The Treasury of David

by

Charles H. Spurgeon

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Ps. 73-89 (Book 3)

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Psalm 73

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher
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TITLE. A Psalm of Asaph. This is the second Psalm ascribed to Asaph, and the first of eleven consecutive Psalms bearing the name of this eminent singer. Some writers are not sure that Asaph wrote them, but incline to the belief that David was the author, and Asaph the person to whom they were dedicated, that he might sing them when in his turn he became the chief musician. But though our own heart turns in the same direction, facts must be heard; and we find in 2Ch 29:30, that Hezekiah commanded the Levites to sing "the words of David and of Asaph the seer; "and, moreover, in Ne 12:46, David and Asaph are mentioned together, as distinct from "the chief of the singers,"and as it would seem, as joint authors of psalmody. We may, therefore, admit Asaph to be the author of some, if not all, of the twelve Psalms ascribed to him. Often a great star which seems to be but one to the eyes of ordinary observers, turns out upon closer inspection to be of a binary character; so here the Psalms of David are those of Asaph too. The great sun of David has a satellite in the moon of Asaph. By reading our notes on Psalm Fifty, in Volume 2, the reader will glean a little more concerning this man of God.

SUBJECT. Curiously enough this Seventy-third Psalm corresponds in subject with the Thirty-seventh: it will help the memory of the young to notice the reversed figures. The theme is that ancient stumbling block of good men, which Job's friends could not get over; viz.—the present prosperity of wicked men and the sorrows of the godly. Heathen philosophers have puzzled themselves about this, while to believers it has too often been a temptation.

DIVISION. In Ps 73:1 the psalmist declares his confidence in God, and, as it were, plants his foot on a rock while he recounts his inward conflict. From Ps 73:2-14 he states his temptation; then, from Ps 73:15-17 he is embarrassed as how to act, but ultimately finds deliverance from his dilemma. He describes with awe the fate of the ungodly in Ps 73:18-20, condemns his own folly and adores the grace of God, Ps 73:21-24, and concludes by renewing his allegiance to his God, whom he takes afresh to be his portion and delight.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. Truly, or, more correctly, only, God is good to Israel. He is only good, nothing else but good to his own covenanted ones. He cannot act unjustly, or unkindly to them; his goodness to them is beyond dispute, and without mixture. Even to such as are of a clean heart. These are the true Israel, not the ceremonially clean but the really so; those who are clean in the inward parts, pure in the vital mainspring of action. To such he is, and must be, goodness itself. The writer does not doubt this, but lays it down as his firm conviction. It is well to make sure of what we do know, for this will be good anchor hold for us when we are molested by those mysterious storms which arise from things which we do not understand. Whatever may or may not be the truth about mysterious and inscrutable things, there are certainties somewhere; experience
Psalm 73

Verse 2. Here begins the narrative of a great soul battle, a spiritual Marathon, a hard and well fought field, in which the half defeated became in the end wholly victorious. But as for me. He contrasts himself with his God who is ever good; he owns his personal want of good, and then also compares himself with the clean in heart, and goes on to confess his defilement. The Lord is good to his saints, but as for me, am I one of them? Can I expect to share his grace? Yes, I do share it; but I have acted an unworthy part, very unlike one who is truly pure in heart. My feet were almost gone. Errors of heart and head soon affect the conduct. There is an intimate connection between the heart and the feet. Asaph could barely stand, his uprightness was going, his knees were bowing like a falling wall. When men doubt the righteousness of God, their own integrity begins to waver. My steps had well nigh slipped. Asaph could make no progress in the good road, his feet ran away from under him like those of a man on a sheet of ice. He was weakened for all practical action, and in great danger of actual sin, and so of a disgraceful fall. How ought we to watch the inner man, since it has so forcible an effect upon the outward character. The confession in this case is, as it should be, very plain and explicit.

Verse 3. For I was envious at the foolish. "The foolish" is the generic title of all the wicked: they are beyond all others fools, and he must be a fool who envies fools. Some read it, "the proud:" and, indeed, these, by their ostentation, invite envy, and many a mind which is out of gear spiritually, becomes infected with that wasting disease. It is a pitiful thing that an heir of heaven should have to confess "I was envious, "but worse still that he should have to put it, "I was envious at the foolish." Yet this acknowledgment is, we fear, due from most of us. When I saw the prosperity of the wicked. His eye was fixed too much on one thing; he saw their present, and forgot their future, saw their outward display, and overlooked their soul's discomfort. Who envies the bullock his fat when he recollects the shambles? Yet some poor afflicted saint has been sorely tempted to grudge the ungodly sinner his temporary plenty. All things considered, Dives had more cause to envy Lazarus than Lazarus to be envious of Dives.
Verse 4. For there are no bands in their death. This is mentioned as the chief wonder, for we usually expect that in the solemn article of death, a difference will appear, and the wicked will become evidently in trouble. The notion is still prevalent that a quiet death means a happy hereafter. The psalmist had observed that the very reverse is true. Careless persons become case hardened, and continue presumptuously secure, even to the last. Some are startled at the approach of judgment, but many more have received a strong delusion to believe a lie. What with the surgeon's drugs and their own infidelity, or false peace, they glide into eternity without a struggle. We have seen godly men bound with doubts, and fettered with anxieties, which have arisen from their holy jealousy; but the godless know nothing of such bands: they care neither for God nor devil. Their strength is firm. What care they for death? Frequently they are brazen and insolent, and can vent defiant blasphemies even on their last couch. This may occasion sorrow and surprise among saints, but certainly should not suggest envy, for, in this case, the most terrible inward conflict is infinitely to be preferred to the profoundest calm which insolent presumption can create. Let the righteous die as they may, let my last end be like theirs.

Verse 5. They are not in trouble as other men. The prosperous wicked escape the killing toils which afflict the mass of mankind; their bread comes to them without care, their wine without stint. They have no need to enquire, "Whence shall we get bread for our children, or raiment for our little ones?" Ordinary domestic and personal troubles do not appear to molest them. Neither are they plagued like other men. Fierce trials do not arise to assail them: they smart not under the divine rod. While many saints are both poor and afflicted, the prosperous sinner is neither. He is worse than other men, and yet he is better off; he ploughs least, and yet has the most fodder. He deserves the hottest hell, and yet has the warmest nest. All this is clear to the eyes of faith, which unriddles the riddle; but to the bleared eye of sense it seems an enigma indeed. They are to have nothing hereafter, let them have what they can here; they, after all, only possess what is of secondary value, and their possessing it is meant to teach us to set little store by transient things. If earthly good were of much value, the Lord would not give so large a measure of it to those who have least of his love.

Verse 6. Therefore pride compasseth them about as a chain. They are as great in their own esteem as if they were aldermen of the New Jerusalem; they want no other ornament than their own pomposity. No jeweller could sufficiently adorn them; they wear their own pride as a better ornament than a gold chain. Violence covereth them as a garment. In their boastful arrogance they array themselves; they wear the livery of the devil, and are fond of it. As soon as you
see them, you perceive that room must be made for them, for, regardless of the feelings and rights of others, they intend to have their way, and achieve their own ends. They brag and bully, bluster and browbeat, as if they had taken out license to ride roughshod over all mankind.

**Verse 7.** *Their eyes stand out with fatness.* In cases of obesity the eyes usually appear to be enclosed in fat, but sometimes they protrude; in either case the countenance is changed, loses its human form, and is assimilated to that of fatted swine. The face is here the index of the man: the man has more than suffices him; he is glutted and surfeited with wealth, and yet is one of the wicked whom God abhorreth. They have more than heart could wish. Their wishes are gratified, and more; their very greediness is exceeded; they call for water, and the world gives them milk; they ask for hundreds, and thousands are lavished at their feet. The heart is beyond measure gluttonous, and yet in the case of certain ungodly millionaires, who have rivalled Sardanapalus both in lust and luxury, it has seemed as if their wishes were exceeded, and their meat surpassed their appetite.

**Verse 8.** *They are corrupt.* They rot above ground; their heart and life are depraved. And speak wickedly concerning oppression. The reek of the sepulchre rises through their mouths; the nature of the soul is revealed in the speech. They choose oppression as their subject, and they not only defend it, but advocate it, glory in it, and would fain make it the general rule among all nations. "Who are the poor? What are they made for? What, indeed, but to toil and slave that men of education and good family may enjoy themselves? Out on the knaves for prating about their rights! A set of wily demagogues are stirring them up, because they get a living by agitation. Work them like horses, and feed them like dogs; and if they dare complain, send them to the prison or let them die in the workhouse." There is still too much of this wicked talk abroad, and, although the working classes have their faults, and many of them very grave and serious ones too, yet there is a race of men who habitually speak of them as if they were an inferior order of animals. God forgive the wretches who thus talk. They speak loftily. Their high heads, like tall chimneys, vomit black smoke. Big talk streams from them, their language is colossal, their magniloquence ridiculous. They are Sir Oracle in every case, they speak as from the judges' bench, and expect all the world to stand in awe of them.

**Verse 9.** *They set their mouth against the heavens.* Against God himself they aim their blasphemies. One would think, to hear them, that they were demigods themselves, and held their heads above the clouds, for they speak down upon other men as from a sublime elevation peculiar to themselves. Yet they might let God alone, for their pride will make them enemies enough without their
defying him. And their tongue walketh through the earth. Leisurely and habitually they traverse the whole world to find victims for their slander and abuse. Their tongue prowls in every corner far and near, and spares none. They affect to be universal censors, and are in truth perpetual vagrants. Like the serpent, they go nowhere without leaving their slime behind them; if there were another Eden to be found, its innocence and beauty would not preserve it from their filthy trail. They themselves are, beyond measure, worthy of all honour, and all the rest of mankind, except a few of their parasites, are knaves, fools, hypocrites, or worse. When these men's tongues are out for a walk, they are unhappy who meet them, for they push all travellers into the kennel: it is impossible altogether to avoid them, for in both hemispheres they take their perambulations, both on land and sea they make their voyages. The city is not free from them, and the village swarms with them. They waylay men in the king's highway, but they are able to hunt across country, too. Their whip has a long lash, and reaches both high and low.

**Verse 10.** Therefore his people return hither. God's people are driven to fly to his throne for shelter; the doggish tongues fetch home the sheep to the Shepherd. The saints come again, and again, to their Lord, laden with complaints on account of the persecutions which they endure from these proud and graceless men. And waters of a full cup are wrung out to them. Though beloved of God, they have to drain the bitter cup; their sorrows are as full as the wicked man's prosperity. It grieves them greatly to see the enemies of God so high, and themselves so low, yet the Lord does not alter his dispensations, but continues still to chasten his children, and indulge his foes. The medicine cup is not for rebels, but for those whom Jehovah Rophi loves.

**Verse 11.** And they say, How doth God know? Thus dare the ungodly speak. They flatter themselves that their oppressions and persecutions are unobserved of heaven. If there be a God, is he not too much occupied with other matters to know what is going on upon this world? So they console themselves if judgments be threatened. Boasting of their own knowledge, they yet dare to ask, Is there knowledge in the Most High? Well were they called foolish. A God, and not know? This is a solecism in language, a madness of thought. Such, however, is the acted insanity of the graceless theists of this age; theists in name, because avowed infidelity is disreputable, but atheists in practice beyond all question. I could not bring my mind to accept the rendering of many expositors by which this verse is referred to tried and perplexed saints. I am unable to conceive that such language could flow from their lips, even under the most depressing perplexities.
Verse 12. Behold, these are the ungodly, who prosper in the world. Look! See! Consider! Here is the standing enigma! The crux of Providence! The stumblingblock of faith! Here are the unjust rewarded and indulged, and that not for a day or an hour, but in perpetuity. From their youth up these men, who deserve perdition, revel in prosperity. They deserve to be hung in chains, and chains are hung about their necks; they are worthy to be chased from the world, and yet the world becomes all their own. Poor purblind sense cries, Behold this! Wonder, and be amazed, and make this square with providential justice, if you can. They increase in riches; or, strength. Both wealth and health are their dowry. No bad debts and bankruptcies weigh them down, but robbery and usury pile up their substance. Money runs to money, gold pieces fly in flocks; the rich grow richer, the proud grow prouder. Lord, how is this? Thy poor servants, who become yet poorer, and groan under their burdens, are made to wonder at thy mysterious ways.

