, thou art there. Descending into the lowest imaginable depths among the dead, there should we find the Lord. THOU! says the Psalmist, as if he felt that God was the one great Existence in all places. Whatever Hades may be, or whoever may be there, one thing is certain, Thou, O Jehovah, art there. Two regions, the one of glory and the other of darkness, are set in contrast, and this one fact is asserted of both—“thou art there”. Whether we rise up or lie down, take our wing or make our bed, we shall find God near us. A "behind" is added to the second clause, since it seems more a wonder to meet with God in hell than in heaven, in Hades than in Paradise. Of course the presence of God produces very different effects in these places, but it is unquestionably in each; the bliss of one, the terror of the other. What an awful thought, that some men seem resolved to take up their night's abode in hell, a night which shall know no morning.

9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea;

139: 9 If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea. If I could fly with all swiftness, and find a habitation where the mariner has not yet ploughed the deep, yet I could not reach the boundaries of the divine presence. Light flies with inconceivable rapidity, and it flashes far afield beyond all human ken; it illuminates the great and wide sea, and sets its waves gleaming afar; but its speed would utterly fail if employed in flying from the Lord. Were we to speed on the wings of the morning breeze, and break into oceans unknown to chart and map, yet there we should find the Lord already present. He who saves to the uttermost would be with us in the uttermost parts of the sea.

10 Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me.

139: 10 Even there shall thy hand lead me. We could only fly from God by his own power. The Lord would be leading, covering, preserving, sustaining us even when we were fugitives from him.

And thy right hand shall hold me. In the uttermost parts of the sea my arrest would be as certain as at home: God’s right hand would there seize and detain the runaway. Should we be commanded on the most distant errand, we may assuredly depend
upon the upholding right hand of God as with us in all mercy, wisdom, and power. The exploring missionary in his lonely wanderings is led, in his solitary feebleness he is held. Both the hands of God are with his own servants to sustain them, and against rebels to overthrow them; and in this respect it matters not to what realms they resort, the active energy of God is around them still.

11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me.

139: 11 If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me. Dense darkness may oppress me, but it cannot shut me out from thee, or thee from me. Thou seest as well without the light as with it, since thou art not dependent upon light which is thine own creature, for the full exercise of thy perceptions. Moreover, thou art present with me whatever may be the hour; and being present you discover all that I think, or feel, or do. Men are still so foolish as to prefer night and darkness for their evil deeds; but so impossible is it for anything to be hidden from the Lord that they might just as well transgress in broad daylight. Darkness and light in this agree; Great God, they're both alike to thee. Thine hand can pierce thy foes as soon Through midnight shades as blazing noon. A good man will not wish to be hidden by the darkness, a wise man will not expect any such thing. If we were so foolish as to make sure of concealment because the place was shrouded in midnight, we might well be alarmed out of our security by the fact that, as far as God is concerned, we always dwell in the light; for even the night itself glows with a revealing force,—

even the night shall be light about me. Let us think of this if ever we are tempted to take license from the dark—it is light about us. If the darkness be light, how great is that light in which we dwell! Note well how David keeps his song in the first person; let us mind that we do the same as we cry with Hagar, "Thou God seest me."

12 Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee.

139: 12 Yea, of a surety, beyond all denial.

The darkness hideth not from thee; it veils nothing, it is not the medium of concealment in any degree what ever. It hides from men, but not from God.

But the night shineth as the day: it is but another form of day: it shines, revealing all; it

"shineth as the day,"—quite as clearly and distinctly manifesting all that is done.

The darkness and the light are both alike to thee. This sentence seems to sum up all that went before, and most emphatically puts the negative upon the faintest idea of hiding under the cover of night. Men cling to this notion, because it is easier and less expensive to hide under darkness than to journey to remote places; and therefore the foolish thought is here beaten to pieces by
statements which in their varied forms effectually batter it. Yet the ungodly are still duped by
their groveling notions of God, and enquire,

"How doth God know?" They must fancy that he is as limited in his powers of observation as
they are, and yet if they would but consider for a moment they

would conclude that he who could not see in the dark could not be God, and he who is not
present everywhere could not be the Almighty Creator. Assuredly God is in all places, at all
times, and nothing can by any possibility be kept away from his all observing, all comprehending
mind. The Great Spirit comprehends within himself all time and space, and yet he is infinitely
greater than these, or aught else that he has made.

13 For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.

139: 13 For thou hast possessed my reins. Thou art the owner of my inmost parts and passions:
not the indweller and observer only, but the acknowledged lord and possessor of my most secret
self. The word "reins" signifies the kidneys, which by the Hebrews were supposed to be the seat
of the desires and longings; but perhaps it indicates here the most hidden and vital portion of the
man; this God doth not only inspect, and visit, but it is his own; he is as much at home there as a
landlord on his own estate, or a proprietor in his own house.

Thou hast covered me in my mother's womb. There I lay hidden—covered by thee. Before I
could know thee, or aught else, thou hadst a care for me, and didst hide me away as a treasure till
thou shouldest see fit to bring me to the light. Thus the Psalmist describes the intimacy which
God had with him. In his most secret part—his reins, and in his most secret condition—yet
unborn, he was under the control and guardianship of God.

14 I will praise thee; for I am fearfully and wonderfully made: marvelous are thy
works; and that my soul knoweth right well.

139: 14 I will praise thee: a good resolve, and one which he was even now carrying out. Those
who are praising God are the very men who will praise him. Those who wish to praise have
subjects for adoration ready to hand. We too seldom remember our creation, and all the skill and
kindness bestowed upon our frame: but the sweet singer of Israel was better instructed, and
therefore he prepares for the chief musician a song concerning our nativity and all the fashioning
which precedes it. We cannot begin too soon to bless our Maker, who began so soon to bless us:
even in the act of creation he created reasons for our praising his name,

For I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Who can gaze even upon a model of our anatomy
without wonder and awe? Who could dissect a portion of the human frame without marveling at
its delicacy, and trembling at its frailty? The Psalmist had scarcely peered within the veil which
hides the nerves, sinews, and blood vessels from common inspection; the science of anatomy
was quite unknown to him; and yet he had seen enough to arouse his admiration of the work and his reverence for the Worker.

**Marvelous are thy works.** These parts of my frame are all thy works; and though they be home works, close under my own eye, yet are they wonderful to the last degree. They are works within my own self, yet are they beyond my understanding, and appear to me as so many miracles of skill and power. We need not go to the ends of the earth for marvels, nor even across our own threshold; they abound in our own bodies.

**And that my soul knoweth right well.** He was no agnostic—he knew; he was no doubter—his soul knew; he was no dupe—his soul knew right well. Those know indeed and of a truth who first know the Lord, and then know all things in him. He was made to know the marvelous nature of God's work with assurance and accuracy, for he had found by experience that the Lord is a master worker, performing inimitable wonders when accomplishing his kind designs. If we are marvelously wrought upon even before we are born, what shall we say of the Lord's dealings with us after we quit his secret workshop, and he directs our pathway through the pilgrimage of life? What shall we not say of that new birth which is even more mysterious than the first, and exhibits even more the love and wisdom of the Lord.

15 My substance was not hid from thee, when I was made in secret, and curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.

139: 15 *My substance was not hid from thee.* The substantial part of my being was before thine all seeing eye; the bones which make my frame were put together by thine hand. The essential materials of my being before they were arranged were all within the range of thine eye. I was hidden from all human knowledge, but not from thee: thou hast ever been intimately acquainted with me.

**When I was made in secret.** Most chastely and beautifully is here described the formation of our being before the time of our birth. A great artist will often labour alone in his studio, and not suffer his work to be seen until it is finished; even so did the Lord fashion us where no eye beheld as, and the veil was not lifted till every member was complete. Much of the formation of our inner man still proceeds in secret: hence the more of solitude the better for us. The true church also is being fashioned in secret, so that none may cry,

"Lo, here!" or "Lo, there!" as if that which is visible could ever be identical with the invisibly growing body of Christ.

**And curiously wrought in the lowest parts of the earth.** "Embroidered with great skill", is an accurate poetical description of the creation of veins, sinews, muscles, nerves, etc. What tapestry can equal the human fabric? This work is wrought as much in private as if it had been accomplished in the grave, or in the darkness of the abyss. The expressions are poetical, beautifully veiling, though not absolutely concealing, the real meaning. God's intimate knowledge of us from our beginning, and even before it, is here most charmingly set forth. Cannot he who made us thus wondrously when we were not, still carry on his work of power till
he has perfected us, though we feel unable to aid in the process, and are lying in great sorrow and self loathing, as though cast into the lowest parts of the earth?

16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect; and in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them.

139: 16 Thine eyes did see my substance, yet being unperfect. While as yet the vessel was upon the wheel the Potter saw it all. The Lord knows not only our shape, but our substance: this is substantial knowledge indeed. The Lord's observation of us is intent and intentional,—

"Thine eyes did see." Moreover, the divine mind discerns all things as clearly and certainly as men perceive by actual eye sight. His is not hearsay acquaintance, but the knowledge which comes of sight.

And in thy book all my members were written, which in continuance were fashioned, when as yet there was none of them. An architect draws his plans, and makes out his specifications; even so did the great Maker of our frame write down all our members in the book of his purposes. That we have eyes, and ears, and hands, and feet, is all due to the wise and gracious purpose of heaven: it was so ordered in the secret decree by which all things are as they are. God's purposes concern our limbs and faculties. Their form, and shape, and everything about them were appointed of God long before they had any existence. God saw us when we could not be seen, and he wrote about us when there was nothing of us to write about. When as yet there were none of our members in existence, all those members were before the eye of God in the sketch book of his foreknowledge and predestination. This verse is an exceedingly difficult one to translate, but we do not think that any of the proposed amendments are better than the rendering afforded us by the Authorized Version. The large number of words in italics will warn the English reader that the sense is hard to come at, and difficult to express, and that it would be unwise to found any doctrine upon the English words; happily there is no temptation to do so. The great truth expressed in these lines has by many been referred to the formation of the mystical body of our Lord Jesus. Of course, what is true of man, as man, is emphatically true of Him who is the representative man. The great Lord knows who belong to Christ; his eye perceives the chosen members who shall yet be made one with the living person of the mystical Christ. Those of the elect who are as yet unborn, or unrenewed, are nevertheless written in the Lord's book. As the form of Eve grew up in silence and secrecy under the fashioning hand of the Maker, so at this hour is the Bride being fashioned for the Lord Jesus; or, to change the figure,—a body is being prepared in which the life and glory of the indwelling Lord shall for ever be displayed. The Lord knoweth them that are his: he has a specially familiar acquaintance with the members of the body of Christ; he sees their substance, unperfect though they be.

17 ¶ How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! how great is the sum of them!
139: 17 How precious also are thy thoughts unto me, O God! He is not alarmed at the fact that God knows all about him; on the contrary, he is comforted, and even feels himself to be enriched, as with a casket of precious jewels. That God should think upon him is the believer's treasure and pleasure. He cries,

"How costly, how valued are thy thoughts, how dear to me is thy perpetual attention!" He thinks upon God's thoughts with delight; the more of them the better is he pleased. It is a joy worth worlds that the Lord should think upon us who are so poor and needy: it is a joy which fills our whole nature to think upon God; returning love for love, thought for thought, after our poor fashion.

How great is the sum of them! When we remember that God thought upon us from old eternity, continues to think upon us every moment, and will think of us when time shall be no more, we may well exclaim,

"How great is the sum!" Thoughts such as are natural to the Creator, the Preserver, the Redeemer, the Father, the Friend, are evermore flowing from the heart of the Lord. Thoughts of our pardon, renewal, upholding, supplying, educating, perfecting, and a thousand more kinds perpetually well up in the mind of the Most High. It should fill us with adoring wonder and reverent surprise that the infinite mind of God should turn so many thoughts towards us who are so insignificant and so unworthy! What a contrast is all this to the notion of those who deny the existence of a personal, conscious God! Imagine a world without a thinking, personal God! Conceive of a grim providence of machinery!—a fatherhood of law! Such philosophy is hard and cold. As well might a man pillow his head upon a razor edge as seek rest in such a fancy. But a God always thinking of us makes a happy world, a rich life, a heavenly hereafter.

18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand: when I awake, I am still with thee.

139: 18 If I should count them, they are more in number than the sand. This figure shows the thoughts of God to be altogether innumerable; for nothing can surpass in number the grains of sand which belt the main ocean and all the minor seas. The task of counting God's thoughts of love would be a never ending one. If we should attempt the reckoning we must necessarily fail, for the infinite falls not within the line of our feeble intellect. Even could we count the sands on the seashore, we should not then be able to number God's thoughts, for they are "more in number than the sand." This is not the hyperbole of poetry, but the solid fact of inspired statement: God thinks upon us infinitely; there is a limit to the act of creation, but not to the might of divine love.

When I awake, I am still with thee. Thy thoughts of love are so many that my mind never gets away from them, they surround me at all hours. I go to my bed, and God is my last thought; and when I wake I find my mind still hovering about his palace gates; God is ever with me, and I am ever with him. This is life indeed. If during sleep my mind wanders away into dreams, yet it only wanders upon holy ground, and the moment I wake my heart is back with its Lord. The Psalmist does not say,
"When I awake, I return to thee", but, "I am still with thee": as if his meditations were continuous, and his communion unbroken. Soon we shall lie down to sleep for the last time: God grant that when the trumpet of the archangel shall waken us we may find ourselves still with him.

19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God: depart from me therefore, ye bloody men.

139: 19 Surely thou wilt slay the wicked, O God. There can be no doubt upon that head, for thou hast seen all their transgressions, which indeed have been done in thy presence; and thou hast long enough endured their provocations, which have been so openly manifest before thee. Crimes committed before the face of the Judge are not likely to go unpunished. If the eye of God is grieved with the presence of evil, it is but natural to expect that he will remove the offending object. God who sees all evil will slay all evil. With earthly sovereigns sin may go unpunished for lack of evidence, or the law may be left without execution from lack of vigor in the judge; but this cannot happen in the case of God, the living God. He beareth not the sword in vain. Such is his love of holiness and hatred of wrong, that he will carry on war to the death with those whose hearts and lives are wicked. God will not always suffer his lovely creation to be defaced and defiled by the presence of wickedness: if anything is sure, this is sure, that he will ease him of his adversaries.

Depart from me therefore, ye bloody men. Men who delight in cruelty and war are not fit companions for those who walk with God. David chases the men of blood from his court, for he is weary of those of whom God is weary. He seems to say—If God will not let you live with him I will not have you live with me. You would destroy others, and therefore I want you not in my society. You will be destroyed yourselves, I desire you not in my service. Depart from me, for you depart from God. As we delight to have the holy God always near us, so would we eagerly desire to have wicked men removed as far as possible from us. We tremble in the society of the ungodly lest their doom should fall upon them suddenly, and we should see them lie dead at our feet. We do not wish to have our place of intercourse turned into a gallows of execution, therefore let the condemned be removed out of our company.

20 For they speak against thee wickedly, and thine enemies take thy name in vain.

139: 20 For they speak against thee wickedly. Why should I bear their company when their talk sickens me? They vent their treasons and blasphemies as often as they please, doing so without the slightest excuse or provocation; let them therefore be gone, where they may find a more congenial associate than I can be. When men speak against God they will be sure to speak against us, if they find it serve their turn; hence godless men are not the stuff out of which true friends can ever be made. God gave these men their tongues, and they turn them against their Benefactor, wickedly, from sheer malice, and with great perverseness.

And thine enemies take thy name in vain. This is their sport: to insult Jehovah's glorious name is their amusement. To blaspheme the name of the Lord is a gratuitous wickedness in which
there can be no pleasure, and from which there can be no profit. This is a sure mark of the "enemies" of the Lord, that they have the impudence to assail his honour, and treat his glory with irreverence. How can God do other than slay them? How can we do other than withdraw from every sort of association with them? What a wonder of sin it is that men should rail against so good a Being as the Lord our God! The impudence of those who talk wickedly is a singular fact, and it is the more singular when we reflect that the Lord against whom they speak is all around them, and lays to heart every dishonour which they render to his holy name. We ought not to wonder that men slander and deride us, for they do the same with the Most High God.

21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? and am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee?

139: 21 Do not I hate them, O LORD, that hate thee? He was a good hater, for he hated only those who hated good. Of this hatred he is not ashamed, but he sets it forth as a virtue to which he would have the Lord bear testimony. To love all men with benevolence is our duty; but to love any wicked man with complacency would be a crime. To hate a man for his own sake, or for any evil done to us, would be wrong; but to hate a man because he is the foe of all goodness and the enemy of all righteousness, is nothing more nor less than an obligation. The more we love God the more indignant shall we grow with those who refuse him their affection.

"If any man love not the Lord Jesus Christ let him be Anathema Maranatha." Truly, "jealousy is cruel as the grave." The loyal subject must not be friendly to the traitor.

And am not I grieved with those that rise up against thee? He appeals to heaven that he took no pleasure in those who rebelled against the Lord; but, on the contrary, he was made to mourn by a sight of their ill behaviour. Since God is everywhere, he knows our feelings towards the profane and ungodly, and he knows that so far from approving such characters the very sight of them is grievous to our eyes.

22 I hate them with perfect hatred: I count them mine enemies.

139: 22 I hate them with perfect hatred. He does not leave it a matter of question. He does not occupy a neutral position. His hatred to bad, vicious, blasphemous men is intense, complete, energetic. He is as whole hearted in his hate of wickedness as in his love of goodness.

I count them mine enemies. He makes a personal matter of it. They may have done him no ill, but if they are doing despite to God, to his laws, and to the great principles of truth and righteousness, David proclaims war against them. Wickedness passes men into favour with unrighteous spirits; but it excludes them from the communion of the just. We pull up the drawbridge and man the walls when a man of Belial goes by our castle. His character is a casus belli [just cause, lit. occasion of war]; we cannot do otherwise than contend with those who contend with God.
23 Search me, O God, and know my heart: try me, and know my thoughts:

139: 23 Search me, O God, and know my heart. David is no accomplice with traitors. He has disowned them in set form, and now he appeals to God that he does not harbor a trace of fellowship with them. He will have God himself search him, and search him thoroughly, till every point of his being is known, and read, and understood; for he is sure that even by such an investigation there will be found in him no complicity with wicked men. He challenges the fullest investigation, the innermost search: he had need be a true man who can put himself deliberately into such a crucible. Yet we may each one desire such searching; for it would be a terrible calamity to us for sin to remain in our hearts unknown and undiscovered.

Try me, and know my thoughts. Exercise any and every test upon me. By fire and by water let me be examined. Read not alone the desires of my heart, but the fugitive thoughts of my head. Know with all penetrating knowledge all that is or has been in the chambers of my mind. What a mercy that there is one being who can know us to perfection! He is intimately at home with us. He is graciously inclined towards us, and is willing to bend his omniscience to serve the end of our sanctification. Let us pray as David did, and let us be as honest as he. We cannot hide our sin: salvation lies the other way, in a plain discovery of evil, and an effectual severance from it.

24 And see if there be any wicked way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting.

139: 24 And see if there be any wicked way in me. See whether there be in my heart, or in my life, any evil habit unknown to myself. If there be such an evil way, take me from it, take it from me. No matter how dear the wrong may have become, nor how deeply prejudiced I may have been in its favour, be pleased to deliver me therefrom altogether, effectually, and at once, that I may tolerate nothing which is contrary to thy mind. As I hate the wicked in their way, so would I hate every wicked way in myself.

And lead me in the way everlasting. If thou hast introduced me already to the good old way, be pleased to keep me in it, and conduct me further and further along it. It is a way which thou hast set up of old, it is based upon everlasting principles, and it is the way in which immortal spirits will gladly run for ever and ever. There will be no end to it world without end. It lasts for ever, and they who are in it last for ever. Conduct me into it, O Lord, and conduct me throughout the whole length of it. By thy providence, by thy word, by thy grace, and by thy Spirit, lead me evermore.
PSALM 140

To the chief Musician
A Psalm of David

This Psalm is in its proper place, and so fitly follows 139 that you might almost read right on, and make no break between the two. Serious injury would follow to the whole Book of Psalms if the order should be interfered with as certain wiseacres propose. It is The Cry of a Hunted Soul the supplication of a believer incessantly persecuted and beset by cunning enemies, who hungered for his destruction. David was hunted like a partridge upon the mountains, and seldom obtained a moment's rest. This is his pathetic appeal to Jehovah for protection, an appeal which gradually intensifies into a denunciation of his bitter foes. With this sacrifice of prayer he offers the salt of faith; for in a very marked and emphatic manner he expresses his personal confidence in the Lord as the Protector of the oppressed, and as his own God and Defender. Few short Psalms are so rich in the jewellery of precious faith.

TO THE CHIEF MUSICIAN. The writer wished this experimental hymn to be under the care of the chief master of song, that it might neither be left unsung, nor chanted in a slovenly manner. Such trials and such rescues deserved to be had in remembrance, and to be set up among the choicest memorials of the Lord's goodness. We, too, have our songs which are of no ordinary kind, and these must be sung with our best powers of heart and tongue. We will offer them to the Lord by no other hand than that of "the Chief Musician."

A PSALM OF DAVID. The life of David wherein he comes in contact with Saul and Doeg is the best explanation of this Psalm; and surely there can be no reasonable doubt that David wrote it, and wrote it in the time of his exile and peril. The tremendous outburst at the end has in it the warmth which was so natural to David, who was never lukewarm in anything; yet it is to be noticed that concerning his enemies he was often hot in language through indignation, and yet he was cool in action, for he was not revengeful. His was no petty malice, but a righteous anger: he foresew, foretold, and even desired the just vengeance of God upon the proud and wicked, and yet he would not avail himself of opportunities to revenge himself upon those who had done him wrong. It may be that his appeals to the great King cooled his anger, and enabled him to leave his wrongs unredressed by any personal act of violence. "Vengeance is mine; I will repay, saith the
Lord”; and David when most wounded by undeserved persecution and wicked falsehood was glad to leave his matters at the foot of the throne, where they would be safe with the King of kings.

1 ¶Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man: preserve me from the violent man;

140: 1 Deliver me, O LORD, from the evil man. It reads like a clause of the Lord's prayer, "Deliver us from evil." David does not so much plead against an individual as against the species represented by him, namely, the being whose best description is—

"the evil man." There are many such abroad; indeed we shall not find an unregenerate man who is not in some sense an evil man, and yet all are not alike evil. It is well for us that our enemies are evil: it would be a horrible thing to have the good against us. When "the evil man" bestirs himself against the godly he is as terrible a being as a wolf, or a serpent, or even a devil. Fierce, implacable, unpitying, unrelenting, unscrupulous, he cares for nothing but the indulgence of his malice. The persecuted man turns to God in prayer; he could not do a wiser thing. Who can meet the evil man and defeat him save Jehovah himself, whose infinite goodness is more than a match for all the evil in the universe? We cannot of ourselves baffle the craft of the enemy, but the Lord knoweth how to deliver his saints. He can keep us out of the enemy’s reach, he can sustain us when under his power, he can rescue us when our doom seems fixed, he can give us the victory when defeat seems certain; and in any and every case, if he do not save us from the man he can keep us from the evil. Should we be at this moment oppressed in any measure by ungodly men, it will be better to leave our defense with God than to attempt it ourselves.

Preserve me from the violent man. Evil in the heart simmers in malice, and at last boils in passion. Evil is a ragtag thing when it getteth liberty to manifest itself; and so "the evil man" soon develops into "the violent man" What watchfulness, strength, or valour can preserve the child of God from deceit and violence? There is but one sure Preserver, and it is our wisdom to hide under the shadow of his wings. It is a common thing for good men to be assailed by enemies: David was attacked by Saul, Doeg, Ahithophel, Shimei, and others; even Mordecai sitting humbly in the gate had his Haman; and our Lord, the Perfect One, was surrounded by those who thirsted for his blood. We may not, therefore, hope to pass through the world without enemies, but we may hope to be delivered out of their hands, and preserved from their rage, so that no real harm shall come of their malignity. This blessing is to be sought by prayer, and expected by faith.

2 Which imagine mischiefs in their heart; continually are they gathered together for war.

140: 2 Which imagine mischiefs in their heart. They cannot be happy unless they are plotting and planning, conspiring and contriving. They seem to have but one heart, for they are completely agreed in their malice; and with all their heart and soul they pursue their victim. One piece of mischief is not enough for them; they work in the plural, and prepare many arrows for their bow. What they cannot actually do they nevertheless like to think over, and to rehearse on
the stage of their cruel fancy. It is an awful thing to have such a heart disease as this. When the imagination gloats over doing harm to others, it is a sure sign that the entire nature is far gone in wickedness.

**Continually are they gathered together for war.** They are a committee of opposition in permanent session: they never adjourn, but perpetually consider the all absorbing question of how to do the most harm to the man of God. They are a standing army always ready for the fray: they not only go to the wars, but dwell in them. Though they are the worst of company, yet they put up with one another, and are continually in each other's society, confederate for fight. David's enemies were as violent as they were evil, as crafty as they were violent, and as persistent as they were crafty. It is hard dealing with persons who are only in their element when they are at daggers drawn with you. Such a case calls for prayer, and prayer calls on God.

3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent; adders' poison is under their lips. Selah.

**140: 3 They have sharpened their tongues like a serpent.** The rapid motion of a viper's tongue gives you the idea of its sharpening it; even thus do the malicious move their tongues at such a rate that one might suppose them to be in the very act of wearing them to a point, or rubbing them to a keen edge. It was a common notion that serpents inserted their poison by their tongues, and the poets used the idea as a poetical expression, although it is certain that the serpent wounds by his fangs and not by his tongue. We are not to suppose that all authors who used such language were mistaken in their natural history any more than a writer can be charged with ignorance of astronomy because he speaks of the sun's traveling from east to west. How else can poets speak but according to the appearance of things to an imaginative eye. The world's great poet puts it in "King Lear": "She struck me with her tongue, Most serpent like, upon the very heart." In the case of slanderers, they so literally sting with their tongues, which are so nimble in malice, and withal so piercing and cutting, that it is by no means unjust to speak of them as sharpened.

**Adders' poison is under their lips.** The deadliest of all venom is the slander of the unscrupulous. Some men care not what they say so long as they can vex and injure. Our text, however, must not be confined in its reference to some few individuals, for in the inspired epistle to the Romans it is quoted by the apostle as being true of us all. So depraved are we by nature that the most venomous creatures are our fit types. The old serpent has not only inoculated us with his venom, but he has caused us to be ourselves producers of the like poison: it lies under our lips, ready for use, and, alas, it is all too freely used when we grow angry, and desire to take vengeance upon any who have caused us vexation. It is sadly wonderful what hard things even good men will say when provoked; yea, even such as call themselves "perfect" in cool blood are not quite as gentle as doves when their claims to sinlessness are bluntly questioned. This poison of evil speaking would never fall from our lips, however much we might be provoked, if it were not there at other times; but by nature we have as great a store of venomous words as a cobra has of poison. O Lord, take the poison bags away, and cause our lips to drop nothing but honey. Selah. This is heavy work. Go up, go up, my heart! Sink not too low. Fall not into the lowest key. Lift up thyself to God.
4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked; preserve me from the violent man; who have purposed to overthrow my goings.

140: 4 Keep me, O LORD, from the hands of the wicked. To fall into their hands would be a calamity indeed. David in his most pitiable plight chose to fall into the hand of a chastising God rather than to be left in the power of men. No creature among the wild beasts of the wood is so terrible an enemy to man as man himself when guided by evil, and impelled by violence. The Lord by providence and grace can keep us out of the power of the wicked. He alone can do this, for neither our own watchfulness nor the faithfulness of friends can secure us against the serpentine assaults of the foe. We have need to be preserved from the smooth as well as the rough hands of the ungodly, for their flatteries may harm us as much as their calumnies. The hands of their example may pollute us, and so do us more harm than the hands of their oppression. Jehovah must be our keeper, or evil hands will do what evil hearts have imagined and evil lips have threatened.

Preserve me from the violent man. His intense passion makes him terribly dangerous. He will strike anyhow, use any weapon, smite from any quarter: he is so furious that he is reckless of his own life if he may accomplish his detestable design. Lord, preserve us by thine omnipotence when men attack us with their violence. This prayer is a wise and suitable one. Who have purposed to overthrow my goings. They resolve to turn the good man from his resolve, they would defeat his designs, injure his integrity, and blast his character. Their own goings are wicked, and therefore they hate those of the righteous, seeing they are a standing rebuke to them. This is a forcible argument to use in prayer with God: he is the patron of holiness, and when the pure lives of his people are in danger of overthrow, he may be expected to interpose. Never let the pious forget to pray, for this is a weapon against which the most determined enemy cannot stand.

5 The proud have hid a snare for me, and cords; they have spread a net by the wayside; they have set gins for me. Selah.

140: 5 The proud have hid a snare for me. Proud as they are, they stoop to this mean action: they use a snare, and they hide it away, that their victim may be taken like a poor hare who is killed without warning—killed in its usual run, by a snare which it could not see. David's enemies wished to snare him in his path of service, the usual way of his life. Saul laid many snares for David, but the Lord preserved him. All around us there are snares of one sort or another, and he will be well kept, aye, divinely kept, who never falls into one of them.

And cords. With these they pull the net together and with these they bind their captive. Thus fowlers do, and trappers of certain large animals. The cords of love are pleasant, but the cords of hate are cruel as death itself.

They have spread a net by the wayside. Where it will be near their prey; where the slightest divergence from the path will bring the victim into it. Surely the common wayside ought to be safe: men who go out of the way may well be taken in a net, but the path of duty is proverbially
the path of safety; yet it is safe nowhere when malicious persons are abroad. Birds are taken in nets, and men are taken by deceit. Satan instructs his children in the art of fowling, and they right speedily learn how to spread nets: perhaps they have been doing that for us already; let us make our appeal to God concerning it.

*They have set gins for me.* One instrument of destruction is not enough; they are so afraid of missing their prey that they multiply their traps, using differing devices, so that one way or another they may take their victim. Those who avoid the snare and the net may yet be caught in a gin, and accordingly gins are placed in all likely places. If a godly man can be cajoled, or bribed, or cowed, or made angry, the wicked will make the attempt. Ready are they to twist his words, misread his intentions, and misdirect his efforts; ready to fawn, and lie, and make themselves mean to the last degree so that they may accomplish their abominable purpose.

*Selah.* The harp needs tuning after such a strain, and the heart needs lifting up towards God.

6 I said unto the LORD, Thou *art* my God: hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.

140: 6 *I said unto the LORD, Thou art my God.* Here was David's stay and hope. He was assured that Jehovah was his God, he expressed that assurance, and he expressed it before Jehovah himself. That had need be a good and full assurance which a man dares to lay before the face of the heart searching Lord. The Psalmist when hunted by man, addressed himself to God. Often the less we say to our foes, and the more we say to our best Friend the better it will fare with us: if we say anything, let it be said unto the Lord. David rejoiced in the fact that he had already said that Jehovah was his God: he was content to have committed himself, he had no wish to draw back. The Lord was David's own by deliberate choice, to which he again sets his seal with delight. The wicked reject God, but the righteous receive him as their own, their treasure, their pleasure, their light and delight.

*Hear the voice of my supplications, O LORD.* Since thou art mine, I pray thee hear my cries. We cannot ask this favour of another man's god, but we may seek it from our own God. The prayers of saints have a voice in them; they are expressive pleadings even when they sound like inarticulate moanings. The Lord can discern a voice in our waitings, and he can and will hearken thereto. Because he is God he can hear us; because he is our God he will hear us. So long as the Lord doth but hear us we are content: the answer may be according to his own will, but we do entreat to be heard: a soul in distress is grateful to any one who will be kind and patient enough to hearken to its tale, but specially is it thankful for an audience with Jehovah. The more we consider his greatness and our insignificance, his wisdom and our folly, the more shall we be filled with praise when the Lord attends unto our cry.

7 O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.

140: 7 *O GOD the Lord, the strength of my salvation, thou hast covered my head in the day of battle.* When he looked back upon past dangers and deliverances, the good man felt that he should have perished had not the Lord held a shield over his head. In the day of the clash of
arms, or of the putting on of armour (as some read it), the glorious Lord had been his constant Protector. Goliath had his armour bearer, and so had Saul, and these each one guarded his master; yet the giant and the king both perished, while David, without armour or shield, slew the giant and baffled the tyrant. The shield of the Eternal is a better protection than a helmet of brass, When arrows fly thick and the battle axe crashes right and left, there is no covering for the head like the power of the Almighty. See how the child of providence glorifies his Preserver! He calls him not only his salvation, but the strength of it, by whose unrivalled force he had been enabled to outlive the cunning and cruelty of his adversaries. He had obtained a deliverance in which the strength of the Omnipotent was clearly to be seen. This is a grand utterance of praise, a gracious ground of comfort, a prevalent argument in prayer. He that has covered our head aforetime will not now desert us. Wherefore let us fight a good fight, and fear no deadly wound: the Lord God is our shield, and our exceeding great reward.

8 ¶ Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked: further not his wicked device; lest they exalt themselves. Selah.

140: 8 Grant not, O LORD, the desires of the wicked.

Even they are dependent upon thee they can do no more than thou dost permit. Thou dost restrain them; not a dog of them can move his tongue without thy leave and license. Therefore I entreat thee not to let them have their way. Even though they dare to pray to their, do not hear their prayers against innocent men. Assuredly the Lord Jehovah will be no accomplice with the malevolent; their desires shall never be his desires; if they thirst for blood he will not gratify their cruelty.

Further not his wicked devices They are so united as to be like one man in their wishes; but do not hear their prayers. Though hand join in hand, and they desire and design as one man, yet do not thou lend them the aid of thy providence. Do not permit their malicious schemes to succeed. The Lord may allow success to attend the policy of the wicked for a time for wise reasons unknown to us, but we are permitted to pray that it be not so. The petition "Deliver us from evil" includes and allows such supplication.

Lest they exalt themselves. If successful, the wicked are sure to grow proud, and insult the righteous over whom they have triumphed, and this is so great an evil, and so dishonoring to God, that the Psalmist uses it in his pleading as an argument against their being allowed to prosper. The glory of the wicked is opposed to the glory of God. If God seems to favour them they grow too high for this world, and their heads strike against the heavens. Let us hope that the Lord will not suffer this to be. Selah.

Here let us exalt our thoughts and praises high over the heads of self exalting sinners. The more they rise in conceit the higher let us rise in confidence.

9 As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them.
As for the head of those that compass me about, let the mischief of their own lips cover them. To the Lord who had covered his head amid the din of arms the Psalmist appeals against his foes, that their heads may be covered in quite another sense—covered with the reward of their own malice. David's foes were so many that they hemmed him in, encircling him as hunters do their prey. It is little wonder that he turns to the Lord in his dire need. The poet represents his adversaries as so united as to have but one head; for there is often a unanimity among evil spirits which makes them the more strong and terrible for their vile purposes. The *lex talionis*, or law of retaliation, often brings down upon violent men the evil which they planned and spoke of for others: their arrows fall upon themselves. When a man's lips vent curses they will probably, like chickens, come home to roost. A stone hurled upward into the air is apt to fall upon the thrower's head. David's words may be read in the future as a prophecy; but in this verse, at any rate, there is no need to do so in order to soften their tone. It is so just that the mischief which men plot and the slander which they speak should recoil upon themselves that every righteous man must desire it: he who does not desire it may wish to be considered humane and Christlike, but the chances are that he has a sneaking agreement with the wicked, or is deficient in a manly sense of right and wrong. When evil men fall into pits which they have digged for the innocent we believe that even the angels are glad; certainly the most gentle and tender of philanthropists, however much they pity the sufferers, must also approve the justice which makes them suffer. We suspect that some of our excessively soft spoken critics only need to be put into David's place, and they would become a vast deal more bitter than he ever was.

Let burning coals fall upon them: let them be cast into the fire; into deep pits, that they rise not up again.

Let burning coals fall upon them. Then will they know that the scattering of the firebrands is not the sport they thought it to be. When hailstones and coals of fire descend upon them, how will they escape? Even the skies above the wicked are able to deal out vengeance upon them.

Let them be cast into the fire. They have kindled the flames of strife, and it is fair that they should be cast therein. They have heated the furnace of slander seven times hotter than it was wont to be heated, and they shall be devoured therein. Who would have pitied Nebuchadnezzar if he had been thrown into his own burning fiery furnace?

Into deep pits, that they rise not up again. They made those ditches or fosses for the godly, and it is meet that they should themselves fall into them and never escape. When a righteous man falls he rises again; but when the wicked man goes down "he falls like Lucifer, never to hope again." The Psalmist in this passage graphically depicts the Sodom of the wicked persecutor: fire falls upon him from heaven; the city blazes, and he is cast into the conflagration; the vale of Siddim is full of slime pits, and into these he is hurried. Extraordinary judgment overtakes the extraordinary offender: above, around, beneath, all is destruction. He would have consumed the righteous, and now he is consumed himself. So shall it be: so let it be.
11 Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth: evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.

140: 11 *Let not an evil speaker be established in the earth.* For that would be an established plague, a perpetual curse. Men of false and cruel tongues are of most use when they go to fatten the soil in which they rot as carcasses: while they are alive they are the terror of the good, and the torment of the poor. God will not allow the specious orators of falsehood to retain the power they temporarily obtain by their deceitful speaking. They may become prominent, but they cannot become permanent. They shall be disendowed and disestablished in spite of all that they can say to the contrary. All evil bears the element of decay within itself; for what is it but corruption? Hence the utmost powers of oratory are insufficient to settle upon a sure foundation the cause which bears a lie within it.

*Evil shall hunt the violent man to overthrow him.* He hunted the good, and now his own evil shall hunt him. He tried to overthrow the goings of the righteous, and now his own unrighteousness shall prove his overthrow. As he was violent, so shall he be violently assaulted and hunted down. Sin is its own punishment; a violent man will need no direr doom than to reap what he has sown. It is horrible for a huntsman to be devoured by Iris own hounds; yet this is the sure fate of the persecutor.

12 I know that the LORD will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and the right of the poor.

140: 12 *I know that the Lord will maintain the cause of the afflicted, and, the right of the poor.* All through the Psalm the writer is bravely confident, and speaks of things about which he had no doubt: in fact, no Psalm can be more grandly positive than this protest against slander. The slandered saint knew Jehovah's care for the afflicted, for lie had received actual proofs of it himself.

*I will maintain it* is the motto of the great Defender of the rights of the needy. What confidence this should create within the bosoms of the persecuted and poverty stricken! The prosperous and wealthy can maintain their own cause, but those who are otherwise shall find that God helps those who cannot help themselves. Many talk as if the poor had no rights worth noticing, but they will sooner or later find out their mistake when the Judge of all the earth begins to plead with them.

13 Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name: the upright shall dwell in thy presence.

140: 13 *Surely the righteous shall give thanks unto thy name.* The former Psalm had its "surely", but this is a more pleasing one. As surely as God will slay the wicked he will save the oppressed, and fill their hearts and mouths with praises. Whoever else may be silent, the righteous will give thanks; and whatever they may suffer, the matter will end ill their living through the trial, and magnifying the Lord for his delivering grace. On earth ere long, and in heaven for ever, the pure in heart shall sing unto the Lord. How loud and sweet will be
the songs of the redeemed in the millennial age, when the meek shall inherit the earth, and delight themselves in the abundance of peace!

*The upright shall dwell in thy presence.* Thus shall they give thanks in the truest and fullest manner. This abiding before the Lord shall render to him "songs without words", and therefore all the more spiritual and true. Their living and walking with their God shall be their practical form of gratitude. Sitting down in holy peace, like children at their father's table, their joyful looks and language shall speak their high esteem and fervent love to him who has become their dwelling place. How high have we climbed in this Psalm—from being hunted by the evil man to dwelling in the divine presence; so doth faith upraise the saint from the lowest depths to heights of peaceful repose. Well might the song be studded with Selahs, or uplifters.
PSALM 141
A Psalm of David

TITLE. A Psalm, Of David. Yes, David under suspicion, half afraid to speak lest he should speak unadvisedly while trying to clear himself; David slandered and beset by enemies; David censured even by saints, and taking it kindly; David deploring the condition of the godly party of whom he was the acknowledged heard: David waiting upon God with confident expectation. The Psalm is one of a group of four, and it bears a striking likeness to the other three. Its meaning lies so deep as to be in places exceedingly obscure, yet even upon its surface it has dust of gold. In its commencement the psalm is lighted up with the evening glow as the incense rises to heaven; then comes a night of language whose meaning we cannot see; and this gives place to morning light in which our eyes are unto the Lord.

DIVISION. The Psalmist cries for acceptance in prayer (Psalm 141:1-2); Then he begs to be kept as to his speech, preserved in heart and deed, and delivered from every sort of fellowship with the ungodly. He prefers to be rebuked by the gracious rather than to be flattered by the wicked, and consoles himself with the confident assurance that be will one day be understood by the godly party, and made to be a comfort to them (Psalm 141:3-6). In the last verses the slandered saint represents the condition of the persecuted church, looks away to God and pleads for rescue from his cruel enemies, and for the punishment of his oppressors.

1 ¶LORD, I cry unto thee: make haste unto me; give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee.

141: 1 Lord, I cry unto thee. This is my last resort: prayer never fails me. My prayer is painful and feeble, and worthy only to be called a cry; but it is a cry unto Jehovah, and this ennobles it. I have cried unto thee, I still cry to thee, and I always mean to cry to thee. To whom else could I go? What else can I do? Others trust to themselves, but I cry unto thee. The weapon of all prayer is one which the believer may always carry with him, and use in every time of need.

Make haste unto me. His case was urgent, and he pleaded that urgency. God's time is the best time, but when we are sorely pressed we may with holy importunity quicken the movements of mercy. In many cases, if help should come late, it would come too late; and we are permitted to pray against such a calamity.

Give ear unto my voice, when I cry unto thee. See how a second time he talks of crying: prayer had become his frequent, yea, his constant exercise: twice in a few words he says,
"I cry; I cry." How he longs to be heard, and to be heard at once! There is a voice to the great Father in every cry, and groan, and tear of his children: he can understand what they mean when they are quite unable to express it. It troubles the spirit of the saints when they fear that no favorable ear is turned to their doleful cries: they cannot rest unless their "unto thee" is answered by an "unto me." When prayer is a man's only refuge, he is deeply distressed at the bare idea of his failing therein.

"That were a grief I could not bear,  
Didst thou not hear and answer prayer;  
But a prayer hearing, answering God  
Supports me under every load."

2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice.

| 141: 2 Let my prayer be set forth before thee as incense. | As incense is carefully prepared, kindled with holy fire, and devoutly presented unto God, so let my prayer be. We are not to look upon prayer as easy work requiring no thought. It needs to be "set forth"; what is more, it must be set forth before the Lord, "by a sense of his presence and a holy reverence for his name: neither may we regard all supplication as certain of divine acceptance, it needs to be set forth before the Lord "as incense," concerning the offering of which there were rules to be observed, otherwise it would be rejected of God. |
| And the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice. | Whatever form his prayer might take his one desire was that it might be accepted of God. Prayer is sometimes presented without words by the very motions of our bodies: bent knees and lifted hands are the tokens of earnest, expectant prayer. Certainly work, or the lifting up of the hands in labour, is prayer if it be done in dependence upon God and for his glory: there is a hand prayer as well as a heart prayer, and our desire is that tiffs may be sweet unto the Lord as the sacrifice of eventide. Holy hope, the lifting up of hands that hang down, is also a kind of worship: may it ever be acceptable with God. The Psalmist makes a bold request: he would have his humble cries and prayers to be as much regarded of the Lord as the appointed morning and evening sacrifices of the holy place. Yet the prayer is by no means too bold, for, after all, the spiritual is in the Lord's esteem higher than the ceremonial, and the calves of the lips are a truer sacrifice than the calves of the stall. So far we have a prayer about prayer: we have a distinct supplication in the two following verses. |

3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth; keep the door of my lips.

| 141: 3 Set a watch, O LORD, before my mouth. | That mouth had been used in prayer, it would be a pity it should ever be defiled with untruth, or pride, or wrath; yet so it will become unless |
carefully watched, for these intruders are ever lurking about the door. David feels that with all his own watchfulness he may be surprised into sin, and so he begs the Lord himself to keep him. When Jehovah sets the watch the city is well guarded: when the Lord becomes the guard of our mouth the whole man is well garrisoned.

*Keep the door of my lips.* God has made our lips the door of the mouth, but we cannot keep that door of ourselves, therefore do we entreat the Lord to take the rule of it. O that the Lord would both open and shut our lips, for we can do neither the one nor the other aright if left to ourselves. In times of persecution by ungodly men we are peculiarly liable to speak hastily, or evasively, and therefore we should be specially anxious to be preserved in that direction from every form of sin. How condescending is the Lord! We are ennobled by being door keepers for him, and yet he deigns to be a door keeper for us.

4 Incline not my heart to *any* evil thing, to practice wicked works with men that work iniquity: and let me not eat of their dainties.

141:4 *Incline not my heart to any evil thing.* It is equivalent to the petition, "*Lead us not into temptation.*" O that nothing may arise in providence which would excite our desires in a wrong direction. The Psalmist is here careful of his heart. He who holds the heart is lord of the man: but if the tongue and the heart are under God's care all is safe. Let us pray that he may never leave us to our own inclinations, or we shall soon decline from the right.

To *practise wicked works with men that work iniquity.* The way the heart inclines the life soon tends: evil things desired bring forth wicked things practiced. Unless the fountain of life is kept pure the streams of life will soon be polluted. Alas, there is great power in company: even good men are apt to be swayed by association; hence the fear that we may practice wicked works when we are with wicked workers. We must endeavor not to be with them lest we sin with them. It is bad when the heart goes the wrong way alone, worse when the life runs in the evil road alone; but it is apt to increase unto a high degree of ungodliness when the backslider runs the downward path with a whole horde of sinners around him. Our practice will be our perdition if it be evil: it is an aggravation of sin rather than an excuse for it to say that it is our custom and our habit. It is God's practice to punish all who make a practice of iniquity. Good men are horrified at the thought of sinning as others do; the fear of it drives them to their knees. Iniquity, which, being interpreted, is a want of equity, is a thing to be shunned as we would avoid an infectious disease.

*And let me not eat of their dainties.* If we work with them we shall soon eat with them. They will bring out their sweet morsels, and delicate dishes, in the hope of binding us to their service by the means of our palates. The trap is baited with delicious meats that we may be captured and become meat for their malice. If we would not sin with men we had better not sit with them, and if we would not share their wickedness we must not share their wantonness.
Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness: and let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head: for yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities.

Let the righteous smite me; it shall be a kindness. He prefers the bitters of gracious company to the dainties of the ungodly. He would rather be smitten by the righteous than feasted by the wicked. He gives a permit to faithful admonition, he even invites it—

"let the righteous smite me." When the ungodly smile upon us their flattery is cruel; when the righteous smite us their faithfulness is kind. Sometimes godly men rap hard; they do not merely hint at evil, but hammer at it; and even then we are to receive the blows in love, and be thankful to the hand which smites so heavily. Fools resent reproof; wise men endeavor to profit by it.

And let him reprove me; it shall be an excellent oil, which shall not break my head. Oil breaks no heads, and rebuke does no man any harm; rather, as oil refreshes and perfumes, so does reproof when fitly taken sweeten and renew the heart. My friend must love me well if he will tell me of my faults: there is an unctuousness about him if he is honest enough to point out my errors. Many a man has had his head broken at the feasts of the wicked, but none at the table of a true hearted reprover. The oil of flattery is not excellent; the oil so lavishly used at the banquet of the reveler is not excellent; head breaking and heart breaking attend the anointings of the riotous; but it is otherwise with the severest censures of the godly: they are not always sweet, but they are always excellent; they may for the moment bruise the heart, but they never break either it or the head. For yet my prayer also shall be in their calamities. Gracious men never grow wrathful with candid friends so as to harbor an ill feeling against them; if so, when they saw them in affliction, they would turn round upon them and taunt them with their rebukes. Far from it; these wisely grateful souls are greatly concerned to see their instructors in trouble, and they bring forth their best prayers for their assistance. They do not merely pray for them, but they so closely and heartily sympathize that their prayers are "in their calamities, "down in the dungeon with them. So true is Christian brotherhood that we are with our friends in sickness or persecution, suffering their griefs; so that our heart's prayer is in their sorrows. When we can give good men nothing more, let us give them our prayers, and let us do this doubly to those who have given us their rebukes.

When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet.

This is a verse of which the meaning seems far to seek. Does it refer to the righteous among the Israelites? We think so. David surely means that when their leaders fell never to rise again, they would then turn to him and take delight in listening to his voice.
When their judges are overthrown in stony places, they shall hear my words; for they are sweet. And so they did: the death of Saul made all the best of the nation look to the son of Jesse as the Lord's anointed; his words became sweet to them. Many of those good men who had spoken severely of David's quitting his country, and going over to the Philistines, were nevertheless dear to his heart for their fidelity, and to them he returned nothing but good will, loving prayers, and sweet speeches, knowing that by and by they would overlook his faults, and select him to be their leader. They smote him when he erred, but they recognized his excellences. He, on his part, bore no resentment, but loved them for their honesty. He would pray for them when their land lay bleeding at the feet of their foreign enemies; he would come to their rescue when their former leaders were slain; and his words of courageous hopefulness would be sweet in their ears. This seems to me to be a good sense, consistent with the context. At the same time, other and more laboured interpretations have their learned admirers, and to these we will refer in our notes from other authors.