Verse 13. Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain. Poor Asaph! he questions the value of holiness when its wages are paid in the coin of affliction. With no effect has he been sincere; no advantage has come to him through his purity, for the filthy hearted are exalted and fed on the fat of the land. Thus foolishly will the wisest of men argue, when faith is napping. Asaph was a seer, but he could not see when reason left him in the dark; even seers must have the sunlight of revealed truth to see by, or they grope like the blind. In the presence of temporal circumstances, the pure in heart may seem to have cleansed themselves altogether in vain, but we must not judge after the sight of the eyes. And washed my hands in innocency. Asaph had been as careful of his hands as of his heart; he had guarded his outer as well as his inner life, and it was a bitter thought that all of this was useless, and left him in even a worse condition than foul handed, black hearted worldlings. Surely the horrible character of the conclusion must have helped to render it untenable; it could not be so while God was God. It smelt too strong of a lie to be tolerated long in the good man's soul; hence, in a verse or two, we see his mind turning in another direction.

Verse 14. For all the day long have I been plagued. He was smitten from the moment he woke to the time he went to bed. His griefs were not only continued, but renewed with every opening day. And chastened every morning. This was a vivid contrast to the lot of the ungodly. There were crowns for the reprobates and crosses for the elect. Strange that the saints should sigh and the sinners sing. Rest was given to the disturbers, and yet peace was denied to the peace makers. The downcast seer was in a muse and a maze. The affairs of mankind appeared to him to be in a fearful tangle; how could it be permitted by
a just ruler that things should be so turned upside down, and the whole course of justice dislocated.

Verse 15. If I say, I will speak thus. It is not always wise to speak one's thoughts; if they remain within, they will only injure ourselves; but once uttered, their mischief may be great. From such a man as the psalmist, the utterance which his discontent suggested would have been a heavy blow and deep discouragement to the whole brotherhood. He dared not, therefore, come to such a resolution, but paused, and would not decide to declare his feelings. It was well, for in his case second thoughts were by far the best. I should offend against the generation of thy children. I should scandalise them, grieve them, and perhaps cause them to offend also. We ought to look at the consequences of our speech to all others, and especially to the church of God. Woe unto the man by whom offence cometh! Rash, undigested, ill considered speech, is responsible for much of the heart burning and trouble in the churches. Would to God that, like Asaph, men would bridle their tongues. Where we have any suspicion of being wrong, it is better to be silent; it can do no harm to be quiet, and it may do serious damage to spread abroad our hastily formed opinions. To grieve the children of God by appearing to act perfidiously and betray the truth, is a sin so heinous, that if the consciences of heresy mongers were not seared as with a hot iron, they would not be so glib as they are to publish abroad their novelties. Expressions which convey the impression that the Lord acts unjustly or unkindly, especially if they fall from the lips of men of known character and experience, are as dangerous as firebrands among stubble; they are used for blasphemous purposes by the ill disposed; and the timid and trembling are sure to be cast down thereby, and to find reason for yet deeper distress of soul.

Verse 16. When I thought to know this, it was too painful for me. The thought of scandalising the family of God he could not bear, and yet his inward thoughts seethed and fermented, and caused an intolerable anguish within. To speak might have relieved one sorrow, but, as it would have created another, he forbore so dangerous a remedy; yet this did not remove the first pangs, which grew even worse and worse, and threatened utterly to overwhelm him. A smothered grief is hard to endure. The triumph of conscience which compels us to keep the wolf hidden beneath our own garments, does not forbid its gnawing at our vitals. Suppressed fire in the bones rages more fiercely than if it could gain a vent at the mouth. Those who know Asaph's dilemma will pity him as none others can.

Verse 17. Until I went into the sanctuary of God. His mind entered the eternity where God dwells as in a holy place, he left the things of sense for the things invisible, his heart gazed within the veil, he stood where the thrice holy God
stands. Thus he shifted his point of view, and apparent disorder resolved itself into harmony. The motions of the planets appear most discordant from this world which is itself a planet; they appear as "progressive, retrograde, and standing still; "but could we fix our observatory in the sun, which is the centre of the system, we should perceive all the planets moving in perfect circle around the head of the great solar family. Then understood I their end. He had seen too little to be able to judge; a wider view changed his judgment; he saw with his mind's enlightened eye the future of the wicked, and his soul was in debate no longer as to the happiness of their condition. No envy gnaws now at his heart, but a holy horror both of their impending doom, and of their present guilt, fills his soul. He recoils from being dealt with in the same manner as the proud sinners, whom just now he regarded with admiration.

Verse 18. The Psalmist's sorrow had culminated, not in the fact that the ungodly prospered, but that God had arranged it so: had it happened by mere chance, he would have wondered, but could not have complained; but how the arranger of all things could so dispense his temporal favours, was the vexatious question. Here, to meet the case, he sees that the divine hand purposely placed these men in prosperous and eminent circumstances, not with the intent to bless them but the very reverse. Surely thou didst set them in slippery places. Their position was dangerous, and, therefore, God did not set his friends there but his foes alone. He chose, in infinite love, a rougher but safer standing for his own beloved. Thou castedst them down into destruction. The same hand which led them up to their Tarpeian rock, hurled them down from it. They were but elevated by judicial arrangement for the fuller execution of their doom. Eternal punishment will be all the more terrible in contrast with the former prosperity of those who are ripening for it. Taken as a whole, the case of the ungodly is horrible throughout; and their worldly joy instead of diminishing the horror, actually renders the effect the more awful, even as the vivid lightning amid the storm does not brighten but intensify the thick darkness which lowers around. The ascent to the fatal gallows of Haman was an essential ingredient in the terror of the sentence—"hang him thereon." If the wicked had not been raised so high they could not have fallen so low.

Verse 19. How are they brought into desolation, as in a moment! This is an exclamation of godly wonder at the suddenness and completeness of the sinners' overthrow. Headlong is their fall; without warning, without escape, without hope of future restoration! Despite their golden chains, and goodly apparel, death stays not for manners but hurries them away; and stern justice unbribed by their wealth hurls them into destruction. They are utterly consumed with terrors. They have neither root nor branch left. They cease to exist among
the sons of men, and, in the other world, there is nothing left of their former
glory. Like blasted trees, consumed by the lightning, they are monuments of
vengeance; like the ruins of Babylon they reveal, in the greatness of their
desolation, the judgments of the Lord against all those who unduly exalt
themselves. The momentary glory of the graceless is in a moment effaced, their
loftiness is in an instant consumed.

Verse 20. As a dream when one awaketh; so, O Lord, when thou
awakest, thou shalt despise their image. They owe their existence and prosperity to the
forbearance of God, which the psalmist compares to a sleep; but as a dream
vanishes so soon as a man awakes, so the instant the Lord begins to exercise his
justice and call men before him, the pomp and prosperity of proud transgressors
shall melt away. When God awakes to judgment, they who despise him shall be
despised; they are already "such stuff as dreams are made of, "but then the
baseless fabric shall not leave a wreck behind. Let them flaunt the little hour,
poor unsubstantial sons of dreams; they will soon be gone; when the day
breaketh, and the Lord awake as a mighty man out of his sleep, they will vanish
away. Who cares for the wealth of dreamland? Who indeed but fools? Lord,
leave us not to the madness which covets unsubstantial wealth, and ever teach
us thine own true wisdom.

Verse 21. The holy poet here reviews his inward struggle and awards himself
censure for his folly. His pain had been intense; he says, Thus my heart was
grieved. It was a deep seated sorrow, and one which penetrated his inmost
being. Alexander reads it, "My heart is soured." His spirit had become
embittered; he had judged in a harsh, crabbed, surly manner. He had become
atrabilious, full of black bile, melancholy, and choleric; he had poisoned his
own life at the fountain head, and made all its streams to be bitter as gall. And I
was pricked in my reins. He was as full of pain as a man afflicted with renal
disease; he had pierced himself through with many sorrows; his hard thoughts
were like so many calculi in his kidneys; he was utterly wretched and
woebegone, and all through his own reflections. O miserable philosophy, which
stretches the mind on the rack, and breaks it on the wheel! O blessed faith,
which drives away the inquisitors, and sets the captives free!

Verse 22. So foolish was I. He, though a saint of God, had acted as if he had
been one of the fools whom God abhorreth. Had he not even envied them?—
and what is that but to aspire to be like them? The wisest of men have enough
folly in them to ruin them unless grace prevents. And ignorant. He had acted as
if he knew nothing, had babbled like an idiot, had uttered the very drivel of a
witless loon. He did not know how sufficiently to express his sense of his own
fatuity. I was as a beast before thee. Even in God's presence he had been
brutish, and worse than a beast. As the grass eating ox has but this present life, and can only estimate things thereby, and by the sensual pleasure which they afford, even so had the psalmist judged happiness by this mortal life, by outward appearances, and by fleshly enjoyments. Thus he had, for the time, renounced the dignity of an immortal spirit, and, like a mere animal, judged after the sight of the eyes. We should be very loath to call an inspired man a beast, and yet, penitence made him call himself so; nay, he uses the plural, by way of emphasis, and as if he were worse than any one beast. It was but an evidence of his true wisdom that he was so deeply conscious of his own folly. We see how bitterly good men bewail mental wanderings; they make no excuses for themselves, but set their sins in the pillory, and cast the vilest reproaches upon them. O for grace to detest the very appearance of evil!

**Verse 23.** Nevertheless I am continually with thee. He does not give up his faith, though he confesses his folly. Sin may distress us, and yet we may be in communion with God. It is sin beloved and delighted in which separates us from the Lord, but when we bewail it heartily, the Lord will not withdraw from us. What a contrast is here in this and the former verse! He is as a beast, and yet continually with God. Our double nature, as it always causes conflict, so is it a continuous paradox: the flesh allies us with the brutes, and the spirit affiliates us to God. Thou hast holden me by my right hand. With love dost thou embrace me, with honour ennable me, with power uphold me. He had almost fallen, and yet was always upheld. He was a riddle to himself, as he had been a wonder unto many. This verse contains the two precious mercies of communion and upholding, and as they were both given to one who confessed himself a fool, we also may hope to enjoy them.

**Verse 24.** Thou shalt guide me with thy counsel. I have done with choosing my own way, and trying to pick a path amid the jungle of reason. He yielded not only the point in debate, but all intentions of debating, and he puts his hand into that of the great Father, asking to be led, and agreeing to follow. Our former mistakes are a blessing, when they drive us to this. The end of our own wisdom is the beginning of our being wise. With Him is counsel, and when we come to him, we are sure to be led aright. And afterward. "Afterward!" Blessed word. We can cheerfully put up with the present, when we foresee the future. What is around us just now is of small consequence, compared with afterward. Receive me to glory. Take me up into thy splendour of joy. Thy guidance shall conduct me to this matchless terminus. Glory shall I have, and thou thyself wilt admit me into it. As Enoch was not, for God took him, so all the saints are taken up—received up into glory.
Verse 25. *Whom have I in heaven but thee?* Thus, then, he turns away from the glitter which fascinated him to the true gold which was his real treasure. He felt that his God was better to him than all the wealth, health, honour, and peace, which he had so much envied in the worldling; yea, He was not only better than all on earth, but more excellent than all in heaven. He bade all things else go, that he might be filled with his God. And there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee. No longer should his wishes ramble, no other object should tempt them to stray; henceforth, the Ever living One should be his all in all.