7 Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth, as when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth.

141: 7 David's case seemed hopeless: the cause of God in Israel was as a dead thing, even as a skeleton broken, and rotten, and shoveled out of the grave, to return as dust to its dust.

Our bones are scattered at the grave's mouth. There seemed to be no life, no cohesion, no form, order, or headship among the godly party in Israel: Saul had demolished it, and scattered all its parts, so that it did not exist as an organized whole. David himself was like one of these dried bones, and the rest of the godly were in much the same condition. There seemed to be no vitality or union among the holy seed; but their cause lay at death's door.

As when one cutteth and cleaveth wood upon the earth. They were like wood divided and thrown apart: not as one piece of timber, nor even as a bundle, but all cut to pieces, and thoroughly divided. Leaving out the word "wood", which is supplied by the translators, the figure relates to cleaving upon the earth, which probably means ploughing, but may signify any other form of chopping and splitting, such as felling a forest, tearing up bushes, or otherwise causing confusion and division. How often have good men thought thus of the cause of God! Wherever they have looked, death, division, and destruction have stared them in the face. Cut and cloven, hopelessly sundered! Scattered, yea, scattered at the grave's mouth! Split up and split for the fire! Such the cause of God and truth has seemed to be. "Upon the earth" the prospect was wretched; the field of the church was ploughed, burrowed, and scarified: it had become like a wood chopper's yard, where everything was doomed to be broken up. We have seen churches in such a state, and have been heart broken. What a mercy that there is always a place above the earth to which we can look! There lives One who will give a resurrection to his cause, and a reunion to his divided people. He will bring up the dead bones from the grave's mouth, and make the dried faggots live again.

Let us imitate the Psalmist in the next verse, and look up to the living God.

8 But mine eyes are unto thee, O GOD the Lord: in thee is my trust; leave not my soul destitute.
141: 8 But mine eyes are unto thee, O GOD the Lord. He looked upward and kept his eyes fixed there. He regarded duty more than circumstances; he considered the promise rather than the external providence; and he expected from God rather than from men. He did not shut his eyes in indifference or despair, neither did he turn them to the creature in vain confidence, but he gave his eyes to his God, and saw nothing to fear. Jehovah his Lord is also his hope. Thomas called Jesus Lord and God, and David here speaks of his God and Lord. Saints delight to dwell upon the divine names when they are adoring or appealing.

In thee is my trust. Not alone in thine attributes or in thy promises, but in thyself. Others might confide where they chose, but David kept to his God: in him he trusted always, only, confidently, and unreservedly.

Leave not my soul destitute; as it would be if the Lord did not remember and fulfill his promise. To be destitute in circumstances is bad, but to be destitute in soul is far worse; to be left of friends is a calamity, but to be left of God would be destruction. Destitute of God is destitution with a vengeance. The comfort is that God hath said, "I will never leave thee nor forsake thee."

9 Keep me from the snares which they have laid for me, and the gins of the workers of iniquity.

141: 9 Keep me from, the snares which they have laid for me. He had before asked, in Ps 141:3, that the door of his mouth might be kept; but his prayer now grows into

"Keep me." He seems more in trouble about covert temptation than concerning open attacks. Brave men do not dread battle, but they hate secret plots. We cannot endure to be entrapped like unsuspecting animals; therefore we cry to the God of wisdom for protection.

And the gins of the workers of iniquity. These evil workers sought to catch David in his speech or acts. This was in itself a piece of in equity, and so of a piece with the rest of their conduct. They were bad themselves, and they wished either to make him like themselves, or to cause him to seem so. If they could not catch the good man in one way, they would try another: snares and gins should be multiplied, for anyhow they were determined to work his ruin. Nobody could preserve David but the Omniscient and Omnipotent One: he also will preserve us. It is hard to keep out of snares which you cannot see, and to escape gins which you cannot discover. Well might the much hunted Psalmist cry, "Keep me."

10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape.

141: 10 Let the wicked fall into their own nets, whilst that I withal escape. It may not be a Christian prayer, but it is a very just one, and it takes a great deal of grace to refrain from crying Amen to it; in fact, grace does not work towards making us wish otherwise concerning the enemies of holy men. Do we not all wish the innocent to be delivered, and the guilty to reap the result of their own malice? Of course we do, if we are just men.
There can be no wrong in desiring that to happen in our own case which we wish for all good men. Yet is there a more excellent way.

PSALM 142

Maschil of David
A Prayer when he was in the cave.

TITLE. Maschil of David. This Maschil is written for our instruction. It teaches us principally by example how to order our prayer in times of distress. Such instruction is among the most needful, practical, and effectual parts of our spiritual education. He who has learned how to pray has been taught the most useful of the arts and sciences. The disciples said unto the Son of David, "Lord, teach us to pray"; and here David gives us a valuable lesson by recording his own experience as to supplication from beneath a cloud.

A Prayer when he was in the cave. He was in one of his many lurking places, either Engedi, Adullam, or some other lone cavern wherein he could conceal himself from Saul and his blood hounds. Caves make good closets for prayer; their gloom and solitude are helpful to the exercise of devotion. Had David prayed as much in his palace as he did in his cave, he might never have fallen into the act which brought such misery upon his later days.

SUBJECT. There can be little doubt that this song dates from the days when Saul was sorely persecuting David, and David himself was in soul trouble, probably produced by that weakness of faith which led him to associate with heathen princes. His fortunes were evidently at their lowest, and, what was worse, his repute had fearfully fallen; yet he displayed a true faith in God, to whom he made known his pressing sorrows. The gloom of the cave is over the psalm, and yet as if standing at the mouth of it the prophet poet sees a bright light a little beyond.

1 ¶ I cried unto the LORD with my voice; with my voice unto the LORD did I make my supplication.

142: 1 I cried unto the LORD with my voice. It was a cry of such anguish that he remembers it long after, and makes a record of it. In the loneliness of the cave he could use his voice as much as he pleased; and therefore he made its gloomy vaults echo with his appeals to heaven. When there was no soul in the cavern seeking his blood, David with all his soul was engaged in seeking his God. He felt it a relief to his heart to use his voice in his pleadings with Jehovah. There was a voice in his prayer when he used his voice for prayer.

With my voice unto the Lord did I make my supplication. He dwells upon the fact that he spoke aloud in prayer; it was evidently well impressed upon his memory, hence he doubles the word and says, "with my voice; with my voice." It is well when our supplications are such that we find pleasure in looking back upon them. He that is cheered by the memory of his prayers will pray again. See how the good man's appeal was to Jehovah only: he did not go round about to men, but he ran straight forward to Jehovah, his God. What true wisdom is here! Consider how the Psalmist's prayer grew into shape as he proceeded with it. Its first poured out his natural longings,—

"I cried"; and then he gathered up all his wits and arranged his thoughts,—

"I made supplication." True prayers may differ in their diction, but not in their direction: an impromptu cry and a preconceived supplication must alike ascend towards the one prayer hearing
God, and he will accept each of them with equal readiness. The intense personality of the prayer is noteworthy: no doubt the Psalmist was glad of the prayers of others, but he was not content to be silent himself. See how everything is in the first person,—

"I cried with my voice; with my voice did I make my supplication." It is good to pray in the plural—"Our Father", but in times of trouble we shall feel forced to change our note into "Let this cup pass from me."

2 I poured out my complaint before him; I shewed before him my trouble.

142: 2 I poured out my complaint before him. His inward meditation filled his soul: the bitter water rose up to the brim; what was to be done? He must pour out the wormwood and the gall, he could not keep it in; he lets it run away as best it can, that so his heart may be emptied of the fermenting mixture. But he took care where he outpoured his complaint, lest he should do mischief, or receive an ill return. If he poured it out before man he might only receive contempt from the proud, hardheartedness from the careless, or pretended sympathy from the false; and therefore he resolved upon an outpouring before God alone, since he would pity and relieve. The word is Scarcely "complaint"; but even if it be so we may learn from this text that our complaint must never be of a kind that we dare not bring before God. We may complain to God, but not of God. When we complain it should not be before men, but before God alone.

I shewed before him my trouble. He exhibited his griefs to one who could assuage them: he did not fall into the mistaken plan of so many who publish their sorrows to those who cannot help them.

This verse is parallel with the first; David first pours out his complaint, letting it flow forth in a natural, spontaneous manner, and then afterwards he makes a more elaborate show of his affliction; just as in the former verse (Psalm 141:1-10) he began with crying, and went on to "make supplication." Praying men pray better as they proceed. Note that we do not show our trouble before the Lord that he may see it, but that we may see him. It is for our relief, and not for his information that we make plain statements concerning our woes: it does us much good to set out our sorrow in order, for much of it vanishes in the process, like a ghost which will not abide the light of day; and the rest loses much of its terror, because the veil of mystery is removed by a clear and deliberate stating of the trying facts. Pour out your thoughts and you will see what they are; show your trouble and the extent of it will be known to you; let all be done before the Lord, for in comparison with his great majesty of love the trouble will seem to be as nothing.

3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me.

142: 3 When my spirit was overwhelmed within me, then thou knewest my path. The bravest spirit is sometimes sorely put to it. A heavy fog settles down upon the mind, and the man seems drowned and smothered in it; covered with a cloud, crushed with a load, confused with difficulties, conquered by impossibilities. David was a hero, and yet his spirit sank: he could smite a giant down, but he could not keep himself up. He did not know his own path, nor feel
able to bear his own burden. Observe his comfort: he looked away from his own condition to the ever observant, all knowing God:

and solaced himself with the fact that all was known to his heavenly Friend. Truly it is well for us to know that God knows what we do not know. We lose our heads, but God never closes his eyes: our judgments lose their balance, but the eternal mind is always clear.

In the way wherein I walked have they privily laid a snare for me. This the Lord knew at the time, and gave his servant warning of it. Looking back, the sweet singer is rejoiced that he had so gracious a Guardian, who kept him from unseen dangers. Nothing is hidden from God; no secret snare can hurt the man who dwells in the secret place of the Most High, for he shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. The use of concealed traps is disgraceful to our enemies, but they care little to what tricks they resort for their evil purposes. Wicked men must find some exercise for their malice, and therefore when they dare not openly assail they will privately ensnare. They watch the gracious man to see where his haunt is, and there they set their trap; but they do it with great caution, avoiding all observation, lest their victim being forewarned should escape their toils. This is a great trial, but the Lord is greater still, and makes us to walk safely in the midst of danger, for he knows us and our enemies, our way and the snare which is laid in it. Blessed be his name.

4 ¶ I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me: refuge failed me; no man cared for my soul.

142: 4 I looked on my right hand, and beheld, but there was no man that would know me. He did not miss a friend for want of looking for him, nor for want of looking in a likely place. Surely some helper would be found in the place of honour; some one would stand at his right hand to undertake his defense. He looked steadily, and saw all that could be seen, for he "beheld"; but his anxious gaze was not met by an answering smile. Strange to say, all were strange to David. He had known many, but none would know him. When a person is in ill odor it is wonderful how weak the memories of his former friends become: they quite forget, they refuse to know. This is a dire calamity. It is better to be opposed by foes than to be forsaken by friends. When friends look for us they affect to have known us from our birth, but when we look for friends it is wonderful how little we can make them remember: the fact is that in times of desertion it is not true that no man did know us, but no man would know us. Their ignorance is willful.

Refuge failed me. Where in happier days I found a ready harbor I now discovered none at all. My place of flight had taken to flight. My refuge gave me a refusal. No man cared for my soul. Whether I lived or died was no concern of anybody's. I was cast out as an outcast.

No soul cared for my soul. I dwelt in No man's land, where none cared to have me, and none cared about me. This is an ill plight—no place where to lay our head, and no head willing to find us a place. How pleased were his enemies to see the friend of God without a friend! How sad was he to be utterly deserted in his utmost need! Can we not picture David in the cave, complaining that even the cave was not a refuge for him, for Saul had come even there? Hopeless was his looking out, we shall soon see him looking up.
5 I cried unto thee, O LORD: I said, Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living.

142: 5 I cried unto thee, O Lord. As man would not regard him, David was driven to Jehovah, his God. Was not this a gain made out of a loss? Wealth gained by a failure? Anything which leads us to cry unto God is a blessing to us. This is the second time that in this short psalm we find the same record, "I cried unto thee, O LORD": the saintly man is evidently glad to remember his cry and its results. We hear often of the bitter cry of outcast London, here is another bitter cry, and it comes from an outcast, in wretched lodgings, forgotten by those who should have helped him. I said,

Thou art my refuge and my portion in the land of the living. There is a sort of progressive repetition all through this sacred song; he cried first, but he said afterwards: his cry was bitter, but his saying was sweet; his cry was sharp and short, but his saying was fresh and full. It gives a believer great pleasure to remember his own believing speeches: he may well desire to bury his unbelieving murmurings in oblivion, but the triumphs of grace in working in him a living faith, he will not dream of forgetting. What a grand confession of faith was this! David spoke to God, and of God

"Thou art my refuge." Not thou hast provided me a refuge, but thou, thyself, art my refuge. He fled to God alone; he hid himself beneath the wings of the Eternal. He not only believed this, but said it, and practiced it. Nor was this all; for David, when banished from his portion in the promised land, and cut off from the portion of goods which he by right inherited, found his portion in God, yea, God was his portion. This was so not only in reference to a future state, but here among living men. It is sometimes easier to believe in a portion in heaven than in a portion upon earth: we could die more easily than live, at least we think so. But there is no living in the land of the living like living upon the living God. For the man of God to say these precious things in the hour of his dire distress was a grand attainment. It is easy to prate bravely when we dwell at ease, but to speak confidently in affliction is quite another matter. Even in this one sentence we have two parts, the second rising far above the first. It is something to have Jehovah for our refuge, but it is everything to have him for our portion. If David had not cried he would not have said; and if the Lord had not been his refuge he would never have been his portion. The lower step is as needful as the higher; but it is not necessary always to stop on the first round of the ladder.

6 Attend unto my cry; for I am brought very low: deliver me from my persecutors; for they are stronger than I.

142: 6 Attend unto my cry. Men of God look upon prayer as a reality, and they are not content without having an audience with God; moreover, they have such confidence in the Lord's condescending grace, that they hope he will even attend to that poor broken prayer which can only be described as a cry.

For I am brought very low, and therefore all the prayer I can raise is a mournful cry. This is his argument with God: he is reduced to such a sad condition that if he be not rescued he will be
ruined. Gracious men may not only be low, but very low; and this should not be a reason for their doubting the efficacy of their prayers, but rather a plea with the Lord why they should have special attention.

**Deliver me from my persecutors.** If he did not get out of their hands, they would soon kill him out of hand, and as he could not himself effect an escape, he cried to God, "deliver me."

**For they are stronger than I.** As he before found a plea in his sadness, so now in his feebleness: Saul and his courtiers were in power, and could command the aid of all who sought royal favour; but poor David was in the cave, and every Nabal girded at him. Saul was a monarch, and David a fugitive; Saul had all the forms of law on his side, while David was an outlaw: so that the prayer before us comes from the weak, who proverbially go to the wall,—a good place to go to if they turn their faces to it in prayer, as Hezekiah did in his sickness. The Lord is wont to take the side of the oppressed, and to show his power by baffling tyrants; David's supplication was therefore sure to speed. In these sentences we see how explicitly the man of God described his case in his private communings with his Lord: in real earnest he poured out his complaint before him and showed before him his trouble.

7 Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name: the righteous shall compass me about; for thou shalt deal bountifully with me.

142: 7 Bring my soul out of prison, that I may praise thy name. That God may be glorified is another notable plea for a suppliant. Escaped prisoners are sure to speak well of those who give them liberty; Soul emancipation is the noblest form of liberation, and calls for the loudest praise: he who is delivered from the dungeons of despair is sure to magnify the name of the Lord. We are in such a prison that only God himself can bring us out of it, and when he does so he will put a new song into our mouths. The cave was not half such a dungeon to David's body as persecution and temptation made for his soul. To be exiled from the godly is worse than imprisonment, hence David makes it one point of his release that he would be restored to church fellowship—

**The righteous shall compass me about.** Saints gather around a child of God when his Father smiles upon him; they come to hear his joyful testimony, to rejoice with him, and to have their own faith encouraged. All the true believers in the twelve tribes were glad to rally to David's banner when the Lord enlarged his spirit; they glorified God for him and with him and through him. They congratulated him, consorted with him, crowned him, and championed him. This was a sweet experience for righteous David, who had for awhile come under the censure of the upright. He bore their smiting with patience, and now he welcomes their sanction with gratitude.

**For thou shalt deal bountifully with me.** God's bountiful dealing is sure to bring with it the sympathy and alliance of all the favorites of the Great King. What a change from looking for a friend and finding none to this enthusiastic concourse of allies around the man after God's own heart! When we can begin a psalm with crying, we may hope to close it with singing. The voice of prayer soon awakens the voice of praise.
PSALM 143

A Psalm of David
TITLE. A Psalm of David. It is so much like other Davidic psalms that we accept the title without a moment's hesitation. David's history illustrates it, and his spirit breathes in it. Why it has been set down as one of the seven Penitential Psalms we can hardly tell; for it is rather a vindication of his own integrity, and an indignant prayer against his slanderers, than a confession of fault. It is true the second verse proves that he never dreamed of justifying himself before the Lord; but even in it there is scarcely the brokenness of penitence. It seems to us rather martial than penitential, rather a supplication for deliverance from trouble than a weeping acknowledgment of transgression. We suppose that seven penitentals were needed by ecclesiastical rabbis, and therefore this was impressed into the service. In truth, it is a mingled strain, a box of ointment composed of divers ingredients, sweet and bitter, pungent and precious. It is the outcry of an overwhelmed spirit, unable to abide in the highest state of spiritual prayer, again and again descending to bewail its deep temporal distress; yet evermore struggling to rise to the best things. The singer moans at intervals; the petitioner for mercy cannot withhold his cries for vindication. His hands are outstretched to heaven, but at his girdle hangs a sharp sword, which rattles in its scabbard as he closes his psalm.

DIVISION. This psalm is divided by the Selah. We prefer to follow the natural cleavage, and therefore have made no other dissection of it. May the Holy Spirit lead us into its inner meaning.

1 ¶Hear my prayer, O LORD, give ear to my supplications: in thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness.

143: 1 Hear my prayer, O Lord, give ear to my supplications. In the preceding psalm he began by declaring that he had cried unto the Lord; here he begs to be favorably regarded by Jehovah the living God, whose memorial is that he heareth prayer. He knew that Jehovah did hear prayer, and therefore he entreated him to hear his supplication, however feeble and broken it might be. In two forms he implores the one blessing of gracious audience:—

"hear" and "give ear." Gracious men are so eager to be heard in prayer that they double their entreaties for that boon. The Psalmist desires to be heard and to be considered; hence he cries, "hear", and then "give ear." Our case is difficult, and we plead for special attention. Here it is probable that David wished his suit against his adversaries to be heard by the righteous Judge; confident that if he had a hearing in the matter whereof he was slanderously accused, he would be triumphantly acquitted. Yet while somewhat inclined thus to lay his case before the Court of King's Bench, he prefers rather to turn it all into a petition, and present it before the Court of Requests, hence he cries rather

"hear my prayer" than "hear my suit." Indeed David is specially earnest that he himself, and the whole of his life, may not become the subject of trial, for in that event he could not hope for acquittal. Observe that he offered so much pleading that his life became one continual prayer; but that petitioning was so varied in form that it broke out in many supplications.

In thy faithfulness answer me, and in thy righteousness. Saints desire to be answered as well as heard: they long to find the Lord faithful to his promise and righteous in defending the cause of
justice. It is a happy thing when we dare appeal even to righteousness for our deliverance; and this we can do upon gospel principles, for

"if we confess our sins he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins." Even the sterner attributes of God are upon the side of the man who humbly trusts, and turns his trust into prayer. It is a sign of our safety when our interests and those of righteousness are blended. With God's faithfulness and righteousness upon our side we are guarded on the right hand and on the left. These are active attributes, and fully equal to the answering of any prayer which it would be light to answer. Requests which do not appeal to either of these attributes it would not be for the glory of God to hear, for they must contain desires for things not promised, and unrighteous.

2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant: for in thy sight shall no man living be justified.

2 And enter not into judgment with thy servant. He had entreated for audience at the mercy seat, but he has no wish to appear before the judgment seat. Though clear before men, he could not claim innocence before God. Even though he knew himself to be the Lord's servant, yet he did not claim perfection, or plead merit; for even as a servant he was unprofitable. If such be the humble cry of a servant, what ought to be the pleading of a sinner?

For in thy sight shall no man living be justified. None can stand before God upon the footing of the law. God's sight is piercing and discriminating; the slightest flaw is seen and judged; and therefore pretence and profession cannot avail where that glance reads all the secrets of the soul. In this verse David told out the doctrine of universal condemnation by the law long before Paul had taken his pen to write the same truth. To this day it stands true even to the same extent as in David's day: no man living even at this moment may dare to present himself for trial before the throne of the Great King on the footing of the law. This foolish age has produced specimens of pride so rank that men have dared to claim perfection in the flesh; but these vain glorious boasters are no exception to the rule here laid down: they are but men, and poor specimens of men. When their lives are examined they are frequently found to be more faulty than the humble penitents before whom they vaunt their superiority.

3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul; he hath smitten my life down to the ground; he hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.

3 For the enemy hath persecuted my soul. He has followed me up with malicious perseverance, and has worried me as often as I have been within his reach. The attack was upon the soul or life of the Psalmist: our adversaries mean us the worst possible evil, their attacks are no child's play, they hunt for the precious life.

He hath smitten my life down to the ground. The existence of David was made bitter by the cruelty of his enemy; he was as one who was hurled down and made to lie upon the ground, where he could be trampled on by his assailant. Slander has a very depressing effect upon the spirits; it is a
blow which overthrows the mind as though it were knocked clown with the fist.

*He hath made me to dwell in darkness, as those that have been long dead.* The enemy was not content with felling his life to the ground—he would lay him lower still, even in the grave; and lower than that, if possible, for the enemy would shut up the saint in the darkness of hell if he could. David was driven by Saul's animosity to haunt caverns and holes, like an unquiet ghost; he wandered out by night, and lay hid by day like an uneasy spirit which had long been denied the repose of the grave. Good men began to forget him, as though he had been long dead; and bad men made ridicule of his rueful visage as though it belonged not to a living man, but was dark with the shadow of the sepulchre. Poor David! He was qualified to bless the house of the living, but he was driven to consort with the dead! Such may be our case, and yet we may be very dear to the Lord. One thing is certain, the Lord who permits us to dwell in darkness among the dead, will surely bring us into light, and cause us to dwell with those who enjoy life eternal.

4 Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.

143: 4 *Therefore is my spirit overwhelmed within me; my heart within me is desolate.* David was no stoic: he felt his banishment, and smarted under the cruel assaults which were made upon his character. He felt perplexed and overturned, lonely and afflicted. He was a man of thought and feeling, and suffered both in spirit and in heart from the undeserved and unprovoked hostility of his persecutors. Moreover, he laboured under the sense of fearful loneliness; he was for a while forsaken of his God, and his soul was exceeding heavy, even unto death. Such words our Lord Jesus might have used: in this the Head is like the members, and the members are as the Head.

5 I remember the days of old; I meditate on all thy works; I muse on the work of thy hands.

143: 5 *I remember the days of old.* When we see nothing new which can cheer us, let us think upon old things. We once had merry days, days of deliverance, and joy and thanksgiving; why not again? Jehovah rescued his people in the ages which lie back, centuries ago; wily should he not do the like again? We ourselves have a rich past to look back upon; we have sunny memories, sacred memories, satisfactory memories, and these are as flowers for the bees of faith to visit, from whence they may make honey for present use.

*I meditate on all thy works.* When my own works reproach me, thy works refresh me. If at the first view the deeds of the Lord do not encourage us, let us think them over again, ruminating and considering the histories of divine providence. We ought to take a wide and large view of all God's works; for as a whole they work together for good, and in each part they are worthy of reverent study.

*I muse on the work of thy hands.* This he had done in former days, even in his most trying hours. Creation had been the book in which he read of the wisdom and goodness of the Lord. He repeats his perusal of the page of nature, and counts it a balm for his wounds, a cordial for his
caries, to see what the Lord has made by his skilful hands. When the work of our own hand grieves us, let us look to the work of God's hands. Memory, meditation, and musing are here set together as the three graces, ministering grace to a mind depressed and likely to be diseased. As David with his harp played away the evil spirit from Saul, so does he hero chase away gloom from his own soul by holy communion with God.

6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee: my soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. Selah.

143: 6 I stretch forth my hands unto thee. He was eager for his God. His thoughts of God kindled in him burning desires, and these led to energetic expressions of his inward longings. As a prisoner whose feet are bound extends his hands in supplication when there is hope of liberty, so does David.

My soul thirsteth after thee, as a thirsty land. As the soil cracks, and yawns, and thus opens its mouth in dumb pleadings, so did the Psalmist's soul break with longings. No heavenly shower had refreshed him from the sanctuary: banished from the means of grace, his soul felt parched and dry, and he cried

"My soul to thee"; nothing would content him but the presence of his God. Not alone did he extend his hands, but his heart was stretched out towards the Lord. He was athirst for the Lord. If he could but feel the presence of his God he would no longer be overwhelmed or dwell in darkness; nay, everything would turn to peace and joy.

Selah. It was time to pause, for the supplication had risen to agony point. Both harp strings and heart strings were strained, and needed a little rest to get them right again for the second half of the song.

7 ¶ Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth: hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit.

143: 7 Hear me speedily, O LORD: my spirit faileth. If long delayed, the deliverance would come too late. The afflicted suppliant faints, and is ready to die. His life is ebbing out; each moment is of importance; it will soon be all over with him. No argument for speed can be more powerful than this. Who will not run to help a suppliant when his life is in jeopardy? Mercy has wings to its heels when misery is in extremity. God will not fail when our spirit fails, but the rather he will hasten his course and come to us on the wings of the wind.

Hide not thy face from me, lest I be like unto them that go down into the pit. Communion with God is so dear to a true heart that the withdrawal of it makes the man feel as though he were ready to die and perish utterly. God's withdrawals reduce the heart to despair, and take away all strength from the mind. Moreover, his absence enables adversaries to work their will without restraint; and thus, in a second way, the persecuted one is like to perish. If we have God's
countenance we live, but if he turns his back upon us we die. When the Lord looks with favour
upon our efforts we prosper, but if he refuses to countenance them we labour in vain.

8 Cause me to hear thy lovingkindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust:
cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee.

143: 8 Cause me to hear thy loving kindness in the morning; for in thee do I trust. Lord, my
sorrow makes me deaf,—cause me to hear: there is but one voice that can cheer me—cause me
to hear thy lovingkindness; that music I would fain enjoy at once—cause me to hear it in the
morning, at the first dawning hour. A sense of divine love is to the soul both dawn and dew; the
end of the night of weeping, the beginning of the morning of joy. Only God can take away from
our weary ears the din of our care, and charm them with the sweet notes of his love. Our plea
with the Lord is our faith; if we are relying upon him, he cannot disappoint us: "in thee do I
trust" is a sound and solid argument with God. He who made the ear will cause us to hear: he
who is love itself will have the kindness to bring his lovingkindness before our minds.

Cause me to know the way wherein I should walk; for I lift up my soul unto thee. The Great
First Cause must cause us to hear and to know. Spiritual senses are dependent upon God, and
heavenly knowledge comes from him alone. To know the way we ought to take is exceedingly
needful, for how can we be exact in obedience to a law with which we are not acquainted? or
how can there be an ignorant holiness? If we know not the way, how shall we keep in it? If we
know not wherein we should walk, how shall we be likely to follow the right path?, The Psalmist
lifts up his soul: faith is good at a dead lift: the soul that trusts will rise. We will not allow our
hope to sink, but we will strive to get up and rise out of our daily griefs. This is wise. When
David was in any difficulty as to his way he lifted his soul towards God himself, and then he
knew that he could not go very far wrong. If the soul will not rise of itself we must lift it, lift it
up unto God. This is good argument in prayer: surely the God to whom we endeavor to lift
up our soul will condescend to show us what he would have us to do. Let us attend to David's
example, and when our heart is low, let us heartily endeavor to lift it up, not so much to comfort
as to the Lord himself.

9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies: I flee unto thee to hide me.

143: 9 Deliver me, O LORD, from mine enemies. Many foes beset us, we cannot overcome
them, we cannot even escape from them; but Jehovah can and will rescue us if we pray to him.
The weapon of all prayer will stand us in better stead than sword and shield.

I flee unto thee to hide me. This was a good result from his persecutions. That which makes us
flee to our God may be an ill wind, but it blows us good. There is no cowardice in such flight,
but much holy courage. God can hide us out of reach of harm, and even out of sight Of it. He is
our hiding place; Jesus has made himself the refuge of his people: the sooner, and the more
entirely we flee to him the better for us. Beneath the crimson canopy of our Lord's atonement
believers are completely hidden; let us abide there and be at rest. In the seventh verse our poet
cried,
10 Teach me to do thy will; for thou art my God: thy spirit is good; lead me into the land of uprightness.

11 Quicken me, O LORD, for thy name's sake: for thy righteousness' sake bring my soul out of trouble.

12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul: for I am thy servant.

143: 12 And of thy mercy cut off mine enemies, and destroy all them that afflict my soul. He believes that it will be so, and thus prophesies the event; for the words may be read as a declaration, and it is better so to understand them. We could not pray just so with our Christian light; but under Old Testament arrangements the spirit of it was congruous to the law. It is a petition which justice sanctions, but the spirit of love is not at home in presenting it. We, as Christians, turn the petition to spiritual use only. Yet David was of so generous a mind, and dealt so tenderly with Saul, that he could hardly have meant all that his words are made in our version to say.

For I am lay servant; and therefore I hope that my Master will protect me in his service, and grant me victory while I fight his battles. It is a warrior's prayer, and smells of the dust and smoke of battle. It was heard, and therefore it was not asking amiss. Still there is a more excellent way.
variation of an old one, or as two compositions roughly joined together. It is true that it would be a complete composition if the passage from Ps 144:12-15 were dropped; but there are other parts, of David's poems which might be equally self contained if certain verses were omitted; and the same might be said of many uninspired sonnets. It does not, therefore, follow that the latter part was added by another hand, nor even that the latter part was a fragment by the same author, appended to the first song merely with the view of preserving it. It seems to us to be highly probable that the Psalmist, remembering that he had trodden some of the same ground before, felt his mind moved to fresh thought, and that the Holy Spirit used this mood for his own high purposes. Assuredly the addendum is worthy of the greatest Hebrew poet, and it is so admirable in language, and so full of beautiful imagery, that persons of taste who were by no means overloaded with reverence have quoted it times without number, thus confessing its singular poetical excellence. To us the whole psalm appears to be perfect as it stands, and to exhibit such unity throughout that it would be a literary Vandalism, as well as a spiritual crime, to rend away one part from the other.

**TITLE.** Its title is "Of David", and its language is of David, if ever language can belong to any man. As surely as we could say of any poem, this is of Tennyson, or of Longfellow, we may say, This is of David. Nothing but the disease which closes the eye to manifest fact and opens it to fancy, could have led learned critics to ascribe this song to anybody but David. Alexander well says, "The Davidic origin of this psalm is as marked as that of any in the Psalter."

It is to God the devout warrior sings when he extols him as his strength and stay (Ps 144:1-2). Man he holds in small account, and wonders at the Lord's regard for him (Ps 144:3-4); but he turns in his hour of conflict to the Lord, who is declared to be "a man of war", whose triumphant interposition he implores (Ps 144:5-8). He again extols and entreats in Ps 144:9-11 and then closes with a delightful picture of the Lord's work for his chosen people, who are congratulated upon having such a God to be their God.

1 ¶Blessed be the LORD my strength, which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight:

| 144: 1 | **Blessed be the LORD my strength.** He cannot delay the utterance of his gratitude, he bursts at once into a loud note of praise. His best word is given to his best friend— |

"Blessed be Jehovah." When the heart is in a right state it must praise God, it cannot be restrained; its utterances leap forth as waters forcing their way from a living spring. With all his strength David blesses the God of his strength. We ought not to receive so great a boon as strength to resist evil, to defend truth, and to conquer error, without knowing who gave it to us, and rendering to him the glory of it. Not only does Jehovah give strength to his saints, but he is their strength. The strength is made theirs because God is theirs. God is full of power, and he becomes the power of those who trust him. In him our great strength lieth, and to him be blessings more than we are able to utter. It may be read,

"My Rock"; but this hardly so well consorts with the following words:

**Which teacheth my hands to war, and my fingers to fight.** The word rock is the Hebrew way of expressing strength: the grand old language is full of such suggestive symbols. The Psalmist in
the second part of the verse sets forth the Lord as teacher in the arts of war. If we have strength we are not much the better unless we have skill also. Untrained force is often an injury to the man who possesses it, and it even becomes a danger to those who are round about him; and therefore the Psalmist blesses the Lord as much for teaching as for strength. Let us also bless Jehovah if he has in anything made us efficient. The tuition mentioned was very practical, it was not so much of the brain as of the hands and fingers; for these were the members most needful for conflict. Men with little scholastic education should be grateful for deftness and skill in their handicrafts. To a fighting man the education of the hands is of far more value than mere book learning could ever be; he who has to use a sling or a bow needs suitable training, quite as much as a scientific man or a classical professor. Men are too apt to fancy that an artisan's efficiency is to be ascribed to himself; but this is a popular fallacy. A clergyman may be supposed to be taught of God, but people do not allow this to be true of weavers or workers in brass; yet these callings are specially mentioned in the Bible as having been taught to holy women and earnest men when the tabernacle was set up at the first. All wisdom and skill are from the Lord, and for them he deserves to be gratefully extolled. This teaching extends to the smallest members of our frame; the Lord teaches fingers as well as hands; indeed, it sometimes happens that if the finger is not well trained the whole hand is incapable. David was called to be a man of war, and he was eminently successful in his battles; he does not trace this to his good generalship or valour, but to his being taught and strengthened for the war and the fight. If the Lord deigns to have a hand in such unspiritual work as fighting, surely he will help us to proclaim the gospel and win souls; and then we will bless his name with even greater intensity of heart. We will be pupils, and he shall be our Master, and if we ever accomplish anything we will give our Instructor hearty blessing. This verse is full of personality; it is mercy shown to David himself which is the subject of grateful song. It has also a presence about it; for Jehovah is now his strength, and is still teaching him; we ought to make a point of presenting praise while yet the blessing is on the wing. The verse is also preeminently practical, and full of the actual life of every day; for David's days were spent in camps and conflicts. Some of us who are grievously tormented with rheumatism might cry,

"Blessed be the Lord, my Comforter, who teacheth my knees to bear in patience, and my feet to endure in resignation"; others who are on the look out to help young converts might say, "Blessed be God who teaches my eyes to see wounded souls, and my lips to cheer them"; but David has his own peculiar help from God, and praises him accordingly. This tends to make the harmony of heaven perfect when all the singers take their parts; if, we all followed the same score, the music would not be so full and rich.

2 My goodness, and my fortress; my high tower, and my deliverer; my shield, and he in whom I trust; who subdueth my people under me.

**144: 2** Now our royal poet multiplies metaphors to extol his God.

**My goodness, and my fortress.** The word for *goodness* signifies *mercy*. Whoever we may be, and wherever we may be, we need mercy such as can only be found in the infinite God. It is all of mercy that he is any of the other good things to us, so that this is a highly comprehensive title, O how truly has the Lord been mercy to many of us in a thousand ways! He is goodness itself, and he has been unbounded goodness to us. We have no goodness of our own, but the Lord has become goodness to us. So is he himself also our *fortress* and safe abode: in him we dwell as
behind impregnable ramparts and immovable bastions. We cannot be driven out, or starved out; for our fortress is prepared for a siege; it is stored with abundance of food, and a well of living water is within it. Kings usually think much of their fenced cities, but King David relies upon his God, who is more to him than fortresses could have been.

**My high tower, and my deliverer.** As from a lofty watchtower the believer, trusting in the Lord, looks down upon his enemies. They cannot reach him in his elevated position; he is out of bow shot; he is beyond their scaling ladders; he dwells on high. Nor is this all; for Jehovah is our Deliverer as well as our Defender. These different figures set forth the varied benefits which come to us from our Lord. He is every good thing which we can need for this world or the next. He not only places us out of harm's way full often, but when we must be exposed, he comes to our rescue, he raises the siege, routs the foe, and sets us in joyous liberty.

**My shield, and he in whom I trust.** When the warrior rushes on his adversary, he bears his target upon his arm, and thrusts death aside; thus doth the believer oppose the Lord to the blows of the enemy, and finds himself secure from harm. For this and a thousand other reasons our trust rests in our God for everything; he never fails us, and we feel boundless confidence in him.

**Who subdueth my people under me.** He keeps my natural subjects subject, and my conquered subjects peaceful under my sway. Men who rule others should thank God if they succeed in the task. Such strange creatures are human beings, that if a number of them are kept in peaceful association under the leadership of any one of the Lord's servants, he is bound to bless God every day for the wonderful fact. The victories of peace are as much worthy of joyful gratitude as the victories of war. Leaders in the Christian church cannot maintain their position except as the Lord preserves to them the mighty influence which ensures obedience and evokes enthusiastic loyalty. For every particle of influence for good which we may possess let us magnify the name of the Lord. Thus has David blessed Jehovah for blessing him. How many times he has appropriated the Lord by that little word

*My!* Each time he grasps the Lord, he adores and blesses him; for the one word

*Blessed* runs through all the passage like a golden thread. He began by acknowledging that his strength for fighting foreign enemies was of the Lord, and he concluded by ascribing his domestic peace to the same source. All round as a king he saw himself to be surrounded by the King of kings, to whom he bowed in lowly homage, doing suit and service on bent knee, with grateful heart admitting that he owed everything to the Rock of his salvation.

3 LORD, what *is* man, that thou takest knowledge of him! *or* the son of man, that thou makest account of him!

**144: Lord, what is man, that thou takest knowledge of him?** What a contrast between Jehovah and man! The Psalmist turns from the glorious all sufficiency of God to the insignificance and nothingness of man. He sees Jehovah to be everything, and then cries,
"Lord, what is man!" What is man in the presence of the Infinite God? What can he be compared to? He is too little to be described at all; only God, who knows the most minute object, can tell what man is. Certainly he is not fit to be the rock of our confidence: he is at once too feeble and too fickle to be relied upon. The Psalmist's wonder is that God should stoop to know him, and indeed it is more remarkable than if the greatest archangel should make a study of emmets, or become the friend of mites. God knows his people with a tender intimacy, a constant, careful observation: he foreknew them in love, he knows them by care, he will know them in acceptance at last. Why and wherefore is this? What has man done? What has he been? What is he now that God should know him, and make himself known to him as his goodness, fortress, and high tower? This is an unanswerable question. Infinite condescension can alone account for the Lord stooping to be the friend of man. That he should make man the subject of election, the object of redemption, the child of eternal love, the darling of infallible providence, the next of kin to Deity, is indeed a matter requiring more than the two notes of exclamation found in this verse.

Or the son of man, that thou makest account of him! The son of man is a weaker being still,—so the original word implies. He is not so much man as God made him, but man as his mother bore him; and how can the Lord think of him, and write down such a cipher in his accounts? The Lord thinks much of man, and in connection with redeeming love makes a great figure of him: this can be believed, but it cannot be explained. Adoring wonder makes us each one cry out, Why dost thou take knowledge of me? We know by experience how little man is to be reckoned upon, and we know by observation how greatly he can vaunt himself, it is therefore meet for us to be humble and to distrust ourselves; but all this should make us the more grateful to the Lord, who knows man better than we do, and yet communes with him, and even dwells in him. Every trace of the misanthrope should be hateful to the believer; for if God makes account of man it is not for us to despise our own kind.

4 Man is like to vanity: his days are as a shadow that passeth away.

144: 4 Man is like to vanity. Adam is like to Abel. He is like that which is nothing at all. He is actually vain, and he resembles that unsubstantial empty thing which is nothing but a blown up nothing,—a puff, a bubble. Yet he is not vanity, but only like it. He is not so substantial as that unreal thing; he is only the likeness of it. Lord, what is a man? It is wonderful that God should think of such a pretentious insignificance.

His days are as a shadow that passeth away. He is so short lived that he scarcely attains to years, but exists by the day, like the ephemera, whose birth and death are both seen by the self same sun. His life is only like a shadow, which is in itself a vague resemblance, an absence of something rather than in itself an existence. Observe that human life is not only as a shade, but as a shade which is about to depart. It is a mere mirage, the image of a thing which is not, a phantasm which melts back into nothing. How is it that the Eternal should make so much of mortal man, who begins to die as soon as he begins to live? The connection of the two verses before us with the rest of the psalm is not far to seek: David trusts in God and finds him everything; he looks to man and sees him to be nothing; and then he wonders how it is that the great Lord can condescend to take notice of such a piece of folly and deceit as man.
Bow thy heavens, O LORD, and come down: touch the mountains, and they shall smoke.

The heavens are the Lord's own, and he who exalted them can bow them. His servant is struggling against bitter foes, and he finds no help in men, therefore he entreats Jehovah to come down to his rescue. It is, indeed, a coming down for Jehovah to interfere in the conflicts of his tried people. Earth cries to heaven to stoop; nay, the cry is to the Lord of heaven to bow the heaven, and appear among the sons of earth. The Lord has often done this, and never more fully than when in Bethlehem the Word was made flesh and dwelt among us: now doth he know the way, and he never refuses to come down to defend his beloved ones. David would have the real presence of God to counterbalance the mocking appearance of boastful man: eternal verity could alone relieve him of human vanity.

Touch the mountains, and they shall smoke. It was so when the Lord appeared on Sinai; the strongest pillars of earth cannot bear the weight of the finger of God. He is a consuming fire, and his touch kindles the peaks of the Alps, and makes them smoke. If Jehovah would appear, nothing could stand before him; if the mighty mountains smoke at his touch, then all mortal power which is opposed to the Lord must end in smoke. How long suffering he is to his adversaries, whom he could so readily consume. A touch would do it; God's finger of flame would set the hills on fire, and consume opposition of every kind.

Cast forth lightning, and scatter them: shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them.

The Eternal can hurl his lightnings wheresoever he pleases, and effect his purpose instantaneously. The artillery of heaven soon puts the enemy to flight: a single bolt sets the armies running hither and thither in utter rout.

Shoot out thine arrows, and destroy them. Jehovah never misses the mark; his arrows are fatal to his foes when he goes forth to war. It was no common faith which led the poet king to expect the Lord to use his thunderbolts on behalf of a single member of that race which he had just now described as "like to vanity." A believer in God may without presumption expect the Almighty Lord to use on his behalf all the stores of his wisdom and power: even the terrible forces of tempest shall be marshaled to the fight, for the defense of the Lord's chosen. When we have once mastered the greater difficulty of the Lord's taking any interest in us, it is but a small thing that we should expect him to exert his great power on our behalf. This is far from being the only time in which this believing warrior had thus prayed: Psalm 18:1-50 is specially like the present; the good man was not abashed at his former boldness, but here repeats himself without fear.

Send thine hand from above; rid me, and deliver me out of great waters, from the hand of strange children;

Let thy long and strong arm be stretched out till thine hand seizes my foes, and delivers me from them.
Rid me, and deliver me out of great waters. Make a Moses of me,—one drawn out of the waters. My foes pour in upon me like torrents, they threaten to overwhelm me; save me from their force and fury; take them from me, and me from them.

From the hand of strange children. From foreigners of every race; men strange to me and thee, who therefore must work evil to me, and rebellion against thyself. Those against whom he pleaded were out of covenant with God; they were Philistines and Edomites; or else they were men of his own nation of black heart and traitorous spirit, who were real strangers, though they bore the name of Israel. Oh to be rid of those infidel, blaspheming beings who pollute society with their false teachings and hard speeches! Oh to be delivered from slanderous tongues, deceptive lips, and false hearts! No wonder these words are repeated, for they are the frequent cry of many a tried child of God;—"Rid me, and deliver me." The devil's children are strange to us: we can never agree with them, and they will never understand us: they are aliens to us, and we are despised by them.

O Lord, deliver us from the evil one, and from all who are of his race.

8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood.

144: 8 Whose mouth speaketh vanity. No wonder that men who are vanity speak vanity. "When he speaketh a lie, he speaketh of his own." They cannot be depended upon, let them promise as fairly as they may: their solemn declarations are light as the foam of the sea, in no wise to be depended upon. Good men desire to be rid of such characters: of all men deceivers and liars are among the most disgusting to true hearts.

And their right hand is a right hand of falsehood. So far their hands and their tongues agree, for they are vanity and falsehood. These men act as falsely as they speak, and prove themselves to be all of a piece. Their falsehood is right handed, they lie with dexterity, they deceive with all their might. It is a dreadful thing when a man's expertness lies more in lies than in truth; when he can neither speak nor act without proving himself to be false. God save us from lying mouths, and hands of falsehood.

9 ¶ I will sing a new song unto thee, O God: upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee.

144: 9 I will sing a new song unto thee, O God. Weary of the false, I will adore the true. Fired with fresh enthusiasm, my gratitude shall make a new channel for itself. I will sing as others have done; but it shall be a new song, such as no others have sung.

That song shall be all and altogether for my God: I will extol none but the Lord, from whom my deliverance has come.

Upon a psaltery and an instrument of ten strings will I sing praises unto thee. His hand should aid his tongue, not as in the case of the wicked, cooperating in deceit; but his hand should unite with his mouth in truthful praise. David intended to tune his best instruments as well as to use his best vocal music: the best is all too poor for so great a God, and therefore we must not fall short
of our utmost. He meant to use many instruments of music, that by all means he might express his great joy in God. The Old Testament dispensation abounded in types, and figures, and outward ritual, and therefore music dropped naturally into its place in the "worldly sanctuary"; but, after all, it can do no more than represent praise, and assist our expression of it; the real praise is in the heart, the true music is that of the soul. When music drowns the voice, and artistic skill takes a higher place than hearty singing, it is time that instruments were banished from public worship; but when they are subordinate to the song, as here, it is not for us to prohibit them, or condemn those who use them, though we ourselves greatly prefer to do without them, since it seems to us that the utmost simplicity of praise is far more congruous with the spirit of the gospel than pomp of organs. The private worshipper, singing his solo unto the Lord, has often found it helpful to accompany himself on some familiar instrument, and of this David in the present psalm is an instance, for he says,

"I will sing praise unto thee",—that is, not so much in the company of others as by himself alone. He saith not "we", but "I."

10 It is he that giveth salvation unto kings: who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword.

144: 10 It is he that giveth salvation unto kings. Those whom the Lord sets up he will keep up. Kings, from their conspicuous position, are exposed to special danger, and when their lives and their thrones are preserved to them they should give the Lord the glory of it. In his many battles David would have perished had not almighty care preserved him. He had by his valour wrought salvation for Israel, but he lays his laurels at the feet of his Lord and Preserver. If any men need salvation kings do, and if they get it the fact is so astonishing that it deserves a verse to itself in the psalm of praise.

Who delivereth David his servant from the hurtful sword. He traces his escape from death to the delivering hand of God. Note, he speaks in the present tense—delivereth, for this was an act which covered his whole life. He puts his name to the confession of his indebtedness: it is David who owns without demur to mercy given to himself. He styles himself the Lord's servant, accepting this as the highest title he had attained or desired.

11 Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children, whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood:

144: 11 Because of what the Lord had done, David returns to his pleading. He begs deliverance from him who is ever delivering him.

Rid me, and deliver me from the hand of strange children. This is in measure the refrain of the song, and the burden of the prayer. He desired to be delivered from his open and foreign adversaries, who had broken compacts, and treated treaties as vain things.
Whose mouth speaketh vanity, and their right hand is a right hand of falsehood. He would not
strike hands with those who carried a lie in their right hand: he would be quit of such at once, if
possible. Those who are surrounded by such serpents know not how to deal with them, and the
only available method seems to be prayer to God for a riddance and deliverance. David in Ps
144:7, according to the original, had sought the help of both the Lord's hands, and well he might,
for his deceitful enemies, with remarkable unanimity, were with one mouth and one hand
seeking his destruction. Riddance from the wicked and the gracious presence of the Lord are
sought with a special eye to the peace and prosperity which will follow thereupon. The sparing
of David's life would mean the peace and happiness of a whole nation. We can scarcely judge
how much of happiness may hang upon the Lord's favour to one man.

12 That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth; that our daughters
may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace:

That our sons may be as plants grown up in their youth. Our sons are of first importance to the
state, since men take a leading part in its affairs; and that the young men are the older men will
be. He desires that they may be like strong, well rooted, young trees, which promise great things.
If they do not grow in their youth, when will they grow? If in their opening manhood they are
dwarfed, they will never get over it. O the joys which we may have through our sons! And, on
the other hand, what misery they may cause us! Plants may grow crooked, or in some other way
disappoint the planter, and so may our sons. But when we see them developed in holiness, what
joy we have of them!