Verse 26. *My flesh and my heart faileth.* They had failed him already, and he had almost fallen; they would fail him in the hour of death, and, if he relied upon them, they would fail him at once. But God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. His God would not fail him, either as protection or a joy. His heart would be kept up by divine love, and filled eternally with divine glory. After having been driven far out to sea, Asaph casts anchor in the old port. We shall do well to follow his example. There is nothing desirable save God; let us, then, desire only him. All other things must pass away; let our hearts abide in him, who alone abideth for ever.

Verse 27. *For, lo, they that are far from thee shall perish.* We must be near God to live; to be far off by wicked works is death. Thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. If we pretend to be the Lord's servants, we must remember that he is a jealous God, and requires spiritual chastity from all his people. Offences against conjugal vows are very offensive, and all sins against God have the same element in them, and they are visited with the direst punishments. Mere heathens, who are far from God, perish in due season; but those who, being his professed people, act unfaithfully to their profession, shall come under active condemnation, and be crushed beneath his wrath. We read examples of this in Israel's history; may we never create fresh instances in our own persons.

Verse 28. *But it is good for me to draw near to God.* Had he done so at first he would not have been immersed in such affliction; when he did so he escaped from his dilemma, and if he continued to do so he would not fall into the same evil again. The greater our nearness to God, the less we are affected by the attractions and distractions of earth. Access into the most holy place is a great privilege, and a cure for a multitude of ills. It is good for all saints, it is good for me in particular; it is always good, and always will be good for me to approach the greatest good, the source of all good, even God himself. I have put my trust in the Lord God. He dwells upon the glorious name of the Lord Jehovah, and avows it as the basis of his faith. Faith is wisdom; it is the key of enigmas, the clue of mazes, and the pole star of pathless seas. Trust and you
Psalm 73:14

will know. That I may declare all thy works. He who believes shall understand, and so be able to teach. Asaph hesitated to utter his evil surmisings, but he has no diffidence in publishing abroad a good matter. God's ways are the more admired the more they are known. He who is ready to believe the goodness of God shall always see fresh goodness to believe in, and he who is willing to declare the works of God shall never be silent for lack of wonders to declare.

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EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. The Seventy-third Psalm is a very striking record of the mental struggle which an eminently pious Jew underwent, when he contemplated the respective conditions of the righteous and the wicked. Fresh from the conflict, he somewhat abruptly opens the Psalm with the confident enunciation of the truth of which victory over doubt had now made him more and more intelligently sure than ever, that *God is good to Israel, even to such as are of a clean heart.* And then he relates the most fatal shock which his faith has received, when he contrasted the prosperity of the wicked, who, though they proudly contemned God and man, prospered in the world and increased in riches, with his own lot, who, though he had cleansed his heart and washed his hands in innocency, had been *plagued all the day long and chastened every morning.* The place where his doubts were removed and his tottering faith reestablished, was the sanctuary of God. God himself was the teacher. What, then, did he teach? By what divinely imparted considerations was the psalmist reassured? Whatever is the proper rendering of Ps 73:4; whether, *There are no sorrows (tending) to their death,* or, *There are no sorrows until their death,*—their whole life to the very last is one unchequered course of happiness—that verse conveys to us the psalmist's mistaken estimate of the prosperity of the wicked, before he went unto the sanctuary of God. The true estimate, at which he afterwards arrived, is found in Ps 73:18-20. Now, admitting (what, by the way, is somewhat difficult of belief, inasmuch as the sudden and fearful temporal destruction of all or even the most prosperous, cannot be made out) that the end of these men means only and always their end in this world, we come to the conclusion that, in the case of the wicked, this Psalm does not plainly and undeniably teach that punishment awaits them after death; but only that, in estimating their condition, it is necessary, in order to vindicate the justice of God, to take in their whole career, and set over against their great prosperity the sudden and fearful reverses and destruction which they frequently encounter. But, in turning to the other side of the comparison, the case of the righteous, we are not met by the thought, that as the prosperity of the wicked is but the preparation for their ruin, the raising higher the tower that
the fall may be the greater, so the adversity of the godly is but an introduction
to worldly wealth and honour. That though is not foreign to the Old Testament
writers. "Evildoers shall be cut off; "writes one of them, "but those who wait
upon the Lord, they shall inherit the earth. For yet a little while, and the wicked
shall not be: yea, thou shalt diligently consider his place, and it shall not be. But
the meek shall inherit the earth; and shall delight themselves in the abundance
of peace." Ps 37:9-11. But it is not so much as hinted at here. The daily
chastening may continue, flesh and heart may fail, but God is good to Israel
notwithstanding: he is their portion, their guide, their help while they live, and
he will take them to his glorious presence when they die. Nevertheless I am
continually with thee: thou hast holden me by my right hand. Thou shalt guide
me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. The New Testament
has nothing higher or more spiritual than this. The reference of the last clause
to happiness after death is, I believe, generally acknowledged by Jewish
commentators. They left it to the candour of Christian expositors to doubt or
deny it. Thomas Thompson Perowne, in "The Essential Coherence of the Old
and New Testaments." 1858.

Whole Psalm. In Psalm Seventy-three the soul looks out, and reasons on what
it sees there; namely, successful wickedness and suffering righteousness. What
is the conclusion? "I have cleansed my heart in vain." So much for looking
about. In Psalm Seventy-seven the soul looks in, and reasons on what it finds
there. What is the conclusion? "Hath God forgotten to be gracious?"
So much for looking in. Where, then, should we look? Look up, straight up, and believe
what you see there. What will be the conclusion? You will understand the
"end" of man, and trace the "way" of God. From "Things New and Old, a
Monthly Magazine." 1858.

Whole Psalm. In this Psalm, the psalmist (Asaph) relates the great difficulty
which existed in his own mind, from the consideration of the wicked. He
observes (Ps 73:2-3), As for me, my feet were almost gone; my steps had well
nigh slipped. For I was envious at the foolish, when I saw the prosperity of the
wicked. In the fourth and following verses he informs us what, in the wicked,
was his temptation. In the first place, he observed, that they were prosperous,
and all things went well with them. He then observed their behaviour in their
prosperity, and the use which they made of it; and that God, notwithstanding
such abuse, continued their prosperity. Then he tells us by what means he was
helped out of this difficulty, viz., by going into the sanctuary (Ps 73:16-17),
and proceeds to inform us what considerations they were which helped him,
viz.,—
1. The consideration of the *miserable end* of wicked men. However they prosper for the present, yet they come to a woeful end at last (Ps 73:18-20).

2. The consideration of the *blessed end* of the saints. Although the saints, while they live, may be afflicted, yet they come to a happy end at last (Ps 73:21-24).

3. The consideration that the godly have a much *better portion* than the wicked, even though they have no other portion but God; as in Ps 73:25-26.

Though the wicked are in prosperity, and are not in trouble as other men; yet the godly, though in affliction, are in a state infinitely better, because they have God for their portion. They need desire nothing else: he that hath God hath all. Thus the psalmist professes the sense and apprehension which he had of things: *Whom have I in heaven but thee? and there is none upon earth that I desire beside thee.* In the twenty-fourth verse the psalmist takes notice how the saints are happy in God, both when they are in this world and also when they are taken to another. They are blessed in God in this world, in that *he guides them by his counsel;* and when he takes them out of it they are still happy, in that *he receives them to glory.* This probably led him to declare that he desired *no other portion,* either in this world or in that to come, either in heaven or upon earth. *Jonathan Edwards.*

**Verse 1.** *Truly:* it's but a particle; but the smallest filings of gold are gathered up. Little pearls are of great price. And this small particle is not of small use, being rightly applied and improved. First, take it (as our translators gave it us) as *a note of asseveration.* *Truly.* It's a word of faith, opposite to the psalmist's sense and Satan's injections. WHATSOEVER sense sees or feels, WHATSOEVER Satan insinuates and says; yet precious faith with confidence asserts, *Truly, verily God is good.* He is not only good in word, but in deed also. Not only seemingly good, but certainly good. Secondly, consider it as *an adversative particle,* *Yet,* so our old translation. Ainsworth renders it, *yet surely;* taking in the former and this together. And then the sense runs thus: How ill soever things go in the world, how ill soever it faires with God's church and people amongst men, *yet God is good* to Israel. Thirdly, some conceive that the word carries *admiration.* Oh, how good is God to Israel. Where expressions and apprehensions fail, there the psalmist takes up God's providence with admiration. Oh, how wonderfully, how transcendently good is God to Israel! This *yet* (as I conceive) hath a threefold reference to the body of the Psalm. For as interpreters observe, though these words are set in the beginning, yet they suggest the conclusion of the psalmist's conflict. And the psalmist seems to begin somewhat abruptly. *Yet God is good.* But having filled his thoughts with his former follies and fears, and now seeing himself in a safe condition both for the present and the future,
he is full of confidence and comfort; and that which was the strongest and chiefest in his heart now breaks our first: Yet God is good.

1. This yet relates unto his sufferings, Ps 73:14: All the day long have I been plagued, and chastened every morning. Notwithstanding the variety and frequency of the saint's sufferings, yet God is good. Though sorrow salutes them every morning at their first awaking, and trouble attends them to bed at night, yet God is good. Though temptations many and terrible make batteries and breeches upon their spirits, yet God is good to Israel.

2. This yet reflects upon his sinning, the fretting and wrangling of his distempered heart (Ps 73:2-3,21). Though sinful motions do mutiny in the soul against God's wise administration, though there be foolish, proud quarrelling with divine providence, and inexcusable distrust of his faithful promises; though fretfulness at others prosperity and discontent at their own adversity, yet God is good. Israel's sinful distempers cause not the Almighty to change the course of his accustomed goodness. While corruptions are kept from breaking out into scandal, while the soul contends against them, and is humbled for them (as the psalmist was), this conclusion must be maintained: yet God is good.

3. This yet looks back upon his misgivings. There had been distrustful despondency upon the good man's heart. For from both the premises (viz., his sufferings and sinning) he had inferred this conclusion, Ps 73:13, Verily I have cleansed my heart in vain, and washed my hands in innocency. As if he had said, "I have kept fasts, observed Sabbaths, heard sermons, made prayers, received sacraments, given alms, avoided sins, resisted temptations, withstood lusts, appeared for Christ and his cause and servants in vain": yea, his heart had added an asseveration (verily) to this faithless opinion, but now he is of another mind: Yet God is good. The administrations of God are not according to the sad surmises of his people's misgiving hearts. For, though they through diffidence are apt to give up their holy labours as lost, and all their conscientious care and carriage as utterly cast away; yet God is good to Israel. Simeon Ash, in a Sermon entitled "God's Incomparable Goodness unto Israel." 1647.

Verse 1. David opens the Psalm abruptly, and from this we learn what is worthy of particular notice, that, before he broke forth into this language, his mind had been agitated with many doubts and conflicting suggestions. As a brave and valiant champion, he had been exercised in very painful struggles and temptations; but, after long and arduous exertion, he at length succeeded in shaking off all perverse imaginations, and came to the conclusion that yet God is gracious to his servants, and the faithful guardian of their welfare. Thus these words contain a tacit contrast between the unhallowed imaginations suggested
Psalm 73

Verse 1. (first clause).