That our daughters may be as corner stones, polished after the similitude of a palace. We
desire a blessing for our whole family, daughters as well as sons. For the girls to be left out of the
circle of blessing would be unhappy indeed. Daughters unite families as corner stones join walls
together, and at the same time they adorn them as polished stones garnish the structure into
which they are builded. Home becomes a palace when the daughters are maids of honour, and
the sons are nobles in spirit; then the father is a king, and the mother a queen, and royal
residences are more than outdone. A city built up of such dwellings is a city of palaces, and a
state composed of such cities is a republic of princes.

13 That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store: that our sheep may
bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets:

That our garners may be full, affording all manner of store. A household must
exercise thrift and forethought: it must have its granary as well as its nursery. Husbands should
husband their resources; and should not only furnish their tables but fill their garners. Where
there are happy househods, there must needs be plentiful provision for them, for famine brings
misery even where love abounds. It is well when there is plenty, and that plenty consists of
"all manner of store." We have occasionally heard murmurs concerning the abundance of grain,
and the cheapness of the poor man's loaf. A novel calamity! We dare not pray against it. David
would have prayed for it, and blessed the Lord when he saw his heart's desire. When all the fruits of the earth are plentiful, the fruits of our lips should be joyful worship and thanksgiving. Plenteous and varied may our products be, that every form of want may be readily supplied.

That our sheep may bring forth thousands and ten thousands in our streets, or rather in the open places, the fields, and sheep walks where lambs should be born. A teeming increase is here described. Adam tilled the ground to fill the garner, but Abel kept sheep, and watched the lambs. Each occupation needs the divine blessing. The second man who was born into this world was a shepherd, and that trade has ever held an important part in the economy of nations. Food and clothing come from the flock, and both are of first consideration.

14 That our oxen may be strong to labour; that there be no breaking in, nor going out; that there be no complaining in our streets.

14:14 That our oxen may be strong to labour; so that the ploughing and cartage of the farm may be duly performed, and the husbandman's work may be accomplished without unduly taxing the cattle, or working them cruelly.

That there be no breaking in, nor going out; no irruption of marauders, and no forced emigration; no burglaries and no evictions.

That there be no complaining in our streets; no secret dissatisfaction, no public riot; no fainting of poverty, no clamor for rights denied, nor concerning wrongs unredressed. The state of things here pictured is very delightful: all is peaceful and prosperous; the throne is occupied efficiently, and even the beasts in their stalls are the better for it. This has been the condition of our own country, and if it should now be changed, who can wonder? For our ingratitude well deserves to be deprived of blessings which it has despised. These verses may with a little accommodation be applied to a prosperous church, where the converts are growing and beautiful, the gospel stores abundant, and the spiritual increase most cheering. There ministers and workers are in full vigor, and the people are happy and united. The Lord make it so in all our churches evermore.

15 Happy is that people, that is in such a case: yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD.

14:15 Happy is that people that is in such a case. Such things are not to be overlooked. Temporal blessings are not trifles, for the miss of them would be a dire calamity. It is a great happiness to belong to a people so highly favored.

Yea, happy is that people, whose God is the LORD. This comes in as an explanation of their prosperity. Under the Old Testament Israel had present earthly rewards for obedience: when Jehovah was their God they were a nation enriched and flourishing. This sentence is also a sort of correction of all that had gone before; as if the poet would say—all these temporal gifts are a part of happiness, but still the heart and soul of happiness lies in the people being right with God, and having a full possession of him. Those who worship the happy God become a happy people.
Then if we have not temporal mercies literally we have something better: if we have not the silver of earth we have the gold of heaven, which is better still. In this psalm David ascribes his own power over the people, and the prosperity which attended his reign, to the Lord himself. Happy was the nation which he ruled; happy in its king, in its families, in its prosperity, and in the possession of peace; but yet more in enjoying true religion and worshipping Jehovah, the only living and true God.

PSALM 145

David's Psalm of praise

This is one of the alphabetical psalms, composed with much art, and, doubtless, so arranged that the memory might be aided. The Holy Spirit condescends to use even the more artificial methods of the poet, to secure attention, and impress the heart.

TITLE. David's Psalm of Praise. It is David's, David's very own, David's favorite. It is David's Praise just as another (Ps 86:1-17) is David's Prayer. It is altogether praise, and praise pitched in a high key. David had blessed God many a time in other psalms, but this he regarded as his
peculiar, his crown jewel of praise. Certainly David's praise is the best of praise, for it is that of a man of experience, of sincerity, of calm deliberation, and of intense warmth of the heart. It is not for any one of us to render David's praise, for David only could do that, but we may take David's psalm as a model, and aim at making our own personal adoration as much, like it as possible: we shall be long before we equal our model. Let each Christian reader present his own praise unto the Lord, and call it by his own name. What a wealth of varied praise will thus be presented through Christ Jesus!

DIVISION. The psalm does not fall into any marked divisions, but is one and indivisible. Our other translators have mapped out this song with considerable discernment. It is or a perfect arrangement, but it will suit our convenience in exposition. David praiseth God for his fame or glory (Psalm 145:1-7), for his goodness (Psalm 145:8-10), for his kingdom (Psalm 145:11-13), for his providence (Psalm 145:14-16), for his saving mercy (Psalm 145:17-21).

1 ¶I will extol thee, my God, O king; and I will bless thy name for ever and ever.

145: 1 I will extol thee, my God, O king. David as God's king adores God as his king. It is well when the Lord's royalty arouses our loyalty, and our spirit is moved to magnify his majesty. The Psalmist has extolled his Lord many a time before, he is doing so still, and he will do so in the future: praise is for all tenses. When we cannot express all our praise just now, it is wise to register our resolution to continue in the blessed work, and write it down as a bond, "I will extol thee." See how David testifies his devotion and adherence to his God by the pronoun "my", how he owns his allegiance by the title "king", and how he goes on to declare his determination to make much of him in his song.

And I will bless thy name for ever and ever. David determined that his praise should rise to blessing, should intelligently spend itself upon the name or character of God, and should be continued world without end. He uses the word "bless" not merely for variation of sound, but also for the deepening and sweetening of the sense. To bless God is to praise him with a personal affection for him, and a wishing well to him: this is a growingly easy exercise as we advance in experience and grow in grace. David declares that he will offer every form of praise, through every form of existence. His notion of duration is a full one—"for ever" has no end, but when he adds another "ever" to it he forbids all idea of a close. Our praise of God shall be as eternal as the God we praise.

2 Every day will I bless thee; and I will praise thy name for ever and ever.

145: 2 Every day will I bless thee. Whatever the character of the day, or of my circumstances and conditions during that day, I will continue to glorify God. Were we well to consider the matter we should see abundant cause in each day for rendering special blessing unto the Lord. All before the day, all in the day, all following the day should constrain us to magnify our God every day, all the year round. Our love to God is not a matter of holy days: every day is alike holy to holy men. David here comes closer to God than when he said,
"I will bless thy name": it is now, "I will bless thee." This is the centre and kernel of true devotion: we do not only admire the Lord's words and works, but himself. Without realizing the personality of God, praise is well nigh impossible; you cannot extol an abstraction.

And I will praise thy name for ever and ever. He said he would bless that name, and now he vows to praise it; he will extol the Lord in every sense and way. Eternal worship shall not be without its variations; it will never become monotonous. Heavenly music is not harping upon one string, but all strings shall be tuned to one praise. Observe the personal pronouns here: four times he says "I will": praise is not to be discharged by proxy: there must be your very self in it, or there is nothing in it.

3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised; and his greatness is unsearchable.

145: 3 Great is the LORD, and greatly to be praised. Worship should be somewhat like its object—great praise for a great God. There is no part of Jehovah's greatness which is not worthy of great praise. In some beings greatness is but vastness of evil: in him it is magnificence of goodness. Praise may be said to be great when the song contains great matter, when the hearts producing it are intensely fervent, and when large numbers unite in the grand acclaim. No chorus is too loud, no orchestra too large, no psalm too lofty for the lauding of the Lord of Hosts.

And his greatness is unsearchable.

"Still his worth your praise exceeds, Excellent are all his deeds."

Song should be founded upon search; hymns composed without thought are of no worth, and tunes upon which no pains have been spent are beneath the dignity of divine adoration. Yet when we meditate most, and search most studiously we shall still find ourselves surrounded with unknowable wonders, which will baffle all attempts to sing them worthily. The best adoration of the Unsearchable is to own him to be so, and close the eyes in reverence before the excessive light of his glory. Not all the minds of all the centuries shall suffice to search out the unsearchable riches of God; he is past finding out; and, therefore, his deserved praise is still above and beyond all that we can render to him.

4 One generation shall praise thy works to another, and shall declare thy mighty acts.

145: 4 One generation shall praise thy works to another. There shall be a tradition of praise: melt shall hand on the service, they shall make it a point to instruct their descendants in this hallowed exercise. We look back upon the experience of our fathers, and sing of it; even thus shall our sons learn praise from the Lord's works among ourselves. Let us see to it that we praise God before our children, and never make them think that his service is an unhappy one.
5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty, and of thy wondrous works.

145: 5 I will speak of the glorious honour of thy majesty. 'Tis fit a king should speak of the majesty of the King of kings. David cannot give over the worship of God into the hands of others, even though all generations should undertake to perpetuate it: he must have his own individual share in it, and so he saith, "I will speak." What a speaker! for he no sooner begins than he heaps up words of honour—"the glorious honour of thy majesty", or "the beauty of the honour of thy majesty."

His language labours to express his meaning; he multiplies the terms by which he would extol Jehovah, his King. Everything which has to do with the Great King is majestic, honourable, glorious. His least is greater than man's greatest, his lowest is higher than man's highest. There is nothing about the infinite Lord which is unworthy of his royalty; and, on the other hand, nothing is wanting to the splendor of his reign: his majesty is honourable, and his honour is glorious: he is altogether wonderful.

And of thy wondrous works. All the works of God among men are Godlike, but certain of them are specially calculated to create surprise. Many works of power, of justice, of wisdom, are wonderful; and his work of grace is wondrous above all. This specially, and all the rest proportionately, should be spoken of by holy men, by experienced men, and by men who have the ability to speak with power. These things must not be permitted to pass away in silence; if others do not remember them, representative men like David must make a point of conversing upon them in private, and speaking of them in public. Let it be the delight of each one of us according to our position to speak lovingly of our Lord.

6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts: and I will declare thy greatness.

145: 6 And men shall speak of the might of thy terrible acts. If unobservant of other matters these acts of judgment shall seize their attention and impress their minds so that they must talk
about them. Did not men in our Savior’s day speak of the falling tower of Siloam and the slaughtered Galileans? Are there not rumours of wars, when there are not even whispers of other things? Horrible news is sure to spread: under mercies men may be dumb, but concerning miseries they raise a great outcry. The force of dread is a power which loosens the tongue of the multitude: they are sure to talk of that which makes the ear to tingle and the hair to stand upright. While they are thus occupied with "fearsome facts", such as the drowning of a world, the destruction of the cities of the plain, the plagues of Egypt, the destruction at the Red Sea, and so forth, David would look at these affairs in another light, and sing another tune.

And I will declare thy greatness. Those acts which were terrible deeds to most men were mighty deeds, or greatnesses to our holy poet: these he would publish like a herald, who mentions the titles and honours of his royal master. It is the occupation of every true believer to rehearse the great doings of his great God. We are not to leave this to the common converse of the crowd, but we are personally to make a declaration of what we have seen and known. We are even bound in deep solemnity of manner to warn men of the Lord's greatness in his terrible acts of justice: thus will they be admonished to abstain from provoking him. To fulfill this duty we are already bound by solemn obligations, and we shall do well to bind ourselves further by resolutions, "I will—God helping me, I will."

7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness, and shall sing of thy righteousness.

145: 7 They shall abundantly utter the memory of thy great goodness. They shall pour forth grateful memories even as springs gush with water, plenteously, spontaneously, constantly, joyously. The Lord's redeemed people having been filled with his great goodness, shall retain the happy recollection of it, and shall be moved often and often to utter those recollections. Not content with a scanty mention of such amazing love, they shall go on to an abundant utterance of such abundant favour. It shall be their delight to speak with one another of God's dealings with them, and to compare notes of their experiences. God has done nothing stintedly; all his goodness is great goodness, all worthy to be remembered, all suggestive of holy discourse. Upon this subject there is no scarcity of matter, and when the heart is right there is no need to stop from want of facts to tell. Oh, that there were more of these memories and utterances, for it is not meet that the goodness of the living God should be buried in the cemetery of silence, in the grave of ingratitude.

And shall sing of thy righteousness. They shall say and then sing. And what is the theme which impels them to leave the pulpit for the orchestra? What do they sing of? They sing of that righteousness which is the sinner's terror, which even good men mention with deep solemnity. Righteousness received by gospel light is in reality the secret foundation of the believer's hope. God's covenant of grace is our strong consolation, because he who made it is righteous, and will not run back from it. Since Jesus died as our substitute, righteousness requires and secures the salvation of all the redeemed. This attribute is our best friend, and therefore we sing of it. Modern thinkers would fain expunge the idea of righteousness from their notion of God; but converted men would not. It is a sign of growth in caution when we rejoice in the justice, rectitude, and holiness of our God. Even a rebel may rejoice in mercy, which he looks upon as laxity; but a loyal rejoices when he learns that God is so just that not even to save his
own would he consent to violate the righteousness of his moral government. Few men will shout for joy at the righteousness of Jehovah, but those who do so his chosen, in whom his soul delighteth.

8 The LORD is gracious, and full of compassion; slow to anger, and of great mercy.

145: 8 The Lord is gracious. Was it not in some such terms that the Lord revealed himself to Moses? Is not this Jehovah's glory? To all living men his aspect: he is gracious, or full of goodness and generosity. He treats creatures with kindness, his subjects with consideration, and his saints favour. His words and ways, his promises and his gifts, his plans and his poses all manifest his grace, or free favour. There is nothing suspicious, diced, morose, tyrannical, or unapproachable in Jehovah,—he is condescending and kind.

And full of compassion. To the suffering, the weak, the despondent, he is very pitiful: he feels for them, he feels with them: he this heartily, and in a practical manner. Of this pitifulness he is full, so the compassionates freely, constantly, deeply, divinely, and effectually. In fullness in a sense not known among men, and this fullness is all fragrant sympathy for human misery. If the Lord be full of compassion there is no in him for forgetfulness or harshness, and none should suspect him What an ocean of compassion there must be since the Infinite God is full of

Slow to anger. Even those who refuse his grace yet share in long suffering. When men do not repent, but, on the contrary, go from bad to worse, averse to let his wrath flame forth against them. Greatly patient and anxious that the sinner may live, he

"lets the lifted thunder drop", and still bears.

"Love suffereth long and is kind", and God is love.

And of great mercy. This is his attitude towards the guilty. When men at last repent, find pardon awaiting them. Great is their sin, and great is God's mercy, need great help, and they have it though they deserve it not; for he is good to the greatly guilty.

9 The LORD is good to all: and his tender mercies are over all his works.

145:9 The LORD is good to all. No one, not even his fiercest enemy, can this; for the falsehood would be too barefaced, since the very existence lips which slander him is a proof that it is slander. He allows his live, he even supplies them with food, and smoothes their way with many forts; for them the sun shines as brightly as if they were saints, and the rain waters their fields as plentifully as if they were perfect men. Is not this goodness to all? In our own land the gospel sounds in the ears of all who care to listen; and the Scriptures are within reach of the poorest child. It would be a wanton wrestling of Scripture to limit this expression to the elect, as some have tried to do; we rejoice in electing love, but none the less we welcome the glorious truth,

"Jehovah is good to all."
And his tender mercies are over all his works. Not "his new covenant works", as one read it the other day who was wise above that which is written, yea, contrary to that which is written. Kindness is a law of God's universe: the world was planned for happiness; even now that sin has so sadly marred God's handiwork, and introduced elements which were not from the beginning, the Lord has so arranged matters that the fall is broken, the curse is met by an antidote, and the inevitable pain is softened with mitigations. Even in this sin stricken world, under its disordered economy, there are abundant traces of a hand skilful to soothe distress and heal disease. That which makes life bearable is the tenderness of the great Father. This is seen in the creation of an insect as well as in the ruling of nations. The Creator is never rough, the Provider is never forgetful, the Ruler is never cruel. Nothing is done to create disease, no organs are arranged to promote misery; the incoming of sickness and pain is not according to the original design, but a result of our disordered state. Man's body as it left the Maker's hand was neither framed for disease, decay, nor death, neither was the purpose of it discomfort and anguish; far otherwise, it was framed for a joyful activity, and a peaceful enjoyment of God. Jehovah has in great consideration laid up in the world cures for our ailments, and helps for our feebleness; and if many of these have been long in their discovery, it is because it was more for man's benefit to find them out himself, than to have them labeled and placed in order before his eyes. We may be sure of this, that Jehovah has never taken delight in the ills of his creatures, but has sought their good, and laid himself out to alleviate the distresses into which they have guiltily plunged themselves.

The duty of kindness to animals may logically be argued from this verse. Should not the children of God be like their Father in kindness?

10 ¶ All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD; and thy saints shall bless thee.

145: 10 All thy works shall praise thee, O LORD. There is a something about every creature which redounds to the honour of God. The skill, kindness, and power manifested in the formation of each living thing is in itself to the praise of God, and when observed by an intelligent mind the Lord is honored thereby. Some works praise him by their being, and others by their well being; some by their mere existence, and others by their hearty volition.

And thy saints shall bless thee. These holy ones come nearer, and render sweeter adoration. Men have been known to praise those whom they hated, as we may admire the prowess of a warrior who is our foe; but saints lovingly praise, and therefore are said to "bless." They wish well to God; they would make him more blessed, if such a thing were possible; they desire blessings upon his cause and his children, and invoke success upon his work and warfare. None but blessed men will bless the Lord. Only saints or holy ones will bless the thrice holy God. If we praise Jehovah because of his works around us, we must go on to bless him for his works within us. Let the two "shall"s of this verse be fulfilled, especially the latter one.

11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom, and talk of thy power;

145: 11 They shall speak of the glory of thy kingdom. Excellent themes for saintly minds. Those who bless God from their hearts rejoice to see him enthroned, glorified, and magnified in power.
No subject is more profitable for humility, obedience, hope, and joy than that of the reigning power of the Lord our God. His works praise him, but they cannot crown him: this remains for holy hands and hearts. It is their high pleasure to tell of the glory of his kingdom in its justice, kindness, eternity, and so forth. Kingdoms of earth are glorious for riches, for extent of territory, for victories, for liberty, for commerce, and other matters; but in all true glories the kingdom of Jehovah excels them. We have seen a palace dedicated "to all the glories of France"; but time, eternity, and all space are filled with the glories of God: on these we love to speak.

And talk of thy power. This power supports the kingdom and displays the glory, and we are sure to talk of it when the glory of the divine kingdom is under discussion. God's power to create or to destroy, to bless or to punish, to strengthen or to crush, is matter for frequent rehearsal. All power comes from God. Apart from him the laws of nature would be inoperative. His power is the one source of force—mechanical, vital, mental, spiritual. Beyond the power of God which has been put forth, infinite force lies latent in himself. Who can calculate the reserve forces of the Infinite? How, then, can his kingdom fail? We hear talk of the five great powers, but what are they to the One Great Power? The Lord is "the blessed and only Potentate." Let us accustom ourselves to think more deeply and speak more largely of this power which ever makes for righteousness and works for mercy.

12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts, and the glorious majesty of his kingdom.

145: 12 To make known to the sons of men his mighty acts. These glorious deeds ought to be known to all mankind; but yet few reckon such knowledge to be an essential part of education. As the State cannot teach these holy histories the people of God must take care to do it themselves. The work must be done for every age, for men have short memories in reference to their God, and the doings of his power. They inscribe the deeds of their heroes upon brass, but the glorious acts of Jehovah are written upon the sand, and the tide of time washes them from present memory; therefore we must repeat the lesson, and yet again repeat it. The saints are the religious instructors of the race; they ought to be not only the historians of the past, but the bards of the present, whose duty it is to keep the sons of men in memory of the great deeds which the Lord did in the days of their fathers and in the old time before them. Note the contrast between the great deeds of God and the puny sons of Adam, who have even degenerated from their father, though he was as nothing compared with his Maker.

And the glorious majesty of his kingdom. What a grand subject! Yet this we are to make known; the publication of it is left to us who bless the Lord.

"The glory of the majesty of his reign." What a theme! Jehovah's reign as sovereign Lord of all, his majesty in that dominion, and the glory of that majesty! The threefold subject baffles the most willing mind. How shall we make this known to the sons of men? Let us first labour to know it ourselves, and then let us make it a frequent subject of discourse, so shall men know it from us, the Holy Spirit attending our word.

13 Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and thy dominion endureth throughout all generations.
145: 13 *Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom.* His meditation has brought him near to God, and God near to him: he speaks to him in adoration, changing the pronoun from "his" to "thy." He sees the great King, and prostrates himself before him. It is well when our devotion opens the gate of heaven, and enters within the portal, to speak with God face to face, as a man speaketh with his friend. The point upon which the Psalmist's mind rests is the eternity of the divine throne,—

"thy reign is a reign of all eternities." The Lord's kingdom is without beginning, without break, without bound, and without end. He never abdicates his throne, neither does he call in a second to share his empire. None can overthrow his power, or break away from his rule. Neither this age, nor the age to come, nor ages of ages shall cause his sovereignty to fail. Herein is rest for faith. "The Lord sitteth King for ever."

And thy dominion endureth throughout all generations. Men come and go like shadows on the wall, but God reigneth eternally. We distinguish kings as they succeed each other by calling them first and second; but this King is Jehovah, the First and the Last. Adam in his generation knew his Creator to be King, and the last of his race shall know the same. All hail, Great God! Thou art ever Lord of lords! These three verses are a reverent hymn concerning "the kingdom of God": they will be best appreciated by those who are in that kingdom in the fullest sense, and are most truly loyal to the Lord. It is, according to these verses, a kingdom of glory and power; a kingdom of light which men are to know, and of might which men are to feel; it is full of majesty and eternity; it is the benediction of every generation. We are to speak of it, talk of it, and make it known, and then we are to acknowledge it in the homage directed distinctly to the Lord himself—as in Ps 145:13. In these three verses Jehovah is adored for his gracious providence towards men and all other creatures; this fitly follows the proclamation of his royalty, for we here see how he rules his kingdom, and provides for his subjects.

14 The LORD upholdeth all that fall, and raiseth up all those that be bowed down.

145: 14 *The Lord upholdeth all that fall.* Read this verse in connection with the preceding, and admire the unexpected contrast: he who reigns in glorious majesty, yet condescends to lift up and hold up those who are apt to fall. The form of the verb shows that he is always doing this; he is Jehovah upholding. His choice of the fallen, and the falling, as the subjects of his gracious help is specially to be noted. The fallen of our race, especially fallen women, are shunned by us, and it is peculiar tenderness on the Lord's part that such he looks upon, even those who are at once the chief of sinners and the least regarded of mankind. The falling ones among us are too apt to be pushed down by the strong: their timidity and dependence make them the victims of the proud and domineering. To them also the Lord gives his upholding help. The Lord loves to reverse things,—he puts down the lofty, and lifts up the lowly.

And raiseth up all those that be bowed down. Another deed of condescension. Many are despondent, and cannot lift up their heads in courage, or their hearts with comfort; but these he cheers.
Some are bent with their daily lead, and these he strengthens. Jesus loosed a daughter of Abraham whom Satan had so bound that she was bowed down, and could by no means lift up herself. In this he proved himself to be the true Son of the Highest. Think of the Infinite bowing to lift up the bowed, and stooping to be leaned upon by those who are ready to fall. The two "alls" should not be overlooked: the Lord has a kindly heart towards the whole company of the afflicted.

15 The eyes of all wait upon thee; and thou givest them their meat in due season.

145: 15 The eyes of all wait upon thee. They have learned to look to thee: it has become their nature to turn to thee for all they want. As children look to a father for all they need, so do the creatures look to God, the all sufficient Provider. It were well if all men had the eye of faith, and if all waited therewith upon the Lord.

And thou givest them their meat in due season. They wait, and God gives. The thought of this brings God so near to our poet prophet that he is again speaking with God after the style of thee and thou. Is it to be wondered at when the Lord is feeding the hungry all around us,—giving food to all creatures, and to ourselves among them? Like a flock of sheep the creatures stand around the Lord as their great Shepherd; all eyes are to his hand expecting to receive their food; nor are they disappointed, for when the hour comes suitable provender is ready for each creature. Observe the punctuality of the Lord in giving food at meal time,—in the season when it is due. This he does for all, and each living thing has its own season, so that the Lord of heaven is feeding his great flock both by day and by night, during every moment of time.

16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing.

145: 16 Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing. You alone provide, O Jehovah! Thou doest it liberally, with open hand; thou doest it easily, as if it were only to open thine hand; thou doest this at once as promptly as if all supplies were ready to hand. Living things have needs, and these create desires; the living God has suitable supplies at hand, and these he gives till inward satisfaction is produced, and the creature sighs no longer. In spiritual things, when God has raised a desire, he always gratifies it; hence the longing is prophetic of the blessing. In no case is the desire of the living thing excited to produce distress, but in order that it may seek and find satisfaction. These verses refer to natural providence; but they may equally well apply to the stores of grace, since the same God is king in both spheres. If we will but wait upon the Lord for pardon, renewing, or whatever else we need, we shall not wait in vain. The hand of grace is never closed while the sinner lives. In these verses we behold our God in the realm of his free grace dealing well with his believing people.

17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works.

145: 17 The LORD is righteous in all his ways, and holy in all his works. His ways and works are both worthy to be praised. Jehovah cannot be unjust or impure. Let his
doings be what they may, they are in every case righteous and holy. This is the confession of the
godly who follow his ways, and of the gracious who study his works. Whatever God is or does
must be right. In the salvation of his people he is as righteous and holy as in any other of his
ways and works: he has not manifested mercy at the expense of justice, but the rather he has
magnified his righteousness by the death of his Son.

18 The LORD is nigh unto all them that call upon him, to all that call upon him
in truth.
19 He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him: he also will hear their cry, and
will save them.

145: 19 **He will fulfill the desire of them that fear him:** that is, those who reverence his name
and his law. Inasmuch as they have respect unto his will, he will have respect unto their will.
They shall have their way for they have his way in their hearts. A holy heart only desires what a
holy God can give, and so its desire is filled full out of the fullness of the Lord.

**He also will hear their cry, and will save them.** Divinely practical shall his nearness be, for he
will work their deliverance. He will listen to their piteous cry, and then will send salvation from
every ill. This he will do himself personally; he will not trust them to angels or saints.

20 The LORD preserveth all them that love him: but all the wicked will he
destroy.
21 My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD: and let all flesh bless his holy
name for ever and ever.

145: 21 **My mouth shall speak the praise of the LORD.** Whatever others may do, I will not be
silent in the praise of the Lord: whatever others may speak upon, my topic is fixed once for all: I
will speak the praise of Jehovah. I am doing it, and I will do it as long as I breathe.

**And let all flesh bless his holy name for ever and ever.** Praise is no monopoly for one, even
though he be a David; others are debtors, let them also be songsters. All men of every race,
condition, or generation should unite to glorify God. No man need think that he will be rejected
when he comes with his personal note of praise; all are permitted, invited, and exhorted to
magnify the Lord. Specially should his holiness be adored: this is the crown, and in a certain
sense the sum, of all his attributes. Only holy hearts will praise the holy name, or character of the
Lord; oh, that all flesh were sanctified, then would the sanctity of God be the delight of all. Once
let the song begin and there will be no end to it. It shall go on for ever and a clay, as the old folks
used to say. If there were two forevers, or twenty forevers, they ought all to be spent in the
praises of the ever living, ever blessing, ever blessed JEHOVAH. Blessed be the Lord for ever
for having revealed to us his name, and blessed be that name as he has revealed it; yea, blessed
be he above all that we can know, or think, or say. Our hearts revel in the delight of praising him.
Our mouth, our mind, our lip, our life shall be our Lord's throughout this mortal existence, and
when time shall be no more.
PSALM 146

DIVISION. We are now among the Hallelujahs. The rest of our journey lies through the Delectable Mountains. All is praise to the close of the book. The key is high pitched: the music is upon the high sounding cymbals. O for a heart full of joyful gratitude, that we may run, and leap, and glorify God, even as these Psalms do.

Alexander thinks that this song may be regarded as composed of two equal parts; in the first we see the happiness of those who trust in God, and not in man (Ps 146:1-5), while the second gives the reason drawn from the Divine perfections (Ps 146:5-10). This might suffice for our purpose; but as there is really no break at all, we will keep it entire. It is "one pearl", a sacred censer of holy incense, pouring forth one sweet perfume.

1 ¶ Praise ye the LORD. Praise the LORD, O my soul.

146: 1 Praise ye the LORD, or, Hallelujah. It is saddening to remember how this majestic word has been trailed in the mire of late. Its irreverent use is an aggravated instance of taking the name of Jehovah our God in vain. Let us hope that it has been done in ignorance by the ruder sort; but great responsibility lies with leaders who countenance and even copy this blasphemy. With holy awe let us pronounce the word HALLELUJAH, and by it summon ourselves and all others to adore the God of the whole earth. Men need to be called to praise; it is important that they should praise; and there are many reasons why they should do it at once. Let all who hear the word Hallelujah unite immediately in holy praise. Praise the LORD, O my soul. He would practise what he had preached. He would be the leader of the choir which he had summoned. It is a poor business if we solely exhort others, and do not stir up our own soul. It is an evil thing to say,

"Praise ye", and never to add, "Praise, O my soul." When we praise God let us arouse our innermost self, our central life: we have but one soul, and if it be saved from eternal wrath, it is bound to praise its Saviour. Come heart, mind, thought! Come my whole being, my soul, my all, be all on flame with joyful adoration! Up, my brethren! Lift up the song!

"Praise ye the Lord." But what am I at? How dare I call upon others, and be negligent myself? If ever man was under bonds to bless the Lord I am that man, wherefore let me put my soul into the centre of the choir, and then let my better nature excite my whole manhood to the utmost height of loving praise.
"O for a well tuned harp!" Nay, rather, O for a sanctified heart. Then if my voice should be of the poorer sort, and somewhat lacking in melody, yet my soul without my voice shall accomplish my resolve to magnify the Lord.

2 While I live will I praise the LORD: I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being.

146: 2 While I live will I praise the LORD. I shall not live here for ever. This mortal life will find a finis in death; but while it lasts I will laud the Lord my God. I cannot tell how long or short my life may be; but every hour of it shall be given to the praises of my God. While I live I'll love; and while I breathe I'll bless. It is but for a while, and I will not while that time away in idleness, but consecrate it to that same service which shall occupy eternity. As our life is the gift of God's mercy, it should be used for his glory.

I will sing praises unto my God while I have any being. When I am no longer in being on earth, I hope to have a higher being in heaven, and there I will not only praise, but sing praises. Here I have to sigh and praise, but there I shall only sing and praise. This "while I have any being" will be a great while, but the whole of it shall be filled up with adoration; for the glorious Jehovah is my God, my own God by covenant, and by blood relationship in Christ Jesus. I have no being apart from my God, therefore, I will not attempt to enjoy my being otherwise than by singing to his honour. Twice the Psalmist says

"I will"; here first thoughts and second thoughts are alike good. We cannot be too firm in the holy resolve to praise God, for it is the chief end of our living and being that we should glorify God and enjoy him for ever.

3 Put not your trust in princes, nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help.

146: 3 Put not your trust in princes. If David be the author this warning comes from a prince. In any case it comes from the Spirit of the living God. Men are always far too apt to depend upon the great ones of earth, and forget the Great One above; and this habit is the fruitful source of disappointment. Princes are only men, and men with greater needs than others; why, then, should we look to them for aid? They are in greater danger, are burdened with greater cares, and are more likely to be misled than other men; therefore, it is folly to select them for our confidence. Probably no order of men have been so false to their promises and treaties as men of royal blood. So live as to deserve their trust, but do not burden them with your trust.

Nor in the son of man, in whom there is no help. Though you should select one son of man out of the many, and should imagine that he differs from the rest and may be safely depended on, you will be mistaken. There is none to be trusted, no, not one. Adam fell; therefore lean not on his sons. Man is a helpless creature without God; therefore, look not for help in that direction. All men are like the few men who are made into princes, they are more in appearance than in reality, more in promising than in performing, more apt to help themselves than to help others.
How many have turned away heartsick from men on whom they once relied! Never was this the case with a believer in the Lord. He is a very present help in time of trouble. In man there is no help in times of mental depression, in the day of sore bereavement, in the night of conviction of sin, or in the hour of death. What a horror when most in need of help to read those black words, NO HELP!

4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth; in that very day his thoughts perish.

146: 4 His breath goeth forth, he returneth to his earth. His breath goes from his body, and his body goes to the grave. His spirit goes one way, and his body another. High as he stood, the want of a little air brings him down to the ground, and lays him under it. Man who comes from the earth returns to the earth: it is the mother and sister of his body, and he must needs lie among Ins kindred as soon as the spirit which was his life has made its exit. There is a spirit in man, and when that goes the man goes. The spirit returns to God who gave it, and the flesh to the dust out of which it was fashioned. This is a poor creature to trust in: a dying creature, a corrupting creature. Those hopes will surely fall to the ground which are built upon men who so soon lie under ground.

In that very day his thoughts perish. Whatever he may have proposed to do, the proposal ends in smoke. He cannot think, and what he had thought of cannot effect itself, and therefore it dies. Now that he is gone, men are ready enough to let his thoughts go with him into oblivion; another thinker comes, and turns the thoughts of his predecessor to ridicule. It is a pitiful thing to be waiting upon princes or upon any other men, in the hope that they will think of us. In an hour they are gone, and where are their schemes for our promotion? A day has ended their thoughts by ending them; and our trusts have perished, for their thoughts have perished. Men's ambitions, expectations, declarations, and boastings all vanish into thin air when the breath of life vanishes from their bodies. This is the narrow estate of man: his breath, his earth, and his thoughts; and this is his threefold climax therein,—his breath goeth forth, to his earth he returns, and his thoughts perish. Is this a being to be relied upon? Vanity of vanities, all is vanity. To trust it would be a still greater vanity.

5 ¶ Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help, whose hope is in the LORD his God:

146: 5 Happy is he that hath the God of Jacob for his help. Heaped up is his happiness. He has happiness indeed: the true and the real delight is with him. The God of Jacob is the God of the covenant, the God of wrestling prayer, the God of the tried believer; he is the only living and true God. The God of Jacob is Jehovah, who appeared unto Moses, and led the tribes of Jacob out of Egypt, and through the wilderness. Those are happy who trust him, for they shall never be ashamed or confounded. The Lord never dies, neither do his thoughts perish: his purpose of mercy, like himself, endures throughout all generations. Hallelujah!

Whose hope is in the LORD his God. He is happy in help for the present and in hope for the future, who has placed all his confidence in Jehovah, who is his God by a covenant of salt.
Happy is he when others are despairing! Happiest shall he be in that very hour when others are discovering the depths of agony. We have here a statement which we have personally tried and proved: resting in the Lord, we know a happiness which is beyond description, beyond comparison, beyond conception. O how blessed a thing it is to know that God is our present help, and our eternal hope. Full assurance is more than heaven in the bud, the flower has begun to open. We would not exchange with Caesar; his sceptre is a bauble, but our bliss is true treasure. In each of the two titles here given, namely, "the God of Jacob", and "Jehovah his God", there is a peculiar sweetness. Either one of them has a fountain of joy in it; but the first will not cheer us without the second. Unless Jehovah be his God no man can find confidence in the fact that he was Jacob's God. But when by faith we know the Lord to be ours, then we are "rich to all the intents of bliss."

6 Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is: which keepeth truth for ever:

146: 6 Which made heaven, and earth, the sea, and all that therein is. Wisely may we trust our Creator: justly may we expect to be happy in so doing. He who made heaven can make a heaven for us, and make us fit for heaven. He who made the earth can preserve us while we are on earth, and help us to make good use of it while we sojourn upon it. He who made the sea and all its mysteries can steer us across the pathless deeps of a troubled life, and make it a way for his redeemed to pass over. This God who still makes the world by keeping it in existence is assuredly able to keep us to his eternal kingdom and glory. The making of the worlds is the standing proof of the power and wisdom of that great God in whom we trust. It is our joy that he not only made heaven, but the sea; not only things which are bright and blessed, but things which are deep and dark. Concerning all our circumstances, we may say the Lord is there. In storms and hurricanes the Lord reigneth as truly as in that great calm which rules the firmament above.

Which keepeth truth for ever. This is a second and most forcible justification of our trust: the Lord will never permit his promise to fail. He is true to his own nature, true to the relationships which he has assumed, true to his covenant, true to his Word, true to his Son. He keeps true, and is the keeper of all that is true. Immutable fidelity is the character of Jehovah's procedure. None can charge him with falsehood or vacillation.

7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed: which giveth food to the hungry.

The LORD looseth the prisoners:

146: 7 Which executeth judgment for the oppressed. He is a swift and impartial administrator of justice. Our King surpasses all earthly princes because he pays no deference to rank or wealth, and is never the respecter of persons. He is the friend of the down trodden, the avenger of the persecuted, the champion of the helpless. Safely may we trust our cause with such a Judge if it be a just one: happy are we to be under such a Ruler. Are we "evil entreated"? Are our rights denied us? Are we slandered? Let this console us, that he who occupies the throne will not only think upon our case, but bestir himself to execute judgment on our behalf.

Which giveth food to the hungry. Glorious King art thou; O Jehovah! Thou dost not only mete out justice but thou dost dispense bounty! All food comes from God; but when we are reduced to
hunger, and providence supplies our necessity, we are peculiarly struck with the fact. Let every
hungry man lay hold on this statement, and plead it before the mercy seat, whether he suffer
bodily hunger, or heart hunger. See how our God finds his special clients among the lowest of
mankind: the oppressed and the starving find help in the God of Jacob.

*The LORD looseth the prisoners.* Thus he completes the triple blessing: justice, bread, and
liberty. Jehovah loves not to see men pining in dungeons, or fretting in fetters: he brought up
Joseph from the round house, and Israel from the house of bondage. Jesus is the Emancipator,
spiritually, providentially, and nationally. Thy chains, O Africa! were broken by his hand. As
faith in Jehovah shall become common among men freedom will advance in every form,
especially will mental, moral, and spiritual bonds be loosed, and the slaves of error, sin, and
death shall be set free. Well might the Psalmist praise Jehovah,
who is so kind to men in bonds! Well may the loosened ones be loudest in the song!

8 The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind: the LORD raiseth them that are bowed down: the LORD loveth the righteous:

**146: 8 The LORD openeth the eyes of the blind.** Jesus did this very frequently, and hereby
proved himself to be Jehovah. He who made the eye can open it, and when he does so it is to his
glory. How often is the mental eye closed in moral night! And who can remove this dreary effect
of the fall but the Almighty God This miracle of grace he has performed in myriads of cases, and
it is in each case a theme for loftiest praise.

*The Lord raiseth them that are bowed down.* This also Jesus did literally, thus doing the work
peculiar to God. Jehovah consoles the bereaved, cheers the defeated, solaces the despondent,
comforts the despairing. Let those who are bowed to the ground appeal to him, and he will
speedily upraise them.

*The LORD loveth the righteous.* He gives to them the love of complacency, communion, and
reward. Bad kings affect the licentious, but Jehovah makes the upright to be his favored ones.
This is greatly to his glory. Let those who enjoy the inestimable privilege of his love magnify his
name with enthusiastic delight. Loved ones, you must never be absent from the choir! You must
never pause from his praise whose infinite love has made you what you are.

9 The LORD preserveth the strangers; he relieth the fatherless and widow: but
the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.

**146: 9 The Lord preserveth the strangers.** Many monarchs hunted aliens down, or transported
them from place to place, or left them as outlaws unworthy of the rights of man; but Jehovah
made special laws for their shelter within his domain. In this country the stranger was, a little
while ago, looked upon as a vagabond,—a kind of wild beast to be avoided if not to be assaulted;
and even to this day there are prejudices against foreigners which are contrary to our holy
religion. Our God and King is never strange to any of his creatures, and if any are left in a
solitary and forlorn condition he has a special eye to their preservation.

*He relieth the fatherless and widow.* These excite his compassion, and he shows it in a
practical way by upraising them from their forlorn condition. The Mosaic law made provision for
these destitute persons. When the secondary fatherhood is gone the child falls back upon the primary fatherhood of the Creator; when the husband of earth is removed the godly widow casts herself upon the care of her Maker.

*But the way of the wicked he turneth upside down.* He fills it with crooked places; he reverses it, sets it down, or upsets it. That which the man aimed at he misses, and he secures that for himself which he would gladly have avoided. The wicked man's way is in itself a turning of things upside down morally, and the Lord makes it so to him providentially: everything goes wrong with him who goes wrong.

10 The LORD shall reign for ever, *even* thy God, O Zion, unto all generations. Praise ye the LORD.

146: 10 *The LORD shall reign for ever.* Jehovah is King, and his kingdom can never come to an end. Neither does he die, nor abdicate, nor lose his crown by force. Glory be to his name, his throne is never in jeopardy. As the Lord ever liveth, so he ever reigneth.

*Even thy God, O Zion, unto all generations.* Zion's God, the God of his worshipping people, is he who in every age shall reign. There will always be a Zion; Zion will always have Jehovah for her King; for her he will always prove himself to be reigning in great power. What should we do in the presence of so great a King, but enter into his courts with praise, and pay to him our joyful homage?

*Praise ye the LORD.* Again they said Hallelujah. Again the sweet perfume arose from the golden vials full of sweet odours. Are we not prepared for an outburst of holy song? Do not we also say—Hallelujah? Here endeth this happy Psalm. Here endeth *not* the praise of the Lord, which shall ascend for ever and ever. Amen.
PSALM 147

SUBJECT. This is a specially remarkable song. In it the greatness and the condescending goodness of the Lord are celebrated. The God of Israel is set forth in his peculiarity of glory as caring for the sorrowing, the insignificant, and forgotten. The poet finds a singular joy in extolling one who is so singularly gracious. It is a Psalm of the city and of the field, of the first and the second creations, of the common wealth and of the church. It is good and pleasant throughout.

DIVISION. The song appears to divide itself into three portions. From Ps 147:1-6, Jehovah is extolled for building up Zion, and blessing his mourners; from Ps 147:7-11, the like praise is given because of his provision for the lowly, and his pleasure in them; and then, from Ps 147:12-20, he is magnified for his work on behalf of his people, and the power of his word in nature and in grace. Let it be studied with joyful gratitude.

1 ¶ Praise ye the LORD: for it is good to sing praises unto our God; for it is pleasant; and praise is comely.

147: 1 Praise ye the Lord, or Hallelujah: The flow of the broad river of the Book of Psalms ends in a cataract of praise. The present Psalm begins and ends with Hallelujah. Jehovah and happy praise should ever be associated in the mind of a believer. Jove was dreaded, but Jehovah is beloved. To one and all of the true seed of Israel the Psalmist acts as choir master, and cries, "Praise ye the Lord." Such an exhortation may fitly be addressed to all those who owe anything to the favour of God; and which of us does not? Pay him we cannot, but praise him we will, not only now, but for ever. For it is good to sing praises unto our God. It is good because it is right; good because it is acceptable with God, beneficial to ourselves, and stimulating to our fellows. The goodness of an exercise is good argument with good men for its continual practice. Singing the divine praises is the best possible use of speech: it speaks of God, for God, and to God, and it does this in a joyful and reverent manner. Singing in the heart is good, but singing with heart and voice is better, for it allows others to join with us. Jehovah is our God, our covenant God, therefore let him have the homage of our praise; and he is so gracious and happy a God that our praise may best be expressed in joyful song. For it is pleasant; and praise is comely. It is pleasant and proper, sweet and suitable to laud the Lord Most High. It is refreshing to the taste of the truly refined mind, and it is agreeable to the eye of the pure in heart: it is delightful both to hear and to see a whole assembly praising the Lord. These are arguments for song service which men who love true piety, real pleasure, and strict propriety will not despise. Please to praise, for praise is pleasant: praise the Lord in the beauty of holiness, for praise is comely. Where duty and delight, benefit and beauty unite, we ought not to be backward. Let each reader feel that he and his family ought to constitute a choir for the daily celebration of the praises of the Lord.
2 The LORD doth build up Jerusalem: he gathereth together the outcasts of Israel.

147: 2 The Lord doth build up Jerusalem. God appears both in the material and spiritual world as a Builder and Maker, and therein he is to be praised. His grace, wisdom, and power are all seen in the formation and establishment of the chosen seat of his worship; once a city with material walls, but now a church composed of spiritual stones. The Jews rejoiced in the uprising of their capital from its ruins, and we triumph in the growth of the church from among a godless world.

He gathereth together the outcasts of Israel; and thus he repairs the waste places, and causes the former desolations to be inhabited. This sentence may relate to Nehemiah and those who returned with him; but there is no reason why it should not with equal fitness be referred to David, who, with his friends, was once an outcast, but ere long became the means of building up Jerusalem. In any case, the Psalmist ascribes to Jehovah all the blessings enjoyed; the restoration of the city and the restoration of the banished he equally traces to the divine hand. How clearly these ancient believers saw the Lord present, working among them and for them! Spiritually we see the hand of God in the edification of the church, and in the ingathering of sinners. What are men tinder conviction of sin but outcasts from God, from holiness, from heaven, and even from hope? Who could gather them from their dispersions, and make citizens of them in Christ Jesus save the Lord our God? This deed of love and power he is constantly performing. Therefore let the song begin at Jerusalem our home, and let every living stone in the spiritual city echo the strain; for it is the Lord who has brought again his banished ones, and builded them together in Zion.

3 He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds.

147: 3 He healeth the broken in heart, and bindeth up their wounds. This the Holy Spirit mentions as a part of the glory of God, and a reason for our declaring his praise: the Lord is not only a Builder, but a Healer; he restores broken hearts as well as broken walls. The kings of the earth think to be great through their loftiness; but Jehovah becomes really so by his condescension. Behold, the Most High has to do with the sick and the sorry, with the wretched and the wounded! He walks the hospitals as the good Physician! His deep sympathy with mourners is a special mark of his goodness. Few will associate with the despondent, but Jehovah chooses their company, and abides with them till he has healed them by his comforts. He deigns to handle and heal broken hearts: he himself lays on the ointment of grace, and the soft bandages of love, and thus binds up the bleeding wounds of those convinced of sin. This is compassion like a God. Well may those praise him to whom he has acted so gracious a part. The Lord is always healing and binding: this is no new work to him, he has done it of old; and it is not a thing of the past of which he is now weary, for he is still healing and still binding, as the original hath it. Come, broken hearts, come to the Physician who never fails to heal: uncover your wounds to him who so tenderly binds them up!
4 He telleth the number of the stars; he calleth them all by *their* names.

147: 4 *He telleth the number of the stars.* None but he can count the mighty host, but as he made them and sustains them he can number them. To Jehovah stars are as mere coins, which the merchant tells as he puts them into his bag.

*He calleth them all by their names.* He has an intimate acquaintance with each separate orb, so as to know its name or character. Indeed, he gives to each its appropriate title, because he knows its constitution and nature. Vast as these stars are, they are perfectly obedient to his bidding; even as soldiers to a captain who calls their names, and allots them their stations. Do they not rise, and set, and move, or stand, precisely according to his order? What a change is here from the preceding verse! Read the two without a break, and feel the full force of the contrast. From stars to sighs is a deep descent! From worlds to wounds is a distance which only infinite compassion can bridge. Yet he who acts a surgeon's part with wounded hearts, marshals the heavenly host, and reads the muster roll of suns and their majestic systems. O Lord, it is good to praise thee as ruling the stars, but it is pleasant to adore thee as healing the broken in heart!

5 Great *is* our Lord, and of great power: his understanding *is* infinite.

147: 5 *Great is our Lord.* Our Lord and King is great—magnanimous, infinite, inconceivably glorious. None can describe his majesty, or reckon up the number of his excellencies.

*And of great power.* Doing as he wills, and willing to do mighty deeds. His acts reveal something of his might, but the mass of his power is hidden, for all things are possible with God, even the things impossible with men.

*His understanding is infinite.* There is no fathoming his wisdom, or measuring his knowledge. He is infinite in existence, in power, and in knowledge; as these three phrases plainly teach us. The gods of the heathen are nothing, but our God filleth all things. And yet how condescending! For this is he who so tenderly nurses sick souls, and waists to be gracious to sinful men. He brings his boundless power and infinite understanding to bear upon human distress for its assuagement and sanctification. For all these reasons let his praise be great: even could it be infinite, it would not exceed his due. In the building of his church and the salvation of souls, his greatness, power, and wisdom are all displayed: let him be extolled because of each of these attributes.