Yet sure the gods are good: I would think so,
If they would give me leave!
But virtue in distress, and vice in triumph,
Make atheists of mankind. Dryden.

Verse 1. God is good. There is a beauty in the name appropriated by the Saxon nations to the Deity, unequalled except by his most reverential Hebrew appellation. They called him "GOD," which is literally "THE GOOD." The same word thus signifying the Deity, and his most endearing quality. Turner.

Verse 1. God is good. Let the devil and his instruments say what they will to the contrary, I will never believe them; I have said it before, and I see no reason to reverse my sentence: Truly God is good. Though sometimes he may hide his face for awhile, yet he doth that in faithfulness and love; there is kindness in his very scourges, and love bound up in his rods; he is good to Israel: do but mark it first or last: "The true Israelite, in whom there is no guile, shall be refreshed by his Saviour." The Israelite that wrestles with tears with God, and values his love above the whole world, that will not be put off without his Father's blessing, shall have it with a witness: "He shall reap in joy though he may at present sow in tears. Even to such as are of a clean heart." The false hearted hypocrite, indeed, that gives God only his tongue and lip, cap and knee, but reserves his heart and love for sin and the world, that hath much of compliment, but nothing of affection and reality, why let such a one never expect, while in such a state, to taste those reviving comforts that I have been treating of; while he drives such a trade, he must not expect God's company. James Janeway. 1636-1674.

Verse 1. Even to such as are of a clean heart. Purity of heart is the characteristic note of God's people. Heart purity denominates us the Israel of God; it makes us of Israel indeed; "but all are not Israel which are of Israel." Ro 9:6. Purity of heart is the jewel which is hung only upon the elect. As chastity
Psalm 73

Verse 2. But as for me. Literally, it is, And I, which ought to be read with emphasis; for David means that those temptations which cast an affront upon the honour of God, and overwhelm faith, not only assail the common class of men, or those who are endued only with some small measure of the fear of God, but that he himself, who ought to have profited above all others in the school of God, had experienced his own share of them. By thus setting himself forth as an example, he designed the more effectually to arouse and incite us to take great heed to ourselves. John Calvin.

Verse 2. Let such also as fear God and begin to look aside on the things of this world, know it will be hard even for them to hold out in faith and in the fear of God in time of trial. Remember the example of David, he was a man that had spent much time in travelling towards heaven; yet, looking but a little aside upon the glittering show of this world, had very near lost his way, his feet were almost gone, his steps had well nigh slipped. Edward Elton. 1620.

Verse 2. He tells us that his feet were almost gone. The word signifies to bow, or bend under one. My steps had well nigh slipped, or poured out, kept not within their true bounds; but like water poured out and not confined, runs aside. Though these expressions be metaphorical, and seemingly dark and cloudy, yet they clearly represent unto us this truth, that his understanding was misguided, his judgment was corrupt, his affections disordered, turbulent, and
guilty of too great a passion; and this, the consequence (Ps 73:22 in which he acknowledges himself ignorant, foolish, and brutish) do sufficiently evidence. Our understanding and judgment may well bear the comparison for feet, for as the one, in our motion, supports the body, so the other, in human actions and all employments, underprops the soul. The affections, also, are as paths and steps; as these of the feet, so these are the prints and expressions of the judgment and mind. Edward Parry, in "David Restored." 1660.

**Verse 2.** *Almost gone.* There is to be noted that the prophet said he was almost gone, and not altogether. Here is the presence, providence, strength, safeguard, and keeping of man by Almighty God, marvellously set forth. That although we are tempted and brought even to the very point to perpetrate and do all mischief, yet he stays us and keeps us, that the temptation shall not overcome us. John Hooper. 1495-1555.

**Verse 2-14.** But the prosperity of wicked and unjust men, both in public and in private life, who, though not leading a happy life in reality, are yet thought to do so in common opinion, being praised improperly in the works of poets, and all kinds of books, may lead you—and I am not surprised at your mistake—to a belief that the gods care nothing for the affairs of men. These matters disturb you. Being led astray by foolish thoughts, and yet not able to think ill of the gods, you have arrived at your present state of mind, so as to think that the gods to indeed exist, but that they despise and neglect human affairs. Plato.

**Verse 8.** *They are corrupt.* Prosperity, in an irreligious heart, breeds corruption, which from thence is emitted by the breath in conversation, to infect and taint the minds of others. George Horne.

**Verse 8.** *They speak wickedly concerning oppression.* Indeed, we see that wicked men, after having for some time got everything to prosper according to their desires, cast off all shame, and are at no pains to conceal themselves, when about to commit iniquity, but loudly proclaim their own turpitude. "What!" they will say, "is it not in my power to deprive you of all that you possess, and even to cut your throat?" Robbers, it is true, can do the same thing; but then they hide themselves for fear. These giants, or rather inhuman monsters, of whom David speaks, on the contrary not only imagine that they are exempted from subjection to any law, but, unmindful of their own weakness, foam furiously, as if there were no distinction between good and evil, between right and wrong. John Calvin.

**Verse 15.** *I should offend,* etc. That is, I do God's church a great deal of injury, which hath always been under afflictions, if I think or say, that all her piety
hath been without hope, or her hope without effect. Others understand it to mean, I deceive the generation, viz., I propound a false doctrine unto them, which is apt to seduce them. Others, "behold the generation," etc.; that is to say, notwithstanding all afflictions, it is certain that thou art a Father to the Church only; which is sufficient to make me judge well of these afflictions; I have done ill, and confess I have erred in this my rash judgment. John Diodati.

Verse 17. By the sanctuaries of God some, even among the Hebrews, understand the celestial mansions in which the spirits of the just and angels dwell; as if David had said, This was a painful thing in my sight, until I came to acknowledge in good earnest that men are not created to flourish for a short time in this world, and to luxuriate in pleasures while in it, but that their condition here is that of pilgrims, whose aspirations, during their earthly pilgrimage, should be towards heaven. I readily admit that no man can form a right judgment of the providence of God but he who elevates his mind above the earth; but it is more simple and natural to understand the word sanctuary as denoting celestial doctrine. As the book of the law was laid up in the sanctuary, from which the oracles of heaven were to be obtained, that is to say, the declaration of the will of God; and as this was the true way of acquiring profitable instruction, David very properly puts entering into the sanctuaries for coming to the school of God, as if his meaning were this: Until God become my schoolmaster, and until I learn by his word what otherwise my mind, when I come to consider the government of the world, cannot comprehend, I stop short all at once, and understand nothing about the subject. When, therefore, we are here told that men are unfit for contemplating the arrangements of divine providence, until they obtain wisdom elsewhere than from themselves, how can we attain to wisdom but by submissively receiving what God teaches us, both by his word and by his Holy Spirit? David by the word sanctuary alludes to the external manner of teaching, which God had appointed among his ancient people; but along with the word he comprehends the secret illumination of the Holy Spirit. John Calvin.

Verse 17. The joy of a wicked man is imperfect in itself, because it is not so as it seems to be, or it is not sincerely so. It is not pure gold, but alloyed and adulterated with sorrow. It may look well to one that is blear eyed, but it will not pass for good to one that looks well to it. Let any one consider and weigh it well in the balance of the sanctuary, whither David went to fetch the scales for the same purpose, and he will find it too light by many grains. It is not so inside as it is without; no more than a mud wall that is plastered with white, or a stinking grave covered with a glorious monument. It is upouloz, looking fair and smooth, like true joy; as a wounded member that is healed too soon (and
you know how God by the prophet complains of the hurt of his people that was slightly healed, Jer 6:14), and it looks as well as any other part of the body; but, underneath, there is still a sore, which festers so much more, and is the worse, for that the outside is so well. Where pretences, and cloaks, and disguises are the fairest; there the knavery, and the poison, and the evil concealed are usually foulest. Zachary Bogan (1625-1659), in "Meditations of the Mirth of a Christian Life."

Verse 17. Then understood I. There is a famous story of providence in Bradwardine to this purpose. A certain hermit that was much tempted, and was utterly unsatisfied concerning the providence of God, resolved to journey from place to place till he met with some who could satisfy him. An angel in the shape of a man joined himself with him as he was journeying, telling him that he was sent from God to satisfy him in his doubts of providence. The first night they lodged at the house of a very holy man, and they spent their time in discourses of heaven, and praises of God, and were entertained with a great deal of freedom and joy. In the morning, when they departed, the angel took with him a great cup of gold. The next night they came to the house of another holy man, who made them very welcome, and exceedingly rejoiced in their society and discourse; the angel, notwithstanding, at his departure killed an infant in the cradle, which was his only son, he having been for many years before childless, and, therefore, was a very fond father of this child. The third night they came to another house, where they had like free entertainment as before. The master of the family had a steward whom he highly prized, and told them how happy he accounted himself in having such a faithful servant. Next morning he sent his steward with them part of their way, to direct them therein. As they were going over the bridge the angel flung the steward into the river and drowned him. The last night they came to a very wicked man's house, where they had very untoward entertainment, yet the angel, next morning, gave him the cup of gold. All this being done, the angel asked the hermit whether he understood those things? He answered, his doubts of providence were increased, not resolved, for he could not understand why he should deal so hardly with those holy men, who received them with so much love and joy, and yet give such a gift to that wicked man who used them so unworthily. The angel said, I will now expound these things unto you. The first house where we came the master of it was a holy man; yet, drinking in that cup every morning, it being too large, it did somewhat unfit him for holy duties, though not so much that others or himself did perceive it; so I took it away, since it is better for him to lose the cup of gold than his temperance. The master of the family where we lay the second night was a man given much to prayer and meditation, and spent much time in holy duties, and was very liberal to the poor all the time
he was childless; but as soon as he had a son he grew so fond of it, and spent so much time in playing with it, that he exceedingly neglected his former holy exercise, and gave but little to the poor, thinking he could never lay up enough for his child; therefore I have taken the infant to heaven, and left him to serve God better upon earth. The steward whom I did drown had plotted to kill his master the night following; and as to that wicked man to whom I gave the cup of gold, he was to have nothing in the other world, I therefore gave him something in this, which, notwithstanding, will prove a snare to him, for he will be more intemperate; and "let him that is filthy be filthy still." The truth of this story I affirm not, but the moral is very good, for it shows that God is an indulgent Father to the saints when he most afflicts them; and that when he sets the wicked on high he sets them also in slippery places, and their prosperity is their ruin. Pr 1:32. Thomas White, in "A Treatise of the Power of Godliness." 1658.

Verse 17. Their end. Providence is often mysterious and a source of perplexity to us. Walking in Hyde Park one day, I saw a piece of paper on the grass. I picked it up; it was a part of a letter; the beginning was wanting, the end was not there; I could make nothing of it. Such is providence. You cannot see beginning or end, only a part. When you can see the whole, then the mystery will be unveiled. Thomas Jones. 1871.

Verse 18. Slippery places. The word in the original signifies slick, or smooth, as ice or polished marble, and is from thence by a metaphor used for flattery. Hence, Abenezra renders it, In locis adulationis posuisti eos: thou hast set them in places of flattery. Edward Parry.

Verse 18. They are but exalted, as the shellfish by the eagle, according to the naturalist, to be thrown down on some rock and devoured. Their most glorious prosperity is but like a rainbow, which showeth itself for a little time in all its gaudy colours, and then vanisheth. The Turks, considering the unhappy end of their viziers, use this proverb, "He that is in the greatest office is but a statue of glass." Wicked men walk on glass or ice, thou hast set them in slippery places; on a sudden their feet slip—they fall, and break their necks. George Swinnock.

Verses 18, 20. Their banqueting house is very slippery, and the feast itself a mere dream. Thomas Adams.