6 The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.

147: 6 *The LORD lifteth up the meek: he casteth the wicked down to the ground.* He reverses the evil order of things. The meek are down, and he lifts them up; the wicked are exalted, and he hurls them down to the dust. The Lord loves those who are reverent to himself, humble in their own eyes, and gentle to their fellow men: these he lifts up to hope, to peace, to power, to eternal honour. When God lifts a man, it is a lift indeed. Proud men are in their own esteem, high enough already; only those who are low will care to be lifted up, and only such will Jehovah upraise. As for the wicked, they must come down from their scats of vain glory. God is accustomed to overthrow such; it is his way and habit. None of the wicked shall in the end
escape. To the earth they must go; for from the earth they came, and for the earth they live. It is one of the glories of our God for which his saints praise him, that he hath put down the mighty from their seats, and hath exalted them of low degree. Well may the righteous be lifted up in spirit and the wicked be downcast as they think of the judgments of the Lord God. In this verse we see the practical outcome of that character of Jehovah which leads him to count and call the stars as if they were little things, while he deals tenderly with sorrowful men, as if they were precious in his esteem. He is so great that nothing is great to him, and he is so condescending that nothing is little to him: his infinite majesty thus naturally brings low the lofty and exalts the lowly.

7 Sing unto the LORD with thanksgiving; sing praise upon the harp unto our God:

147: 7 In this paragraph the contrast announced in the former section is enlarged upon from another point of view, namely, as it is seen in nature and in providence.

*Sing unto the LORD with, thanksgiving;* or rather, "respond to Jehovah.” He speaks to us in his works, let us answer him with our thanks. All that he does is gracious, every movement of Iris hand is goodness; therefore let our hearts reply with gratitude, and our lips with song. Our lives should be responses to divine love. Jehovah is ever engaged in giving, let us respond with thanksgiving.

*Sing praise upon the harp unto our God.* Blend music with song. Under a dispensation of ritual the use of music was most commendable, and suitable in the great congregation: those of us who judge it to be less desirable for public worship, under a spiritual economy, because it has led to so many abuses, nevertheless rejoice in it in our privacy, and are by no means insensible to its charms. It seems profanation that choice minstrelsy should so often be devoted to unworthy themes: the sweetest harmonies should be consecrated to the honour of the Lord. He is our God, and this fact is one choice joy of the sing. We have chosen him because he has chosen us; and we see in him peculiarities which distinguish him from all the pretended deities of those among whom we dwell. He is our God in covenant relationship for ever and ever, and to him be praise in every possible form.

8 Who covereth the heaven with clouds, who prepareth rain for the earth, who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.

147: 8 *Who covereth the heaven with clouds.* He works in all things, above as well as below. Clouds are not caused by accident, but produced by God himself, and made to assume degrees of density by which the blue firmament is hidden. A sky scraper might seem to be a mere fortuitous concourse of vapors, but it is not so: the Great Artist's hand thus covers the canvas of the heavens.

*Who prepareth rain for the earth.* The Lord prepares clouds with a view to rain, and rain with an eye to the fields below. By many concurrent circumstances all things are made ready for the production of a shower; there is more of art in the formation of a rain cloud and in the fashioning
of a rain drop, than appears to superficial observers. God is in the vapor, and in the pearly drop which is born of it.

**Who maketh grass to grow upon the mountains.** By the far reaching shower he produces vegetation where the hand of man is all unknown. He cares not only for Goshen's fertile plains, but for Carmel's steep ascents. God makes the heavens the servants of the earth, and the clouds the irrigators of the mountain meadows.

This is a kind of evolution about which there can be no dispute. Nor does the Lord forget the waste and desolate places, but causes the lone hills to be the first partakers of his refreshing visitations. This is after the manner of our God. He not only causes rain to descend from the heavens to water the grass, and thus unites the skies and the herbs by a ministry of mercy; but he also thinks of the rocky ledges among the hills, and forgets not the pastures of the wilderness. What a God is this!

"Passing by the rich and great, For the poor and desolate."

9 He giveth to the beast his food, *and* to the young ravens which cry.

**147: 9 He giveth to the beast his food.** By causing the grass to grow on the hills the Lord feeds the cattle. God careth for the brute creation. Men tread grass under foot as though it were nothing, but God causeth it to grow: too often men treat their cattle with cruelty, but the Lord himself feedeth them. The great God is too good, and, indeed, too great to overlook things that are despised. Say not,

"Doth God care for oxen?" Indeed he does, and he permits himself to be here described as giving them their food as husbandmen are wont to do.

**And to the young ravens which cry.** These wild creatures, which seem to be of no use to man; are they therefore worthless? By no means; they fill their place in the economy of nature. When they are mere fledgelings, and can only clamor to the parent birds for food, the Lord does not suffer them to starve, but supplies their needs. Is it not wonderful how such numbers of little birds are fed! A bird in a cage under human care is in more danger of lacking seed and water than any one of the myriads that fly in the open heavens, with no owner but their Creator, and no provider but the Lord. Greatness occupied with little things makes up a chief feature of this Psalm. Ought we not all to feel special joy in praising One who is so specially remarkable for his care of the needy and the forgotten? Ought we not also to trust in the Lord? for he who feeds the sons of the raven will surely nourish the sons of God! Hallelujah to Him who both feeds the ravens and rules the stars! What a God art thou, O Jehovah!

10 He delighteth not in the strength of the horse: he taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man.
He delighteth not in the strength of the horse. Not to great and strong animals doth the Creator in any measure direct his special thought; but in lesser living things he has equal pleasure. If man could act the Creator's part, he would take peculiar delight in producing noble quadrupeds like horses, whose strength and speed would reflect honour upon their maker; but Jehovah has no such feeling; lie cares as much for helpless birds in the nest as for the war horse in the pride of its power.

He taketh not pleasure in the legs of a man. These are the athlete's glory, but God hath no pleasure in them. Not the capacities of the creature, but rather its weakness and necessity, win the regard of our God. Monarchs trust in their cavalry and infantry; but the King of kings exults not in the hosts of his creatures as though they could lend power to him. Physical or material greatness and power are of no account with Jehovah; he has respect to other and more precious qualities. Men who boast in fight the valour of gigantic might, will not find themselves the favorites of God: though earthly princes may feast their eyes upon their Joabs and their Abners, their Abishais and Asahels, the Lord of hosts has no pleasure in mere bone and muscle. Sinews and thews are of small account, either in horses or in men, with Him who is a spirit, and delights most in spiritual things. The expression of the text may be viewed as including all creature power, even of a mental or moral kind. God does not take pleasure in us because of our attainments, or potentialities: he respects character rather than capacity.

11 The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in those that hope in his mercy.

The LORD taketh pleasure in them that fear him in those that hope in his mercy. While the bodily powers give no content to God, spiritual qualities are his delight. He cares most for those emotions which centre in himself: the fear which he approves is fear of him, and the hope which he accepts is hope in his mercy. It is a striking thought that God should not only be at peace with some kinds of men, but even find a solace and a joy in their company. Oh! the matchless condescension of the Lord, that his greatness should take pleasure in the insignificant creatures of his hand. Who are these favored men in whom Jehovah takes pleasure? Some of them are the least in his family, who have never risen beyond hoping and fearing. Others of them are more fully developed, but still they exhibit a blended character composed of fear and hope: they fear God with holy awe and filial reverence, and they also hope for forgiveness and blessedness because of the divine mercy.

As a father takes pleasure in his own children, so doth the Lord solace himself in his own beloved ones, whose marks of new birth are fear and hope. They fear, for they are sinners; they hope, for God is merciful. They fear him, for he is great; they hope in him, for he is good. Their fear sobers their hope; their hope brightens their fear: God takes pleasure in them both in their trembling and in their rejoicing. Is there not rich cause for praise in this special feature of the divine character? After all, it is a poor nature which is delighted with brute force; it is a diviner thing to take pleasure in the holy character of those around us. As men may be known by the nature of the things which give them pleasure, so is the Lord known by the blessed fact that he taketh pleasure in the righteous, even though that righteousness is as yet in its initial stage of fear and hope.
12 ¶ Praise the LORD, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion.

147: 12 Praise the Lord, O Jerusalem; praise thy God, O Zion. How the poet insists upon praise: he cries praise, praise, as if it were the most important of all duties. A peculiar people should render peculiar praise. The city of peace should be the city of praise; and the temple of the covenant God should resound with his glories. If nowhere else, yet certainly in Zion there should be joyful adoration of Zion's God. Note, that we are to praise the Lord in our own houses in Jerusalem as well as in his own house in Zion. The holy city surrounds the holy hill, and both are dedicated to the holy God, therefore both should ring with hallelujahs.

13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates; he hath blessed thy children within thee.

147: 13 For he hath strengthened the bars of thy gates. Her fortifications were finished, even to the fastenings of the gates, and God had made all sound and strong, even to her bolts and bars: thus her security against invading foes was guaranteed. This is no small mercy. Oh, that our churches were thus preserved from all false doctrine and unholy living! This must be the Lord's doing; and where he has wrought it his name is greatly to be praised. Modern libertines would tear down all gates and abolish all bars; but so do not we, because of the fear of the Lord.

He hath blessed thy children within thee. Internal happiness is as truly the Lord's gift as external security. When the Lord blesses

"thy sons in the midst of thee", thou art, O Zion, filled with a happy, united, zealous, prosperous, holy people, who dwell in communion with God, and enter into the joy of their Lord. When God makes thy walls salvation thy gates must be praise. It would little avail to fortify a wretched, starving city; but when the walls are strengthened, it is a still greater joy to see that the inhabitants are blessed with all good gifts. How much our churches need a present and abiding benediction.

14 He maketh peace in thy borders, and filleth thee with the finest of the wheat.

147: 14 He maketh peace in thy borders. Even to the boundaries quiet extends; no enemies are wrangling with the borderers. If there is peace there, we may be sure that peace is everywhere.

"When a man's ways please the Lord he maketh even his enemies to be at peace with him." Peace is from the God of peace. Considering the differing constitutions, conditions, tastes, and opinions of men, it is a work of God when in large churches unbroken peace is found year after year; and it is an equal wonder if worldlings, instead of persecuting the godly, treat them with marked respect. He who builds Zion is also her Peace maker, the Lord and Giver of peace.

And filleth thee with the finest of the wheat. Peace is attended with plenty,—plenty of the best food, and of the best sort of that food. It is a great reason for thanksgiving when men's wants are
so supplied that they are filled: it takes much to fill some men: perhaps none ever are filled but the inhabitants of Zion; and they are only to be filled by the Lord himself. Gospel truth is the finest of the wheat, and those are indeed blessed who are content to be filled therewith, and are not hungering after the husks of the world. Let those who are filled with heavenly food fill their mouths with heavenly praise.

15 He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth: his word runneth very swiftly.

147: 15 He sendeth forth his commandment upon earth. His messages fly throughout his dominions: upon earth his warrants are executed as well as in heaven. From his church his word goes forth; from Zion he missions the nations with the word of life.

His word runneth very swiftly: his purposes of love are speedily accomplished. Oriental monarchs laboured hard to establish rapid postal communication; the desire, will, and command of the Lord flash in an instant from pole to pole, yea, from heaven to earth. We who dwell in the centre of the Lord's dominions may exceedingly rejoice that to the utmost extremity of the realm the divine commandment speeds with sure result, and is not hindered by distance or time. The Lord can deliver his people right speedily, or send them supplies immediately from his courts above. God's commands in nature and providence are fiats against which no opposition is ever raised; say, rather, to effect which all things rush onward with alacrity. The expressions in the text are so distinctly in the present that they are meant to teach us the present mission and efficiency of the word of the Lord, and thus to prompt us to present praise.

16 He giveth snow like wool: he scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes.

147: 16 Here follow instances of the power of God upon the elements.

He giveth snow like wool. As a gift he scatters the snow, which falls in flakes like fleecy wool. Snow falls softly, covers universally, and clothes warmly, even as wool covers the sheep. The most evident resemblance lies in the whiteness of the two substances; but many other likenesses are to be seen by the observant eye. It is wise to see God in winter and in distress as well as in summer and prosperity. He who one day feeds us with the finest of the wheat, at another time robes us in snow: he is the same God in each case, and each form of his operation bestows a gift on men.

He scattereth the hoarfrost like ashes. Here again the Psalmist sees God directly and personally at work. As ashes powder the earth when men are burning up the rank herbage; and as when men cast ashes into the air they cause a singular sort of whiteness in the places where they fall, so also does the frost. The country people talk of a black frost and a white frost, and the same thing may be said of ashes, for they are both black and white. Moreover, excessive cold burns as effectually as great heat, and hence there is an inner as well as an outer likeness between hoarfrost and ashes. Let us praise the Lord who condescends to wing each flake of snow and scatter each particle of rime. Ours is no absent or inactive deity: he worketh all things, and is everywhere at home.
17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels: who can stand before his cold?

147: 17 He casteth forth his ice like morsels. Such are the crumbs of hail which he casts forth, or the crusts of ice which he creates upon the waters. These morsels are his ice, and he casts them abroad. The two expressions indicate a very real presence of God in the phenomena of nature.

Who can stand before his cold? None can resist the utmost rigors of cold any more than they can bear the vehemence of heat. God's withdrawals of light are a darkness that may be felt, and his withdrawals of heat are a cold which is absolutely omnipotent. If the Lord, instead of revealing himself as a fire, should adopt the opposite manifestation of cold, he would, in either case, consume us should he put forth all his power. It is ours to submit to deprivations with patience, seeing the cold is his cold. That which God sends, whether it be heat or cold, no man can defy with impunity, but he is happy who bows before it with childlike submission. When we cannot stand before God we will gladly lie at his feet, or nestle under his wings.

18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them: he causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow.

147: 18 He sendeth out his word, and melteth them. When the frost is sharpest, and the ice is hardest, the Lord intervenes; and though he doth no more than send his word, yet the rocks of ice are dissolved at once, and the huge bergs begin to float into the southern seas. The phenomena of winter are not so abundant in Palestine as with us, yet they are witnessed sufficiently to cause the devout to bless God for the return of spring. At the will of God snow, hoarfrost, and ice disappear, and the time of the opening bud and the singing of birds has come. For this let us praise the Lord as we sun ourselves amidst the spring flowers.

He causeth his wind to blow, and the waters flow. The Lord is the great first cause of everything; even the fickle, wandering winds are caused by him. Natural laws are in themselves mere inoperative rules, but the power emanates directly from the Ever present and Ever potent One. The soft gales from the south, which bring a general thaw, are from the Lord, as were those wintry blasts which bound the streams in icy bonds. Simple but effectual are the methods of Jehovah in the natural world; equally so are those which he employs in the spiritual kingdom; for the breath of his Holy Spirit breathes upon frozen hearts, and streams of penitence and love gush forth at once. Observe how in these two sentences the word and the wind go together in nature. They attend each other in grace; the gospel and the Holy Spirit cooperate in salvation. The truth which the Spirit breathed into prophets and apostles he breathes into dead souls, and they are quickened into spiritual life.

19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel.

147: 19 He sheweth his word unto Jacob, his statutes and his judgments unto Israel. He who is the Creator is also the Revealer. We are to praise the Lord above all things for his manifesting himself to us as he does not unto the world. Whatever part of his mind he discloses to us, whether it be a word of instruction, a statute of direction, or a judgment of government, we are
bound to bless the Lord for it. He who causes summer to come in the place of winter has also
removed the coldness and death from our hearts by the power of his word, and this is abundant
cause for singing unto his name. As Jacob's seed of old were made to know the Lord, even so are
we ill these latter days; wherefore, let his name be magnified among us. By that knowledge
Jacob is ennobled into Israel, and therefore let him who is made a prevailing prince in prayer be
also a chief musician in praise. The elect people were bound to sing hallelujahs to their own God.
Why were they so specially favored if they did not, above all others, tell forth the glory of their
God?

20 He hath not dealt so with any nation: and as for his judgments, they have not
known them. Praise ye the LORD.

147: 20 He hath not dealt so with any nation. Israel had clear and exclusive knowledge of God,
while others were left in ignorance. Election is the loudest call for grateful adoration.

And as for his judgments, they have not known them; or, and judgments they had not known
them, as if not knowing the laws of God, they might be looked upon as having no laws at all
worth mentioning. The nations were covered with darkness, and only Israel sat in the light. This
was sovereign grace in its fullest noontide of power.

Praise ye the Lord. When we have mentioned electing, distinguishing love, our praise can rise
no higher, and therefore we close with one more hallelujah.
The song is one and indivisible. It seems almost impossible to expound it in detail, for a living poem is not to be dissected verse by verse. It is a song of nature and of grace. As a flash of lightning flames through space, and enwraps both heaven and earth in one vestment of glory, so doth the adoration of the Lord in this Psalm light up all the universe, and cause it to glow with a radiance of praise. The song begins in the heavens, sweeps downward to dragons and all deeps, and then ascends again, till the people near unto Jehovah take up the strain. For its exposition the chief requisite is a heart on fire with reverent love to the Lord over all, who is to be blessed for ever.

1 ¶ Praise ye the LORD. Praise ye the LORD from the heavens: praise him in the heights.

148: 1 Praise ye the LORD. Whoever ye may be that hear this word, ye are invited, entreated, commanded, to magnify Jehovah. Assuredly he has made you, and, if for nothing else, ye are bound, upon the ground of creatureship, to adore your Maker. This exhortation can never be out of place, speak it where we may; and never out of time, speak it when we may.

Praise ye the LORD from the heavens. Since ye are nearest to the High and Lofty One, be ye sure to lead the song. Ye angels, ye cherubim and seraphim, and all others who dwell in the precincts of his courts, praise ye Jehovah. Do this as from a starting point from which the praise is to pass on to other realms. Keep not your worship to yourselves, but let it fall like a golden shower from the heavens on men beneath.

Praise him in the heights. This is no vain repetition; but after the manner of attractive poesy the truth is emphasized by reiteration in other words. Moreover, God is not only to be praised from the heights, but in them: the adoration is to be perfected in the heavens from which it takes its rise. No place is too high for the praises of the most High. On the summit of creation the glory of the Lord is to be revealed, even as the tops of the highest Alps are tipped with the golden light of the same sun which glads the valleys. Heavens and heights become the higher and the more heavenly as they are made to resound with the praises of Jehovah. See how the Psalmist trumpets
out the word "PRAISE." It sounds forth some nine times in the first five verses of this song. Like minute-guns, exultant exhortations are sounded forth in tremendous force—

_Praise! Praise! Praise!_ The drum of the great King beats round the world with this one note— _Praise! Praise! Praise!_

"Again they said, Hallelujah." All this praise is distinctly and personally for Jehovah. Praise not his servants nor his works; but praise HIM. Is he not worthy of all possible praise? Pour it forth before HIM in full volume; pour it only there!

2 Praise ye him, all his angels: praise ye him, all his hosts.

148: 2 _Praise ye him, all his angels_. Living intelligences, perfect in character and in bliss, lift up your loudest music to your Lord, each one, of you. Not one bright spirit is exempted from this consecrated service. However many ye be, O angels, ye are all _his_ angels, and therefore ye are bound, all of you, to render service to your Lord. Ye have all seen enough of him to be able to praise him, and ye have all abundant reasons for so doing. Whether ye be named Gabriel, or Michael, or by whatever other titles ye are known, praise ye the Lord. Whether ye bow before him, or fly on his errands, or desire to look into his covenant, or behold his Son, cease not, ye messengers of Jehovah, to sound forth his praise while ye move at his bidding.

_Praise ye him, all his hosts_. This includes angelic armies, but groups with them all the heavenly bodies. Though they be inanimate, the stars, the clouds, the lightnings, have their ways of praising Jehovah. Let each one of the countless legions of the Lord of hosts show forth his glory; for the countless armies are all _his_, his by creation, and preservation, and consequent obligation. Both these sentences claim unanimity of praise from those in the upper regions who are called upon to commence the strain—"all his angels, all his hosts." That same hearty oneness must pervade the whole orchestra of praising ones; hence, further on, we read of all stars of light, all deeps, all hills, all cedars, and all people. How well the concert begins when all angels, and all the heavenly host, strike the first joyful notes! In that concert our souls would at once take their part.

3 Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light.

148: 3 _Praise ye him, sun and moon: praise him, all ye stars of light_. The Psalmist enters into detail as to the heavenly hosts. As all, so each, must praise the God of each and all. The sun and moon, as joint rulers of day and night, are paired in praise: the one is the complement of the other, and so they are closely associated in the summons to worship. The sun has his peculiar mode of glorifying the Great Father of lights, and the moon has her own special method of reflecting his brightness. There is a perpetual adoration of the Lord in the skies: it varies with night and day, but it ever continues while sun and moon endure. There is ever a lamp burning before the high altar of the Lord. Nor are the greater luminaries allowed to drown with their floods of light the glory of the lesser brilliants, for all the stars are bidden to the banquet of praise. Stars are many, so many that no one can count the host included under the words, "all ye stars"; yet no one of them refuses to praise its Maker.
From their extreme brilliance they are fitly named "stars of light"; and this light is praise in a visible form twinkling to true music. Light is song glittering before the eye instead of resounding in the ear. Stars without light would render no praise, and Christians without light rob the Lord of his glory. However small our beam, we must not hide it: if we cannot be sun or moon we must aim to be one of the "stars of light", and our every twinkling must be to the honour of our Lord.

4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens, and ye waters that be above the heavens.

148:4 Praise him, ye heavens of heavens. By these are meant those regions which are heavens to those who dwell in our heavens; or those most heavenly of abodes where the most choice of spirits dwell. As the highest of the highest, so the best of the best are to praise the Lord. If we could climb as much above the heavens as the heavens are above the earth, we could still cry out to all around us,

"Praise ye the Lord." There can be none so great and high as to be above praising Jehovah.

And ye waters that be above the heavens. Let the clouds roll up volumes of adoration. Let the sea above roar, and the fullness thereof, at the presence of Jehovah, the God of Israel. There is something of mystery about these supposed reservoirs of water; but let them be what they may, and as they may, they shall give glory to the Lord our God. Let the most unknown and perplexing phenomena take up their parts in the universal praise.

5 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for he commanded, and they were created.

148: 5 Let them praise the name of the LORD; for he commanded, and they were created. Here is good argument: The Maker should have honour from his works, they should tell forth his praise; and thus they should praise his name—by which his character is intended. The name of JEHovah is written legibly upon his works, so that his power, wisdom, goodness, and other attributes are therein made manifest to thoughtful men, and thus his name is praised. The highest praise of God is to declare what he is. We can invent nothing which would magnify the Lord: we can never extol him better than by repeating his name, or describing his character. The Lord is to be extolled as creating all things that exist, and as doing so by the simple agency of his word. He created by a command; what a power is this! Well may he expect those to praise him who owe their being to him. Evolution may be atheistic; but the doctrine of creation logically demands worship; and hence, as the tree is known by its fruit, it proves itself to be true. Those who were created by command are under command to adore their Creator. The voice which said "Let them be", now saith "Let them praise."

6 He hath also established them for ever and ever: he hath made a decree which shall not pass.

148: 6 He hath also stablished them for ever and ever. The continued existence of celestial beings is due to the supporting might of Jehovah, and to that alone. They do not fail because the Lord does not fail them. Without his will these things cannot alter; he has impressed upon them laws which only he himself can change. Eternally his ordinances are binding upon them.
Therefore ought the Lord to be praised because he is Preserver as well as Creator, Ruler as well as Maker.

He hath made a decree which shall not pass. The heavenly bodies are ruled by Jehovah's decree: they cannot pass his limit, or trespass against his law. His rule and ordination can never be changed except by himself, and in this sense his decree "shall not pass": moreover, the highest and most wonderful of creatures are perfectly obedient to the statutes of the Great King, and thus his decree is not passed over. This submission to law is praise. Obedience is homage; order is harmony. In this respect the praise rendered to Jehovah from the "bodies celestial" is absolutely perfect. His almighty power upholds all things in their spheres, securing the march of stars and the flight of seraphs; and thus the music of the upper regions is never marred by discord, nor interrupted by destruction. The eternal hymn is for ever chanted; even the solemn silence of the spheres is a perpetual Psalm.

7 ¶ Praise the LORD from the earth, ye dragons, and all deeps:

148: 7 Praise the LORD from the earth. The song descends to our abode, and so comes nearer home to us. We who are "bodies terrestrial", are to pour out our portion of praise from the golden globe of this favored planet. Jehovah is to be praised not only in the earth but from the earth, as if the adoration ran over from this planet into the general accumulation of worship. In Psalm 148:1 the song was "from the heavens"; here it is "from the earth": songs coming down from heaven are to blend with those going up from earth. The "earth" here meant is our entire globe of land and water: it is to be made vocal everywhere with praise.