Verse 19. They are utterly consumed with terrors. Their destruction is not only sudden, but entire; it is like the breaking in pieces of a potter's vessel, a sherd of which cannot be gathered up and used; or like the casting of a millstone into the sea, which will never rise more; and this is done with terrors, either by terrible
judgments inflicted on them from without, or with terrors inwardly seizing
upon their minds and consciences, as at the time of temporal calamities, or at
death, and certainly at the judgment, when the awful sentence will be
pronounced upon them. See Job 27:20. John Gill.

Verse 19. If thou shouldest live the longest measure of time that any man hath
done, and spend all that time in nothing but pleasures (which no man ever did
but met with some crosses, afflictions, or sicknesses), but at the evening of this
life, must take up thy lodging in the "everlasting burnings" and "devouring fire"
(Isa 30:14); were those pleasures answerable to these everlasting burnings? An
English merchant that lived at Dantzic, now with God, told us this story, and it
was true. A friend of his (a merchant also), upon what grounds I know not,
went to a convent, and dined with some friars. His entertainment was very
noble. After he had dined and seen all, the merchant fell to commending their
pleasant lives: "Yea, "said one of the friars to him, "we live gallantly indeed,
had we anybody to go to hell for us when we die." Giles Firmin (1617-1617),
in "The Real Christian, or, A Treatise of Effectual Calling."

Verse 20. As a dream when one awaketh. The conception is rather subtle, but
seems to have been shrewdly penetrated by Shakespeare, who makes the
Plantagenet prince (affecting, perhaps, the airs of a ruler in God's stead) say to
his discarded favourite—

"I have long dreamt of such a kind of man,
So surfeit swelled, so old and so profane,
But being awake I do not despise my dream."
—Henry IV.

For as it is the inertness of the sleeper's will and intellect that gives reality to
the shapes and figments, the very sentiments and purposes that throng his mind;
so it seems, as it were, to be the negligence and oversight of the Moral Ruler
that makes to prosper the wicked or inane life and influence. So Paul says, in
reference to the polytheism of the ancient world: "and the times of this

Verse 21. Thus my heart was grieved, etc. Two similitudes are used, by which
his grief and indignation or zeal are described. First, he says his heart boiled
over like yeast. The passion which was stirred up in his thoughts he compares
to the yeast which inflates the whole mass, and causes it to swell or boil over...
The other simile is taken from the internal pains which calculi produce; I was
pricked in my reins. They who have felt them are aware of the torture, and there
is no need for a long description. It signifies that his great pain was mingled with indignation, and that this came fresh upon him as often as he looked upon the prosperity of the ungodly. Mollerus.

Verse 21. Reins. Before all the other intestines there are the kidneys (twylb, nefroi), placed on both sides of the lumbar vertebrae on the hinder wall of the abdomen, of which the Scripture makes such frequent mention, and in the most psychically significant manner. It brings the most tender and the most inward experience of a manifold kind into association with them. When man is suffering most deeply within, he is pricked in his kidneys ("reins"). When fretting affliction overcomes him, his kidneys are cloven asunder (Job 16:13; compare La 3:13); when he rejoices profoundly, they exult (Pr 23:16); when he feels himself very penetratingly warned, they chasten him (Ps 16:7); when he very earnestly longs, they are consumed away with his body (Job 19:27). As the omniscient and all penetrating knower of the most secret hidden things of man, God is frequently called (from Ps 7:10 to the Apocalypse) the Trier of the hearts and reins; and of the ungodly it is said, that God is far from their reins (Jer 12:2), that is, that he, being withdrawn back into himself, allows not himself to be perceived by them. Franz Delitzsch.

Verse 22. So foolish was I, and ignorant, etc. Is not a cavilling spirit at the Lord's dispensations bad, both in its roots and fruits? What are the roots of it but (1) ignorance; (2) pride, this lifteth up (Heb 2:4); (3) impatience, or want of waiting on God to see the issues of matters; so in Jon 4:8-11; (4) forgetfulness who the Lord is, and who man is that grumbles at his Maker, La 3:39, Ro 9:20. And as for the fruits, they are none of the best, but bad enough. Men are ready to flag in duty, yea, to throw it off, Ro 9:13, and Mal 3:14; yea, in the way to blaspheme God; see Job 2:9 Mal 3:13 Re 16:9. Thomas Crane, in "A Prospect of Divine Providence." 1672.

Verse 22. I was as a beast before thee. I permitted my mind to be wholly occupied with sensible things, like the beasts that perish, and did not look into a future state, nor did I consider nor submit to the wise designs of an unerring providence. Adam Clarke.

Verse 22. I was as a beast before thee. The original has in it no word of comparison; it ought to be rather translated, I was a very beast before thee, and we are told that the Hebrew word being in the plural number, gives it a peculiar emphasis, indicating some monstrous or astonishing beast. It is the word used by Job which is interpreted "behemoth,"—"I was a very monster before thee, "not only a beast, but one of the most brutish of all beasts, one of the most stubborn and intractable of all beasts. I think no man can go much lower than
this in humble confession. This is a description of human nature, and of the old man in the renewed saint which is not to be excelled. C.H.S.

**Verse 22.** Among the many arguments to prove the penman of the Scripture inspired by the Spirit of God, this is not the last and least—that the penmen of holy writ do record their own faults and the faults of their dearest and nearest relatives. For instance hereof, how coarsely doth David speak of himself: *So foolish was I, and ignorant: I was as a beast before thee.* And do you think that the face of St. Paul did look the more foul by being drawn with his own pencil, when he says, "I was a murderer, a persecutor, the greatest of sinners, "etc? This is not usual in the writings of human authors, who praise themselves to the utmost of what they could, and rather than lose a drop of applause they will lick it up with their own tongues. Tully writes very copiously in setting forth the good service which he did the Roman state, but not a word of his covetousness, of his affecting popular applause, of his pride and vain glory, of his mean extraction and the like. Whereas, clean contrary, Moses sets down the sin and punishment of his own sister, the idolatry and superstition of Aaron his brother, and his own fault in his preposterous striking the rock, for which he was excluded the land of Canaan. *Thomas Fuller.*

**Verse 23.** *I am continually with thee,* as a child the tender care of a parent; and as a parent, during my danger of falling in a slippery path, *"thou hast holden me, thy child, by my right hand." George Horne.*

**Verse 23.** *I am continually with thee.* He does not say that the Lord is continually with "his people," and holds, and guides, and receives them; he says, "He is continually with me; He holds me; He will guide me; He will receive me." The man saw, and felt, and rejoiced in his own personal interest in God's care and love. And he did this (mark), in the very midst of affliction, with "flesh and heart failing; "and in spite too of many wrong, and opposite, and sinful feelings, that had just passed away; under a conviction of his own sinfulness, and folly, and, as he calls it, even "brutishness." Oh! it is a blessed thing, brethren, to have a faith like this. *Charles Bradley.* 1838.

**Verse 23.** *I am still with thee.* The word translated *still* properly means *always,* and denotes that there had been no change or interruption in the previous relation of the parties. There is a perfectly analogous usage of the French *toujours.* *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

**Verse 24.** *Thou shalt guide me.* How are we to work our way in strange lands, if left entirely to our own resources? Hence it is, that so much is said in the Bible about guides, and that the Lord is called the guide of his people. They are
in a foreign land, a land of pits and snares; and, without a good guide, they will be sure to fall into the one, or be caught in the other. "This God is our God, for ever and ever," saith the psalmist; and not only so, but he condescends to "be our guide, and will be, even unto death" (Ps 48:14). Can we have a better guide? When a guide has been well recommended to us by those who have tried him, it is our wisdom to place ourselves unreservedly in his hands; and if he say our way lies to the right, it would show our folly to say we were determined to go to the left. John Gadsby.

Verse 24. Guide... receive. After conversion, God still works with us: he doth not only give grace, but actual help in the work of obedience: "He worketh all our works in us," Isa 26:12. His actual help is necessary to direct, quicken, strengthen, protect and defend us. In our way to heaven, we need not only a rule and path, but a guide. The rule is the law of God; but the guide is the Spirit of God. Thomas Manton.

Verse 24. Afterward. After all our toil in labour and duty, after all our crosses and afflictions, after all our doubts and fears that we should never receive it; after all the hiding of his face, and clouds and darkness that have passed over us; and after all our battles and fightings for it, oh, then how seasonably will the reception of this reward come in: Thou wilt guide me with thy counsel, and afterward receive me to glory. O blessed afterward; when all your work is done, when all your doubts and fears are over, and when all your battles are fought; then, O then, ye shall receive the reward. John Spalding.

Verse 24. Receive me to glory. Mendelssohn in his Beor, has perceived the probable allusion in this clause to the translation of Enoch. Of Enoch it is said, Ge 5:24, Myhla wta xql, "God took him." Here (Ps 73:24), the psalmist writes, ygzqt Kwbk. "Thou shalt take me to glory, or gloriously." In another (Ps 49:16) we read, ygzqy yk. "For he (God) shall take me." I can hardly think that the two latter expressions were written and read in their context by Jews without reference to the former. Thomas Thompson Perowne.

Verse 26. My flesh and my heart faileth; but God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. In which words we may take notice of five things.

1. The order inverted. When he mentions his malady he begins with the failing of the flesh, and then of the heart; but when he reports the relief he begins with that of the heart. From hence observe that when God works a cure in man (out of love) he begins with the heart—he cures that first. And there may be these reasons for it.
1. Because the sin of the heart is often the procuring cause of the malady of body and soul.

2. The body ever fares the better for the soul, but not the soul for the body.

3. The cure of the soul is the principal cure.

2. The suitableness of the remedy to the malady. Strength of heart for failing of heart, and a blessed portion for the failing of the flesh. Observe, that there is a proportionate remedy and relief in God for all maladies and afflictions whatsoever, both within and without. If your hearts fail you, God is strength; if your flesh fails you, or comforts fail you, God is a portion.

3. The prophet's interest; he calls God his portion. Observe, that true Israelites have an undoubted interest in God:—He is theirs.

4. The prophet's experience in the worst time. He finds this to be true, that when communicated strength fails, there is a never failing strength in God. Observe, that Christians' experiences of God's all sufficiency are then fullest and highest when created comforts fail them.

5. There is the prophet's improvement of his experience for support and comfort against future trials and temptations. Observe, that a saint's consideration of his experience of God's all sufficiency in times of exigency, is enough to bear up and to fortify his spirit against all trials and temptations for the time to come.

Thus you may improve the text by way of observation; but there are two principal doctrines to be insisted on. First, that God is the rock of a saint's heart, his strength, and his portion for ever. Secondly, that divine influence and relief passeth from God to his people when they stand in most need thereof.

First. God is the rock of a saint's heart, strength, and portion for ever. Here are two members or branches in this doctrine.

1. That God is the rock of a saint's heart, strength.

2. That God is the portion of a saint. Branch 1. God is the rock of a saint's heart, strength. He is not only strength, and the strength of their hearts, but the rock of their strength; so Isa 17:10. Ps 62:7, ruw, the same word that is used in the text, from hence comes our English word "sure." Explication. God is the rock of our strength, both in respect of our naturals and also of our spirituals: he
Psalm 73

is the strength of nature and of grace (Ps 27:1); the strength of my life natural and spiritual. God is the strength of thy natural faculties—of reason and understanding, of wisdom and prudence, of will and affections. He is the strength of all thy graces, faith, patience, meekness, temperance, hope, and charity; both as to their being and exercise. He is the strength of all thy comfort and courage, peace and happiness, salvation and glory. Ps 140:7. "O God, the rock of my salvation." In three respects. First. He is the author and giver of all strength. Ps 18:32: "It is God that girdeth me with strength." Ps 24:11: "He will give strength to his people." Ps 138:3 68:35. Secondly. He is the increaser and perfecter of a saint's strength; it is God that makes a saint strong and mighty both to do and suffer, to bear and forbear, to believe and to hope to the end; so Heb 11:34: "Out of weakness they were made strong: "so 1Jo 2:14. And therefore is that prayer of Peter, 1Pe 5:10. Thirdly. He is the preserver of your strength; your life is laid up in God. Col 3:3. Your strength is kept by the strength of God; so Ps 91:1. God doth overshadow the strength of saints, that no breach can be made upon it. Ps 63:7. "In the shadow of thy wings will I rejoice." Samuel Blackerby. 1673.

Verse 26. Oh, strange logic! Grace hath learned to deduce strong conclusions out of weak premises, and happy out of sad. If the major be, My flesh and my heart faileth; and the minor, "There is no blossom in the fig tree, nor fruit in the vine, "etc.; yet his conclusion is firm and undeniable: The Lord is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever; or, Yet will I rejoice in the God of my salvation. And if there be more in the conclusion than in the premises, it is the better; God comes even in the conclusion. John Sheffield, in "The Rising Sun." 1654.

Verse 26. My flesh and my heart faileth. They who take the expression in a bad sense, take it to be a confession of his former sin, and to have relation to the combat mentioned in the beginning of the Psalm, between the flesh and the spirit; as if he had said, I was so surfeited with self conceitedness that I presumed to arraign divine actions at the bar of human reason, and to judge the stick under water crooked by the eye of my sense, when, indeed, it was straight: but now I see that flesh is no fit judge in matters of faith; that neither my flesh nor heart can determine rightly of God's dispensations, nor hold out uprightly under Satan's temptations; for if God had not supported me my flesh had utterly supplanted me: My flesh and my heart faileth: but God is the strength of my heart. Flesh is sometimes taken for corrupt nature. Ga 5:13. First, because it is propagated by the flesh (Joh 3:6); secondly, because it is executed by the flesh (Ro 7:25); thirdly, because corruption is nourished, strengthened, and increased by the flesh. 1Jo 2:16. They who take the words in a good sense, do not make
them look back so far as the beginning of the Psalm, but only to the neighbour verse. George Swinnock.

Verse 26. God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever. The Hebrew carrieth it, but God is the rock of my heart, i.e., a sure, strong, and immovable foundation to build upon. Though the winds may blow, and the waves beat, when the storm of death cometh, yet I need not fear that the house of my heart will fall, for it is built on a sure foundation: God is the rock of my heart. The strongest child that God hath is not able to stand alone; like the hop or ivy, he must have somewhat to support him, or he is presently on the ground. Of all seasons, the Christian hath most need of succour at his dying hour; then he must take his leave of all his comforts on earth, and then he shall be sure of the sharpest conflicts from hell, and therefore, it is impossible he should hold out without extraordinary help from heaven. But the psalmist had armour of proof ready, wherewith to encounter his last enemy. As weak and fearful a child as he was, he durst venture a walk in the dark entry of death, having his Father by the hand: "Though I walk through the valley of the shadow of death, I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me," Psalm 23. Though at the troubles of my life, and my trial at death, my heart is ready to fail me, yet I have a strong cordial which will cheer me in my saddest condition: God is the strength of my heart.

And my portion. It is a metaphor taken from the ancient custom among the Jews, of dividing inheritances, whereby every one had his allotted portion; as if he had said, God is not only my rock to defend me from those tempests which assault me, and, thereby, my freedom from evil; but he is also my portion, to supply my necessities, and to give me the fruition of all good. Others, indeed, have their parts on this side the land of promise, but the author of all portions is the matter of my portion. My portion doth not lie in the rubbish and lumber, as theirs doth whose portion is in this life, be they never so large; but my portion containeth him whom the heavens, and heaven of heavens, can never contain. God is the strength of my heart, and my portion for ever; not for a year, or an age, or a million of ages, but for eternity. Though others' portions, like roses, the fuller they blow, the sooner they shed; they are worsted often by their pride, and wasted through their prodigality, so that at last they come to want—and surely death always rends their persons and portions asunder; yet my portion will be ever full, without diminution. Without alteration, this God will be my God for ever and ever, my guide and aid unto death; nay, death, which dissolves so many bonds, and unties such close knots, shall never part me and my portion, but give me a perfect and everlasting possession of it. George Swinnock.
Verse 28. It is good for me to draw near to God. When he saith, it is good, his meaning is it is best. This positive is superlative. It is more than good for us to draw nigh to God at all times, it is best for us to do so, and it is at our utmost peril not to do so; For, lo, saith the psalmist (Ps 73:27), they that are far from thee shall perish: thou hast destroyed all them that go a whoring from thee. It is dangerous to be far from God, but it is more dangerous to go far from him. Every man is far off by nature, and wicked men go further off: the former shall perish, the latter shall be destroyed. He that fares best in his withdrawing from God, fares bad enough; therefore, it is best for us to draw nigh unto God. He is the best friend at all times, and the only friend at sometimes. And may we not say that God suffers and orders evil times, and the withdrawing of the creature, for that very end, that we might draw nearer unto him? Doth he not give up the world to a spirit of reviling and mocking that he may stir up in his people a spirit of prayer? Joseph Caryl.

Verse 28. It is good; that is, it puts in us a blessed quality and disposition. It makes a man to be like God himself; and, secondly, it is good, that is, it is comfortable; for it is the happiness of the creature to be near the Creator; it is beneficial and helpful. To draw near. How can a man but be near to God, seeing he filleth heaven and earth: "Whither shall I go from thy presence?" Ps 139:7. He is present always in power and providence in all places, but graciously present with some by his Spirit, supporting, comforting, strengthening the heart of a good man. As the soul is said to be tota in toto, in several parts by several faculties, so God, is present to all, but in a diverse manner. Now we are said to be near to God in diverse degrees: first, when our understanding is enlightened; intellectus est veritatis sponsa; and so the young man speaking discreetly in things concerning God, is said not to be far from the kingdom of God, Mr 12:34. Secondly, in minding: when God is present to our minds, so that the soul is said to be present to that which it minds; contrarily it is said of the wicked, that "God is not in all their thoughts," Ps 10:4. Thirdly, when the will upon the discovery of the understanding comes to choose the better part, and is drawn from that choice to cleave to him, as it was said of Jonathan's heart, "it was knit to David, " 1Sa 18:1. Fourthly, when our whole affections are carried to God, loving him as the chief good. Love is the firstborn affection. That breeds desire of communion with God. Thence comes joy in him, so that the soul pants after God, "as the hart after the water springs, "Ps 41:1. Fifthly, and especially, when the soul is touched with the Spirit of God working faith, stirring up dependence, confidence, and trust on God. Hence ariseth sweet communion. The soul is never at rest till it rests on him. Then it is afraid to break with him or to displease him; but it groweth zealous and resolute, and hot in love, stiff in good cases; resolute against his enemies. And
yet this is not all, for God will have also the outward man, so as the whole man
must present itself before God in word, in sacraments; speak of him and to him
with reverence, and yet with strength of affection mounting up in prayer, as in a
fiery chariot; hear him speak to us; consulting with his oracles; fetching
comforts against distresses, directions against maladies. Sixthly, and especially,
we draw near to him when we praise him; for this is the work of the souls
departed, and of the angels in heaven, that are continually near unto him. The
prophet here saith, It is good for me. How came he to know this? Why, he had
found it by experience, and by it he was thoroughly convinced. Richard Sibbes.

Verse 28. To draw near to God. It is not one isolated act. It is nor merely
turning to God, and saying, "I have come to him." The expression is draw. It is
not a single act; it is the drawing, the coming, the habitual walk, going on, and
on, and on, so long as we are on earth. It is, therefore, an habitual religion
which must be pressed and enforced upon us. Montagu Villiers. 1855.

Verse 28. To draw near to God. To draw near to God,

1. A man should make his peace with God, in and through the Mediator Jesus
Christ; for, until once that be done, a man must be said to be far from God, and
there is a partition wall standing betwixt God and him. It is the same with that
advice given by Eliphaz to Job: "Acquaint now thyself with him, and be at
peace: thereby good shall come unto thee, " Job 22:21. Be friends with God,
and all shall be well with you.

2. It is to seek more after communion and fellowship with God, and to pursue
after intimacy and familiarity with him; and to have more of his blessed
company with us in our ordinary walk and conversation; according to that
word, "Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound: they shall walk, O
Lord, in the light of thy countenance, "Ps 89:15.

3. As it stands here in the text, it is the expression of one who hath made up his
peace already, and is on good terms with God; and doth differ a little from what
the words absolutely imply; and so we may take it thus,

(a) It implies the confirming or making sure our interest in God, and so it
supposes the man's peace to be made with God; for, whoever be the author of
this Psalm, it supposes he has made his peace; and, therefore, in the following
words it is subjoined, I have put my trust in the Lord, etc.; that is, I have trusted
my soul unto God, and made my peace with him through a mediator. It is good,
whatever comes, it is always good to be near to God, that way, and to be made
sure in him.
(b) It implies to be more conformed unto the image of God, and, therefore, this nearness to him is opposed to that of being far from God. It is good, says he to draw near to God in our duty; when so many are far from him.

(c) It implies, to lay by all things in the world, and to seek fellowship and communion with God, and to be more set apart for his blessed company, and to walk with him in a dependence upon him as the great burden bearer, as he who is to be all in all unto us.

In a word, to draw near unto God, is to make our peace with him, and to secure and confirm that peace with him, and to study a conformity unto him, and to be near unto him in our walk and conversation; in our fellowship, and whole carriage, and deportment, to be always near unto him. William Guthrie.

Verse 28. The Epicurean, says Augustine, is wont to say, *It is good for me to enjoy the pleasures of the flesh:* the Stoic is wont to say, *For me it is good to enjoy the pleasures of the mind:* The Apostle used to say (not in words but in sense), *It is good for me to cleave to God.* Lorinus.


HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Whole Psalm. It containeth the godly man's trial, in the former part of it, and his triumph, in the latter part of it. We have,

1. The grievous conflict between the flesh and the spirit, to the 15th verse.

2. The glorious conquest of the spirit over the flesh, to the end. G. Swinnock.

Whole Psalm.

1. The cause of his distemper.
2. The cure of it.
3. The psalmist's carriage after it.
   —G. Swinnock.

Verse 1. The true Israel, the great blessing, and the sureness of it: or, the proposition of the text expounded, enforced, and applied.
Verse 1. (first clause). Israel's receipts from God are,

1. For quantity, the greatest;
2. For variety, the choicest;
3. For quality, the sweetest;
4. For security, the surest;
5. For duration, the most lasting.
—Simeon Ash.

Verse 2.

1. How far a believer may fall.
2. How far he shall not fall.
3. What fears are and what are not allowable.

Verse 2. A retrospect of our slips; prospect of future danger; present preparation for it.

Verse 4. Quiet death; the cases of the godly and ungodly distinguished by the causes of the quiet, and the unreliability of mere feelings shown.

Verse 5. The bastard's portion contrasted with that of the true son.

Verse 7. The dangers of opulence and luxury.

Verse 8. Connection between a corrupt heart and a proud tongue.

Verse 10.

1. The believer's cup is bitter.
2. It is full.
3. Its contents are varied waters.
4. It is but a cup, measured and limited.
5. It is the cup of his people, and, consequently, works good in the highest degree.

Verse 11. The atheists open question; the oppressor's practical question; the careless man's secret question; and the fearful saint's fainting question. The
reasons why it is ever asked, and the conclusive reasons which put the matter beyond question.