Ye dragons, and all deeps. It would be idle to inquire what special sea monsters are here meant; but we believe all of them are intended, and the places where they abide are indicated by "all deeps." Terrible beasts or fishes, whether they roam the earth or swim the seas, are bidden to the feast of praise. Whether they float amid the teeming waves of the tropics, or wend their way among the floes and bergs of polar waters, they are commanded by our sacred poet to yield their tribute to the creating Jehovah. They pay no service to man; let them the more heartily confess their allegiance to the Lord. About "dragons" and "deeps" there is somewhat of dread, but this may the more fitly become the bass of the music of the Psalm. If there be aught grim in mythology, or fantastic in heraldry, let it praise the incomprehensible Lord.

8 Fire, and hail; snow, and vapor; stormy wind fulfilling his word:

148: 8 Fire and hail. Lightning and hailstones go together. In the plagues of Egypt they cooperated in making Jehovah known in all the terrors of his power. Fire and ice morsels are a contrast in nature, but they are combined in magnifying the Lord.

Snow and vapors. Offsprings of cold, or creations of heat, be ye equally consecrated to his praise. Congealed or expanded vapors, falling flakes or rising clouds, should, rising or falling, still reveal the praises of the Lord.
Stormy winds fulfilling his word. Though rushing with incalculable fury, the storm wind is still under law, and moves in order due, to carry out the designs of God. It is a grand orchestra which contains such wind instruments as these! He is a great leader who can keep all these musicians in concert, and direct both time and tune.

9 Mountains, and all hills; fruitful trees, and all cedars:

148: 9 Mountains, and all hills. Towering steeps and swelling knolls alike declare their Creator. "All hills" are to be consecrated; we have no longer Ebal and Gerizim, the hill of the curse and the hill of the blessing, but all our Ebals are turned to Gerizims. Tabor and Hermon, Lebanon and Carmel, rejoice in the name of the Lord. The greater and the lesser mounts are one in their adoration. Not only the Alps and the mountains of the Jura thunder out his praise; but our own Cotswolds and Grampians are vocal with songs in his honour. Fruitful trees, and all cedars. Fruit trees and forest trees, trees deciduous or evergreen, are equally full of benevolent design, and alike subserve some purpose of love; therefore for all and by all let the great Designer be praised. There are many species of cedar, but they all reveal the wisdom of their Maker. When kings fell them, that they may make beams for their palaces, they do but confess their obligation to the King of trees, and to the King of kings, whose trees they are. Varieties in the landscape are produced by the rising and falling of the soil, and by the many kinds of trees which adorn the land: let all, and all alike, glorify their one Lord. When the trees clap their hands in the wind, or their leaves rustle in the gentle breath of Zephyr, they do to their best ability sing out unto the Lord.

Note

Jura mountains. Named after the Jura rock, this mountain range runs parallel to the Franco – Swiss border.

Cotswolds mountains. The Cotswolds is the name given to a range of hills in central England, sometimes called the "Heart of England", a hilly area reaching over 300 m or 1000 feet

Grampians mountains. The Grampians are named after the mountain range in Scotland due to their resemblance, as seen through the eyes of the Scottish explorer, Major Mitchell who climbed them in 1836. The Grampians are located in the mid west of Victoria and the wild sandstone formations form the western extremity of the Great Dividing Range in Australia. S.E.M.

10 Beasts, and all cattle; creeping things, and flying fowl:

148: 10 Beasts, and all cattle. Animals fierce or tame; wild beasts and domestic cattle; let all these show forth the praises of Jehovah. Those are worse than beasts who do not praise our God. More than brutish are those who are willfully dumb concerning their Maker.
Creeping things, and flying fowl. The multitudes that throng the earth and the air; insects of every form and birds of every wing are called upon to join the universal worship. No one can become familiar with insect and bird life without feeling that they constitute a wonderful chapter in the history of divine wisdom. The minute insect marvelously proclaims the Lord's handiwork: when placed under the microscope it tells a wondrous tale. So, too, the bird which soars aloft displays in its adaptation for an aerial life an amount of skill which our balloonists have in vain attempted to emulate. True devotion not only hears the praises of God in the sweet song of feathered minstrels, but even discovers it in the croaking from the marsh, or in the buzz of "the blue fly which singeth in the window pane." More base than reptiles, more insignificant than insects, are songless men.

11 Kings of the earth, and all people; princes, and all judges of the earth:

148: 11 Kings of the earth, and all people: princes, and all judges of the earth. Now the poet has reached our own race, and very justly he would have rulers and subjects, chieftains and magistrates, unite in worshipping the sovereign Lord of all. Monarchs must not disdain to sing, nor must their people refrain from uniting with them. Those who lead in battle and those who decide in courts must neither of them allow their vocations to keep them from reverently adoring the Chief and Judge of all. All people, and all judges, must praise the Lord of all. What a happy day it will be when it is universally acknowledged that through our Lord Jesus, the incarnate Wisdom, "kings reign and princes decree justice"! Alas, it is not so as yet! kings have been patrons of vice, and princes ringleaders in folly. Let us pray that the song of the Psalmist may be realized in fact.

12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children:

148:12 Both young men, and maidens; old men, and children. Both sexes and all ages are summoned to the blessed service of song. Those who usually make merry together are to be devoutly joyful together: those who make up the ends of families, that is to say, the elders and the juveniles, should make the Lord their one and only end. Old men should by their experience teach children to praise; and children by their cheerfulness should excite old men to song. There is room for every voice at this concert: fruitful trees and maidens, cedars and young men, angels and children, old men and judges—all may unite in this oratorio. None, indeed, can be dispensed with: for perfect Psalmody we must have the whole universe aroused to worship, and all parts of creation must take their parts in devotion.

13 Let them praise the name of the LORD: for his name alone is excellent; his glory is above the earth and heaven.

148: 13. Let them praise the name of the LORD. All that is contained in the name or character of Jehovah is worthy of praise, and all the objects of his creating care will be too few to set it forth in its completeness.
For his name alone is excellent. It alone deserves to be exalted in praise, for alone it is exalted in worth. There is none like unto the Lord, none that for a moment can be compared unto him. His unique name should have a monopoly of praise.

His glory is above the earth and heaven: it is therefore alone because it surpasses all others. His royal splendor exceeds all that earth and heaven can express. He is himself the crown of all things, the excellency of the creation. There is more glory in him personally than in all his works united. It is not possible for us to exceed and become extravagant in the Lord's praise: his own natural glory is infinitely greater than any glory which we can render to him.

14 He also exalteth the horn of his people, the praise of all his saints; even of the children of Israel, a people near unto him. Praise ye the LORD.

148: 14 He also exalteth the horn of his people. He hath made them strong, famous, and victorious. His goodness to all his creatures does not prevent his having a special favour to his chosen nation: he is good to all, but he is God to his people. He lifts up the down trodden, but he in a peculiar manner lifts up his people. When they are brought low he raises up a horn for them by sending them a deliverer; when they are in conflict he gives them courage and strength, so that they lift up their horn amid the fray; and when all is peaceful around them, he fills their horn with plenty, and they lift it up with delight.

The praise of all his saints. He is their glory: to him they render praise; and he by his mercy to them evermore gives them further reasons for praise, and higher motives for adoration. He lifts up their horn, and they lift up his praise. He exalts them, and they exalt him. The Holy One is praised by holy ones. He is their God, and they are his saints; he makes them blessed, and they bless him in return.

Even of the children of Israel. The Lord knoweth them that are his. He knows the name of him with whom he made a covenant, and how he came by that name, and who his children are, and where they are. All nations are bidden in Psalm 148:11 to praise the Lord; but here the call is specially addressed to his elect people, who know him beyond all others. Those who are children of privilege should be children of praise.

A people near unto him, near by kin, and near by care; near as to manifestation and near as to affection. This is a highly honourable description of the beloved race; and it is true even more emphatically of the spiritual Israel, the believing seed. This nearness should prompt us to perpetual adoration. The Lord's elect are the children of his love, the courtiers of his palace, the priests of his temple, and therefore they are bound beyond all others to be filled with reverence for him, and delight in him.

Praise ye the Lord, or, Hallelujah. This should be the Alpha and Omega of a good man's life. Let us praise God to the end, world without end. The field of praise which lies before us in this Psalm is bounded at beginning and end by landmarks in the form of Hallelujahs, and all that lieth between them is every word of it to the Lord's honour. Amen.
PSALM 149

We are almost at the last Psalm, and still among the Hallelujahs. This is "a new song", evidently intended for the new creation, and the men who are of new heart. It is such a song as may be sung at the coming of the Lord, when the new dispensation shall bring overthrow to the wicked and honour to all the saints. The tone is exceedingly jubilant and exultant. All through one hears the beat of the feet of dancing maidens, keeping time to the timbrel and harp.

1 ¶ Praise ye the LORD. Sing unto the LORD a new song, and his praise in the congregation of saints.

149: 1 Praise ye the LORD. Specially you, ye chosen people, whom he has made to be his saints. You have praised him aforetime, praise him yet again; yea, for ever praise him. With renewed zeal and fresh delight lift up your song unto Jehovah.

Sing unto the LORD a new song. Sing, for it is the fittest method for expressing reverent praise. Sing a hymn newly composed, for you have now a new knowledge of God. He is ever new in his manifestations; his mercies are new every morning; his deliverances are new in every night of sorrow; let your gratitude and thanksgivings be new also. It is well to repeat the old; it is more useful to invent the new. Novelty goes well with heartiness. Our singing should be "unto the Lord"; the songs we sing should be of him and to him,

"for of him, and to him, and through him are all things." Among our novelties there should be new songs: alas!

men are fonder of making new complaints than new Psalms. Our new songs should be devised in Jehovah's honour; indeed all our newest thoughts should run towards him. Never can we find a nobler subject for a song than the Lord, nor one more full of fresh matter for a new song, nor one which we are personally so much bound to sing as a new song "unto the Lord."

And his praise in the congregation of saints. Saints are precious, and a congregation of saints is a treasure house of jewels. God is in the midst of saints, and because of this we may well long to be among them. They are so full of his praise that we feel at home among them when we are ourselves full of praise. The sanctuary is the house of praise as well as the house of prayer. All saints praise God: they would not be saints if they did not. Their praise is sincere, suitable, seasonable, and acceptable. Personal praise is sweet unto God, but congregated praise has a multiplicity of sweetinesse in it. When holy ones meet, they adore The Holy One. Saints do not gather to amuse themselves with music, nor to extol one another, but to sing his praise whose saints they are. A congregation of saints is heaven upon earth: should not Jehovah, the Lord of saints, have all the praise that can come from such an assembly? Yet at times even saintly
conclaves need to be stirred up to thanksgiving; for saints may be sad and apprehensive, and then their spirits require to be raised to a higher key, and stimulated to happier worship.

2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him: let the children of Zion be joyful in their King.

149: 2 Let Israel rejoice in him that made him. Here is that new creation which calls for the new song. It was Jehovah who made Israel to be Israel, and the tribes to become a great nation: therefore let the Founder of the nation be had in perpetual honour. Joy and rejoicing are evidently to be the special characteristics of the new song. The religion of the dead in sin is more apt to chant dirges than to sing hallelujahs; but when we are made new in the spirit of our minds we joy and rejoice in him that made us. Our joy is in our God and King: we choose no lower delight.

Let the children of Zion be joyful in their King. Those who had seen the tribes formed into a settled kingdom as well as into a united nation should rejoice. Israel is the nation, Zion is the capital of the kingdom: Israel rejoices in her Maker, Zion in her King. In the case of our God we who believe in him are as glad of his Government as we are of his Creation: his reign is as truly the making of us as was his divine power. The children of Israel are happy to be made a people; the children of Zion are equally happy to be ruled as a people. In every character our God is the source of joy to us: this verse issues a permit to our joy, yea it lays an injunction upon us to be glad in the Lord.

3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp.

149: 3 Let them praise his name in the dance: let them sing praises unto him with the timbrel and harp. Thus let them repeat the triumph of the Red Sea, which was ever the typical glory of Israel. Miriam led the daughters of Israel in the dance when the Lord had triumphed gloriously; was it not most fit that she should? The sacred dance of devout joy is no example, nor even excuse, for frivolous dances, much less for lewd ones. Who could help dancing when Egypt was vanquished, and the tribes were free? Every mode of expressing delight was bound to be employed on so memorable an occasion. Dancing, singing, and playing on instruments were all called into requisition, and most fitly so. There are unusual seasons which call for unusual expressions of joy. When the Lord saves a soul its holy joy overflows, and it cannot find channels enough for its exceeding gratitude: if the man does not leap, or play, or sing, at any rate he praises God, and wishes for a thousand tongues with which to magnify his Saviour. Who would wish it to be otherwise? Young converts are not to be restrained in their joy. Let them sing and dance while they can. How can they mourn now that their Bridegroom is with them? Let us give the utmost liberty to joy. Let us never attempt its suppression, but issue in the terms of this verse a double license for exultation. If any ought to be glad it is the children of Zion; rejoicing is more fit for Israel than for any other people: it is their
own folly and fault that they are not oftener brimming with joy in God, for the very thought of him is delight.

4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people: he will beautify the meek with salvation.

149: 4 For the LORD taketh pleasure in his people; and therefore they should take pleasure in him. If our joy be pleasing to him let us make it full. What condescension is this on Jehovah's part, to notice, to love, and to delight in his chosen! Surely there is nothing in our persons, or our actions, which could cause pleasure to the Ever blessed One, were it not that he condescends to men of low estate. The thought of the Lord's taking pleasure in us is a mine of joy never to be exhausted.

He will beautify the meek with salvation. They are humble, and feel their need of salvation; he is gracious, and bestows it upon them. They lament their deformity, and he puts a beauty upon them of the choicest sort. He saves them by sanctifying them, and thus they wear the beauty of holiness, and the beauty of a joy which springs out of full salvation. He makes his people meek, and then makes the meek beautiful. Herein is grand argument for worshipping the Lord with the utmost exultation: he who takes such a pleasure in us must be approached with every token of exceeding joy. God taketh pleasure in all his children as Jacob loved all his sons; but the meek are his Josephs, and upon these he puts the coat of many colors, beautifying them with peace, content, joy, holiness, and influence. A meek and quiet spirit is called "an ornament", and certainly it is "the beauty of holiness." When God himself beautifies a man, he becomes beautiful indeed and beautiful for ever. The verse may be read,

"He shall beautify the meek with salvation", or

"He shall beautify the afflicted with deliverance", or,

"He shall beautify the meek with victory"; and each of these readings gives a new shade of meaning, well worthy of quiet consideration. Each reading also suggests new cause for joyful adoration. "O come, let us sing unto the Lord."

5 Let the saints be joyful in glory: let them sing aloud upon their beds.

149: 5 Let the saints be joyful in glory. God has honored them, and put a rare glory upon them; therefore let them exult therein. Shall those to whom God is their glory be cast down and troubled? Nay, let their joy proclaim their honourable estate.

Let them sing aloud upon their beds. Their exultation should express itself in shouts and songs, for it is not a feeling of which they have any need to be ashamed. That which is so fully justified by fact, may well be loudly proclaimed. Even in their quietest retreats let them burst into song; when no one hears them, let them sing aloud unto God. If confined by sickness let them joy in God. In the night watches let them not lie awake and weep, but like nightingales let them charm the midnight hours. Their shouts are not now for the battlefield, but for the places of their rest:
they can peacefully lie down and yet enjoy the victory with which the Lord has beautified them. Without fighting, faith wins and sings the victory. What a blessing to have our beds made into thrones, and our retirements turned into triumphs!

6 ¶ Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand;

149: 6 Let the high praises of God be in their mouth, and a two-edged sword in their hand. It seems they are not always on their beds, but are ready for deeds of prowess. When called to fight, the meek are very hard to overcome; they are just as steady in conflict as they are steadfast in patience. Besides, their way of fighting is of an extraordinary sort, for they sing to God but keep their swords in their hands. They can do two things at a time: if they do not wield the trowel and the sword, at least they sing and strike. In this Israel was not an example, but a type: we will not copy the chosen people in making literal war, but we will fulfill the emblem by carrying on spiritual war. We praise God and contend with our corruptions; we sing joyfully and war earnestly with evil of every kind. Our weapons are not carnal, but they are mighty, and wound with both back and edge. The word of God is all edge; whichever way we turn it, it strikes deadly blows at falsehood and wickedness. If we do not praise we shall grow sad in our conflict; and if we do not fight we shall become presumptuous in our song. The verse indicates a happy blending of the chorister and the crusader. Note how each thing in the believer is emphatic: if he sings, it is high praises, and praises deep down in his throat, as the original hath it; and if he fights, it is with the sword, and the sword is two edged. The living God imparts vigorous life to those who trust him. They are not of a neutral tint: men both hear them and feel them. Quiet is their spirit, but in that very quietude abides the thunder of an irresistible force. When godly men give battle to the powers of evil each conflict is high praise unto the God of goodness. Even the tumult of our holy war is a part of the music of our lives.

7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people;

149: 7 To execute vengeance upon the heathen, and punishments upon the people. This was once literally the duty of Israel: when they came into Canaan they fulfilled the righteous sentence of the Lord upon guilty nations. At this hour, under the gentler dispensation of grace, we wrestle not with flesh and blood; yet is our warfare none the less stern, and our victory none the less sure. All evil shall eventually be overthrown: the Lord shall display his justice against evildoers, and in that warfare his servants shall play their parts. The saints shall judge the world. Both the conflict and the victory at the end of it shall cause glory to God, and honour to his holy ones.

8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron;

149: 8 To bind their kings with chains, and their nobles with fetters of iron. Thus are the greatest enemies of Jehovah and his people reduced to shame, rendered helpless, and themselves punished. This was Israel's boast in actual fact, it is ours spiritually. The chief powers of evil shall be restrained and ultimately destroyed. Those who made captives of the godly shall themselves be made captive. The powers of evil cannot bind our King, but by his power their
king shall be bound with a great chain, and shut up in the bottomless pit, that he may at length be trodden under the feet of saints.

9 To execute upon them the judgment written: this honour have all his saints. Praise ye the LORD.

149: 9 To execute upon them the judgment written. Israel as a nation had this to do, and did it, and then they rejoiced in the God who gave success to their arms. We praise our God after another fashion; we are not executioners of justice, but heralds of mercy. It would be a sad thing for any one to misuse this text: lest any warlike believer should be led to do so, we would remind him that the execution must not go beyond the sentence and warrant; and we have received no warrant of execution against our fellow men. Christians have no commission of vengeance; it is theirs to execute the command of mercy, and that alone.

This honour have all his saints. All the godly shared in the triumphs of the Lord when he smote Israel's foes. We have like honour, but it is shown in victories of another sort. All the holy ones are sent upon errands by their holy Lord. The honours described in this Psalm are common to all the family of grace; and such service as the Lord appoints is to be undertaken by every one of them, without exception. The Lord honours all his chosen here, and he will glorify them all hereafter: this rule is without exception. Surely in this we have the best argument for glorifying the Lord, wherefore we close our new song with another Hallelujah, Praise ye the Lord.

PSALM 150

We have now reached the last summit of the mountain chain of Psalms. It rises high into the clear azure, and its brow is bathed in the sunlight of the eternal world of worship, it is a rapture. The poet prophet is full of inspiration and enthusiasm. He slays not to argue, to teach, to explain; but cries with burning words, "Praise him, Praise him, Praise ye the LORD."

1 ¶ Praise ye the LORD. Praise God in his sanctuary: praise him in the firmament of his power.

150: 1 Praise ye the LORD. Hallelujah! The exhortation is to all things in earth or in heaven. Should they not all declare the glory of him for whose glory they are, and were created? Jehovah,
the one God, should be the one object of adoration. To give the least particle of his honour to another is shameful treason; to refuse to render it to him is heartless robbery.

**Praise God in his sanctuary.** Praise El, or the strong one, in his holy place. See how power is mentioned with holiness in this change of names. Praise begins at home.

"In God's own house pronounce his praise." The holy place should be filled with praise, even as of old the high priest filled the sanctum sanctorum with the smoke of sweet smelling incense. In his church below and in his courts above hallelujahs should be continually presented. In the person of Jesus God finds a holy dwelling or sanctuary, and there he is greatly to be praised. He may also be said to dwell in holiness, for all his ways are right and good; for this we ought to extol him with heart and with voice. Whenever we assemble for holy purposes our main work should be to present praises unto the Lord our God. Praise him in the firmament of his power. It is a blessed thing that in our God holiness and power are united. Power without righteousness would be oppression, and righteousness without power would be too weak for usefulness; but put the two together in an infinite degree and we have God. What an expanse we have in the boundless firmament of divine power! Let it all be filled with praise. Let the heavens, so great and strong, echo with the praise of the thrice holy Jehovah, while the sanctuaries of earth magnify the Almighty One.

2 Praise him for his mighty acts: praise him according to his excellent greatness.

**150:2 Praise him for his mighty acts.** Here is a reason for praise. In these deeds of power we see himself. These doings of his omnipotence are always on behalf of truth and righteousness. His works of creation, providence, and redemption, all call for praise; they are his acts, and his acts of might, therefore let him be praised for them.

**Praise him according to his excellent greatness.** His being is unlimited, and his praise should correspond therewith. He possesses a multitude or a plenitude of greatness, and therefore he should be greatly praised. There is nothing little about God, and there is nothing great apart from him. If we were always careful to make our worship fit and appropriate for our great Lord how much better should we sing! How much more reverently should we adore! Such excellent deeds should have excellent praise.

3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet: praise him with the psaltery and harp.

**150: 3 Praise him with the sound of the trumpet.** With the loudest, clearest note call the people together. Make all men to know that we are not ashamed to worship. Summon them with unmistakable sound to bow before their God. The sound of trumpet is associated with the grandest and most solemn events, such as the giving of the law, the proclamation of jubilee, the coronation of Jewish kings, and the raging of war. It is to be thought of in reference to the coming of our Lord in his second advent and the raising of the dead. If we cannot give voice to this martial instrument, at least let our praise be as decided and bold as if we could give a blast upon the horn. Let us never sound a trumpet before us to our own honour, but reserve all our trumpeting for God's glory. When the people have been gathered by blast of trumpet, then proceed to
**praise him with the psaltery and harp.** Stringed instruments are to be used as well as those which are rendered vocal by wind. Dulcet notes are to be consecrated as well as more startling sounds. The gospel meaning is that all powers and faculties should praise the Lord—all sorts of persons, under all circumstances, and with differing constitutions, should do honour unto the Lord of all. If there be any virtue, if there be any talent, if there be any influence, let all be consecrated to the service of the universal Benefactor. Harp and lyre—the choicest, the sweetest, must be all our Lord's.

4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance: praise him with stringed instruments and organs.

**150: 4 Praise him with the timbrel and dance.** Associated with the deliverance at the Red Sea, this form of worship set forth the most jubilant and exultant of worship. The hands and the feet were both employed, and the entire body moved in sympathy with the members. Are there not periods of life when we feel so glad that we would fain dance for joy? Let not such exhilaration be spent upon common themes, but let the name of God stir us to ecstasy. Let us exult as we cry,

"*In the heavenly Lamb
thrice happy I am,
And my heart it doth dance
at the sound of his name.*"

There is enough in our holy faith to create and to justify the utmost degree of rapturous delight. If men are dull in the worship of the Lord our God they are not acting consistently with the character of their religion.

**Praise him with stringed instruments and organs.** We have here the three kinds of musical instruments: timbrels, which are struck, and strings, and pipes; let all be educated to praise the Lord. Nothing is common and unclean: all may be sanctified to highest uses. Many men, many minds, and these as different as strings and pipes; but there is only one God, and that one God all should worship. The word translated "organs" signifies pipe—a simpler form of wind instrument than the more modern and more elaborate organ. Doubtless many a pious shepherd has poured out gracious pastorals from a reed or oaten pipe, and so has magnified his God.

5 Praise him upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.

**150: 5 Praise high upon the loud cymbals: praise him upon the high sounding cymbals.** Let the clash of the loudest music be the Lord's: let the joyful clang of the loftiest notes be all for
him. Praise has beaten the timbrel, swept the harp, and sounded the trumpet, and now for a last effort, awakening the most heavy of slumberers, and startling the most indifferent of onlookers, she dashes together the disks of brass, and with sounds both loud and high proclaims the glories of the Lord.

6 Let every thing that hath breath praise the LORD. Praise ye the LORD.

150: 6. Let everything that hath breath praise the Lord. "Let all breath praise him": that is to say, all living beings. He gave them breath, let them breathe his praise. His name is in the Hebrew composed rather of breathings than of letters, to show that all breath comes from him: therefore let it be used for him. Join all ye living things in the eternal song. Be ye least or greatest, withhold not your praises. What a day will it be when all things in all places unite to glorify the one only living and true God! This will be the final triumph of the church of God.

Praise ye the LORD. Once more, Hallelujah! Thus is the Psalm rounded with the note of praise; and thus is the Book of Psalms ended by a glowing word of adoration. Reader, wilt not thou at this moment pause a while, and worship the Lord thy God? Hallelujah!