**Verse 12.** This verse suggests solemn enquiries for persons who are growing rich.

**Verse 14.** The frequent and even constant chastisement of the righteous; the necessity and design thereof; and the consolations connected therewith.

**Verse 15.** How we may bring injury on the saints; why we should avoid so doing, and how.

**Verse 17.**

1. Entrance into the place of fellowship with God, it privileges, and the way thereto.

2. Lessons learned in that hallowed place; the text mentions one.

3. Practical influence of the fellowship, and the instruction.

**Verses 17-18.** The sinner's end; See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 486.

**Verse 18.** *Thou didst set them in slippery places.*

1. It implies that they were always exposed to sudden, unexpected destruction. As he that walks in slippery places is every moment liable to fall, he cannot foresee one moment whether he shall stand or fall the next; and when he does fall, he falls at once without warning.

2. They are liable to fall of themselves, without being thrown down by the hand of another; as he that stands or walks on slippery ground needs nothing but his own weight to throw him down.

3. There is nothing that keeps wicked men at any one moment out of hell but the mere pleasure of God. *Jonathan Edwards.*

**Verses 18-20.** The end of the wicked is,

1. Near: *Thou hast set,* etc. It may happen at any time.

2. Judicial: *Thou bringest,* etc.
3. Sudden: *How are they*, etc.

4. Tormenting: *They are utterly consumed*, etc.

5. Eternal: Left to themselves; gone from the mind of God; and disregarded as a dream when one awaketh. No after act respecting them, either for deliverance or annihilation.

**Verse 19.** The first sight and sense of hell by a proud and wealthy sinner, who has just died in peace.

**Verse 20.** The contemptible object:—a self righteous, or boastful, or persecuting, or cavilling, or wealthy sinner when his soul is called before God.

**Verse 22.** Our folly, ignorance, and brutishness. When displayed. What effect the fact should have upon us; and how greatly it illustrates divine grace.

**Verse 22-25.**

1. The psalmist's confession concerning the flesh.

2. The faithful expressions of the spirit.


**Verse 25.** Heaven and earth ransacked to find a joy equal to the Lord himself. Let the preacher take up various joys and show the inferiority.

**Verse 26.**

1. The psalmist's complaint: *My flesh and my heart faileth.*

2. His comfort: *But God*, etc. Or, we may take notice, (a) Of the frailty of his flesh; (b) Of the flourishing of his faith.

Doctrine 1. That man's flesh will fail him. The highest, the holiest man's heart will not always hold out. The prophet was great and gracious, yet his flesh failed him.
Doctrine 2. That it is the comfort of a Christian, in his saddest condition, that God is his portion. *G. Swinnock.*

**Verse 26.** "The Fading of the Flesh," *Swinnock's Treatise.* *(Nichol's Puritan Series.)*

**Verse 26.** Where we fail and where we cannot fail.

**Verse 27.**

1. The sad conditions.
2. The terrible punishments.
3. The implied consolations.

**Verse 28.** To draw near to God is our wisdom, our honour, our safety, our peace, our riches. *Thomas Watson's Sermon,* "The Happiness of Drawing near to God." 1669. See also, "The Saint's Happiness," *R. Sibbes's Sermons.*

**Verse 28.** David's conclusion; or, the saint's resolution. *R. Sibbes.*

**Verse 28.**

1. The language of prayer: *It is good,* etc.
2. Of faith: *I have put,* etc.
3. Of praise: *That I may declare.* *G. R.*


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**WORKS UPON THE SEVENTY-THIRD PSALM**


David Restored; or, And Antidote against the Prosperity of the *Wicked and the Afflictions of the Just,* shewing the different ends of both. In a most seasonable discourse upon the Seventy-third Psalm. By the Right Reverend Father in God EDWARD PARRY. Late Lord Bishop of Killaloe. 1660.
Psalm 74

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. Maschil of Asaph. An instructive Psalm by Asaph. The history of the suffering church is always edifying; when we see how the faithful trusted and wrestled with their God in times of dire distress, we are thereby taught how to behave ourselves under similar circumstances; we learn moreover, that when fiery trial befalls us, no strange thing happened unto us, we are following the trail of the host of God.

DIVISION. From Ps 74:1-11 the poet pleads the sorrows of the nation, and the despite done to the assemblies of the Lord; then he urges former displays of divine power as a reason for present deliverance (Ps 74:12-23). Whether it is a prophetic Psalm, intended for use in troubles foreseen, or whether it was written by a later Asaph, after the invasion by Sennacherib or during the Maccabean wars, it would be very hard to determine, but we see no difficulty in the first supposition.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. O God, why hast thou cast us off for ever? To cast us off at all were hard, but when thou dost for so long a time desert thy people it is an evil beyond all endurance—the very chief of woes and abyss of misery. It is our wisdom when under chastisement to enquire, "Show me wherefore thou contendest with me?" and if the affliction be a protracted one, we should more eagerly enquire the purport of it. Sin is usually at the bottom of all the hiding of the Lord's face; let us ask the Lord to reveal the special form of it to us, that we may repent of it, overcome it, and henceforth forsake it. When a church is in a forsaken condition it must not sit still in apathy, but turn to the hand which smiteth it, and humbly enquire the reason why. At the same time, the enquiry of the text is a faulty one, for it implies two mistakes. There are two questions, which only admit of negative replies. "Hath God cast away his people?" (Ro 11:1); and the other, "Will the Lord cast off for ever?" (Ps 77:7). God is never weary of his people so as to abhor them, and even when his anger is turned against them, it is but for a small moment, and with a view to their eternal good. Grief in its distraction asks strange questions and surmises impossible terrors. It is a wonder of grace that the Lord has not long ago put us away as men lay aside cast off garments, but he hateth putting away, and will still be patient with his chosen. Why doth thine anger smoke against the sheep of thy pasture? They are thine, they are the objects of thy care, they are poor, silly, and defenceless things: pity them, forgive them, and come to their rescue. They are but sheep, do not continue to be wroth with them. It is a terrible thing when the anger of God smokes, but it is an infinite mercy that it does not break into a
devouring flame. It is meet to pray the Lord to remove every sign of his wrath, for it is to those who are truly the Lord's sheep a most painful thing to be the objects of his displeasure. To vex the Holy Spirit is no mean sin, and yet how frequently are we guilty of it; hence it is no marvel that we are often under a cloud.

**Verse 2.** *Remember thy congregation, which thou hast purchased of old.* What a mighty plea is redemption. O God, canst thou see the blood mark on thine own sheep, and yet allow grievous wolves to devour them? The church is no new purchase of the Lord; from before the world's foundation the chosen were regarded as redeemed by the Lamb slain; shall ancient love die out, and the eternal purpose become frustrate? The Lord would have his people remember the paschal Lamb, the bloodstained lintel, and the overthrow of Egypt; and will he forget all this himself? Let us put him in remembrance, let us plead together. Can he desert his blood bought and forsake his redeemed? Can election fail and eternal love cease to glow? Impossible. The woes of Calvary, and the covenant of which they are the seal, are the security of the saints.

The rod of thine inheritance, which thou hast redeemed. So sweet a plea deserved to be repeated and enlarged upon. The Lord's portion is his people—will he lose his inheritance? His church is his kingdom, over which he stretches the rod of sovereignty; will he allow his possessions to be torn from him? God's property in us is a fact full of comfort: his value of us, his dominion over us, his connection with us are all so many lights to cheer our darkness. No man will willingly lose his inheritance, and no prince will relinquish his dominions; therefore we believe that the King of kings will hold his own, and maintain his rights against all comers.

This mount Zion, wherein thou hast dwelt. The Lord's having made Zion the especial centre of his worship, and place of his manifestation, is yet another plea for the preservation of Jerusalem. Shall the sacred temple of Jehovah be desecrated by heathen, and the throne of the Great King be defiled by his enemies? Has the Spirit of God dwelt in our hearts, and will he leave them to become a haunt for the devil? Has he sanctified us by his indwelling, and will he, after all, vacate the throne? God forbid. It may be well to note that this Psalm was evidently written with a view to the temple upon Zion, and not to the tabernacle which was there in David's time, and was a mere tent; but the destroyings here bewailed were exercised upon the carved work of a substantial structure. Those who had seen the glory of God in Solomon's peerless temple might well mourn in bitterness, when the Lord allowed his enemies to make an utter ruin of that matchless edifice.
Verse 3. *Lift up thy feet unto the perpetual desolations.* The ruin made had already long been an eyesore to the suppliant, and there seemed no hope of restoration. Havoc lorded it not only for a day or a year, but with perpetual power. This is another argument with God. Would Jehovah sit still and see his own land made a wilderness, his own palace a desolation? Until he should arise, and draw near, the desolation would remain; only his presence could cure the evil, therefore is he entreated to hasten with uplifted feet for the deliverance of his people. Even all that the enemy hath done wickedly in the sanctuary. Every stone in the ruined temple appealed to the Lord; on all sides were the marks of impious spoilers, the holiest places bore evidence of their malicious wickedness; would the Lord for ever permit this? Would he not hasten to overthrow the foe who defied him to his face, and profaned the throne of his glory? Faith finds pleas in the worst circumstances, she uses even the fallen stones of her desolate palaces, and assails with them the gates of heaven, casting them forth with the great engine of prayer.

Verse 4. *Thine enemies roar in the midst of thy congregations.* Where thy people sang like angels, these barbarians roar like beasts. When thy saints come together for worship, these cruel men attack them with all the fury of lions. They have no respect for the most solemn gatherings, but intrude themselves and their blasphemies into our most hallowed meetings. How often in times of persecution or prevalent heresy has the church learned the meaning of such language. May the Lord spare us such misery. When hypocrites abound in the church, and pollute her worship, the case is parallel to that before us; Lord save us from so severe a trial. They set up their ensigns for signs. Idolatrous emblems used in war were set up over God's altar, as an insulting token of victory, and of contempt for the vanquished and their God. Papists, Arians, and the modern school of Neologians, have, in their day, set up their ensigns for signs. Superstition, unbelief, and carnal wisdom have endeavoured to usurp the place of Christ crucified, to the grief of the church of God. The enemies without do us small damage, but those within the church cause her serious harm; by supplanting the truth and placing error in its stead, they deceive the people, and lead multitudes to destruction. As a Jew felt a holy horror when he saw an idolatrous emblem set up in the holy place, even so do we when in a Protestant church we see the fooleries of Rome, and when from pulpits, once occupied by men of God, we hear philosophy and vain deceit.

Verse 5. *A man was famous according as he had lifted up axes upon the thick trees.* Once men were renowned for felling the cedars and preparing them for building the temple, but now the axe finds other work, and men are as proud of destroying as their fathers were of erecting. Thus in the olden times our sires
dealt sturdy blows against the forests of error, and laboured hard to lay the axe at the root of the trees; but, alas! their sons appear to be quite as diligent to destroy the truth and to overthrow all that their fathers built up. O for the good old times again! O for an hour of Luther's hatchet, or Calvin's mighty axe!

**Verse 6.** But now they break down the carved work thereof at once with axes and hammers. The invaders were as industrious to destroy as the ancient builders had been to construct. Such fair carving it was barbarous to hew in pieces, but the Vandals had no mercy and broke down all, with any weapon which came to hand. In these days men are using axes and sledgehammers against the gospel and the church. Glorious truths, far more exquisite than the goodliest carving, are cavilled over and smashed by the blows of modern criticism. Truths which have upheld the afflicted and cheered the dying are smitten by pretentious Goths, who would be accounted learned, but know not the first principals of the truth. With sharp ridicule, and heavy blows of sophistry, they break the faith of some: and would, if it were possible, destroy the confidence of the elect themselves. Assyrians, Babylonians, and Romans are but types of spiritual foes who labour to crush the truth and the people of God.

**Verse 7.** They have cast fire into thy sanctuary. Axes and hammers were not sufficient for the purpose of the destroyers, they must needs try fire. Malice knows no bounds. Those who hate God are never sparing of the most cruel weapons. To this day the enmity of the human heart is quite as great as ever; and, if providence did not restrain, the saints would still be as fuel for the flames. They have defiled by casting down the dwelling place of thy name to the ground. They made a heap of the temple, and left not one stone upon another. When the Lord left Mount Zion, and the Roman gained entrance, the military fury led the soldiers to burn out and root up the memorial of the famous House of the Lord. Could the powers of darkness have their way, a like fate would befall the church of Christ. "Rase it, "say they, "rase it even to the foundation thereof." Defilement to the church is destruction; her foes would defile her till nothing of her purity, and consequently of her real self, remained. Yet, even if they could wreak their will upon the cause of Christ, they are not able to destroy it, it would survive their blows and fires; the Lord would hold them still like dogs on a leash, and in the end frustrate all their designs.

**Verse 8.** They said in their hearts, Let us destroy them together. It was no idle wish, their cruelty was sincere, deep seated, a matter of their inmost heart. Extirpation was the desire of Haman, and the aim of many another tyrant; not a remnant of the people of God would have been left if oppressors could have had their way. Pharaoh's policy to stamp out the nation has been a precedent for
others, yet the Jews survive, and will: the bush though burning has not been consumed. Even thus the church of Christ has gone through baptism of blood and fire, but it is all the brighter for them. They have burned up all the synagogues of God in the land. Here is no allusion to places called synagogues, but to assemblies; and as no assemblies for worship here held in but one place, the ruin of the temple was the destruction of all the holy gatherings, and so in effect all the meeting places were destroyed. One object of persecutors has always been to put an end to all conventicles, as they have called them. Keep them from meeting and you will scatter them, so have the enemy said; but, glory be to God, saints are independent of walls, and have met on the hill side, by the moss, or in the catacombs, or in a boat at sea. Yet has the attempt been almost successful, and the hunt so hot, that the faithful have wandered in solitude, and their solemn congregations have been, under such circumstances, few and far between. What sighs and cries have in such times gone up to the ears of the Lord God of Sabaoth. How happy are we that we can meet for worship in any place we choose, and none dare molest us.

Verse 9. *We see not our signs.* Alas, poor Israel! No Urim and Thummim blazed on the High Priest's bosom, and no Shechaniah shone from between the cherubim. The smoke of sacrifice and cloud of incense no more arose from the holy hill; solemn feasts were suspended, and even circumcision, the covenant sign, was forbidden by the tyrant. We, too, as believers, know what it is to lose our evidences and grope in darkness; and too often do our churches also miss the tokens of the Redeemer's presence, and their lamps remain untrimmed. Sad complaint of a people under a cloud! There is no more any prophet. Prophecy was suspended. No inspiring psalm or consoling promise fell from bard or seer. It is ill with the people of God when the voice of the preacher of the gospel fails, and a famine of the word of life falls on the people. God sent ministers are as needful to the saints as their daily bread, and it is a great sorrow when a congregation is destitute of a faithful pastor. It is to be feared, that with all the ministers now existing, there is yet a dearth of men whose hearts and tongues are touched with the celestial fire. Neither is there any among us that knoweth how long. If someone could foretell an end, the evil might be borne with a degree of patience, but when none can see a termination, or foretell an escape, the misery has a hopeless appearance, and is overwhelming. Blessed be God, he has not left his church in these days to be so deplorably destitute of cheering words; let us pray that he never may. Contempt of the word is very common, and may well provoke the Lord to withdraw it from us; may his long suffering endure the strain, and his mercy afford us still the word of life.
Psalm 74

Verse 10. *O God, how long shall the adversary reproach?* Though we know not how long yet thou dost. The times and seasons are with thee. When God is reproached, there is hope for us, for it may be he will hearken and avenge his dishonoured name. Wickedness has great license allowed it, and justice lingers on the road; God has his reasons for delay, and his seasons for action, and in the end it shall be seen that he is not slack concerning his promise as some men count slackness. Shall the enemy blaspheme thy name for ever? He will do so for ever, unless thou dost give him his quietus. Wilt thou never defend thyself, and stop slanderous tongues? Wilt thou always endure the jeers of the profane? Is there to be no end to all this sacrilege and cursing? Yes, it shall all be ended, but not by and by. There is a time for the sinner to rage, and a time in which patience bears with him; yet it is but a time, and then, ah, then!

Verse 11. *Why withdrawest thou thy hand, even thy right hand?* Wherefore this inaction, this indifference for thine own honour and thy people's safety? How bold is the suppliant! Does he err? Nay, verily, we who are so chill, and distant, and listless in prayer are the erring ones. The kingdom of heaven suffereth violence, and he who learns the art shall surely prevail with God by its means. It is fit that we should enquire why the work of grace goes on so slowly, and the enemy has so much power over men: the inquiry may suggest practical reflections of unbounded value.

"Why dost thou from the conflict stay? 
Why do thy chariot wheels delay? 
Lift up thyself, hell's kingdom shake, 
Arm of the Lord, awake, awake."

Pluck it out of thy bosom. A bold simile, but dying men must venture for their lives. When God seems to fold his arms we must not fold ours, but rather renew our entreaties that he would again put his hand to the work. O for more agony in prayer among professing Christians, then should we see miracles of grace. We have here before us a model of pleading, a very rapture of prayer. It is humble, but very bold, eager, fervent, and effectual. The heart of God is always moved by such entreaties. When we bring forth out strong reasons, then will he bring forth his choice mercies.

Verses 12-23. Having spread the sad case before the Lord, the pleader now urges another series of arguments for divine help. He reasons from the Lord's former wonders of grace, and his deeds of power, imploring a repetition of the same divine works.
Verse 12. *For God is my King of old.* How consoling is this avowal! Israel in holy loyalty acknowledges her King, and claims to have been his possession from of old, and thence she derives a plea for defence and deliverance. If the Lord be indeed the sole monarch of our bosoms, he will in his love put forth his strength on our behalf; if from eternity he has claimed us as his own, he will preserve us from the insulting foe. Working salvation in the midst of the earth. From the most remote period of Israel's history the Lord had worked out for her many salvations; especially at the Red Sea, the very heart of the world was astonished by his wonders of deliverance. Now, every believer may plead at this day the ancient deeds of the Lord, the work of Calvary, the overthrow of sin, death, and hell. He who wrought out our salvation of old will not, cannot desert us now. Each past miracle of grace assures us that he who has begun to deliver will continue to redeem us from all evil. His deeds of old were public and wrought in the teeth of his foes, they were no delusions or make believe; and, therefore, in all our perils we look for true and manifest assistance, and we shall surely receive it.

Verse 21. *O let not the oppressed return ashamed.* Though broken and crushed they come to thee with confidence; suffer them not to be disappointed, for then they will be ashamed of their hope. Let the poor and needy praise thy name. By thy speedy answer to their cries make their hearts glad, and they will render to thee their gladdest songs. It is not the way of the Lord to allow any of those who trust in him to be put to shame; for his word is, "He shall call upon me, and I will deliver him, and he shall glorify me."

Verse 22. *Arise, O God, plead thine own cause.* Answer thou the taunts of the profane by arguments which shall annihilate both the blasphemy and the blasphemer. God's judgments are awful replies to the defiance of his foes. When he makes empires crumble, and smites persecutors to the heart, his cause is pleaded by himself as none other could have advocated it. O that the Lord himself would come into the battle field. Long has the fight been trembling in the balance; one glance of his eyes, one word from his lip, and the banners of victory shall be borne on the breeze. Remember how the foolish man reproacheth thee daily. The Lord is begged to remember that he is himself reproached, and that by a mere man—that man a fool, and he is also reminded that these foul reproaches are incessant and repeated with every revolving day. It is bravely done when faith can pluck pleas out of the dragon's mouth and out of the blasphemies of fools find arguments with God.

Verse 23. *Forget not the voice of thine enemies.* Great warrior let the enemy's taunt provoke thee to the fray. They challenge thee; accept thou the gage of battle, and smite them with thy terrible hand. If the cries of thy children are too
feeble to be heard, be pleased to note the loud voices of thy foes and silence their profanities for ever. The tumult of those that rise up against thee increaseth continually. The ungodly clamour against thee and thy people, their blasphemies are loud and incessant, they defy thee, even thee, and because thou repliest not they laugh thee to scorn. They go from bad to worse, from worse to worst; their fury swells like the thunders of an advancing tempest. What will it come too? What infamy will next be hurled at thee and thine? O God, wilt thou for ever bear this? Hast thou no regard for thine honour, no respect for thy glory? Much of this Psalm has passed over our mind while beholding the idolatries of Rome, (the author visited Rome in November and December, 1871, while this portion of the Treasury of David was in progress) and remembering her bloody persecution of the saints. O Lord, how long shall it be ere thou wilt ease thyself of those profane wretches, the priests, and cast the harlot of Babylon into the ditch of corruption? May the church never cease to plead with thee till judgment shall be executed, and the Lord avenged upon Antichrist.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. There is one singularity in this Psalm which reminds one strongly of Psalm 44: there is not one mention of national or personal sin throughout, no allusion to the Lord's righteous dealing in their punishment, no supplication for pardon and forgiveness; and yet one can hardly doubt that the writer of the Psalm, be he who he may, must have felt as keenly as Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, or any other prophet of the captivity, the sins and iniquities which had brought all this sore evil upon them. But still, though there be expostulations, there is no complaint; though there be mourning, there is no murmuring; there is far more the cry of a smitten child, wondering why, and grieving that his father's face is so turned away from him in displeasure, and a father's hand so heavy on the child of his love. Or, as we might almost say, it is like the cry of one of those martyred ones beneath the altar, wondering at the marauder and oppressor, and exclaiming, "How long, O Lord, how long?" And yet it is the appeal of one who was still a sufferer, still groaning under the pressure of his calamities, "Why has thou cast us off for ever? We see not our signs, there is no more any prophet among us." Barton Bouchier.

Whole Psalm. The peculiarity of this Psalm is marred by the very frequent use of the xeg, for ever: Ps 74:1,3,10. E. W. Hengstenberg.

Verse 1. This Psalm, and particularly these words, do contain the church's sad lamentation over her deep affliction, together with her earnest expostulations
with God about the cause. Two things there are that the church in these words doth plead with God. First, The greatness of her affliction: secondly, the nearness of he relation.

1. The greatness of her affliction. And there were three things in her affliction that did make it lie very heavy upon her. First, the root of this affliction; and that was God's anger: Why doth thine anger smoke, etc. Secondly, the height of this affliction; God was not only angry, but he did smoke in his anger. Thirdly, the length of this affliction: it was so long that God did seem to cast them off for ever.

2. The nearness of her relation: Against the sheep of thy pasture; as if they should have said, Lord, if thou hadst done this against thine enemies, it had been no wonder; if thou hadst poured out thy wrath against the vessels of wrath, it had not been so much. But what! wilt thou draw out thy sword against the sheep of thy pasture? It were no wonder that thou shouldest take the fat and the strong, and pour out thy judgments upon them; but wilt thou do it to thy sheep?

There be several doctrines that I may raise from these words; as,

First doctrine: That God's people are his sheep.

Second doctrine: That God may be sorely angry with his own people, with his own sheep.

Third doctrine: That when God is angry with his people, it becomes them carefully to enquire into the cause.

Fourth doctrine: That when God's people are under afflictions, they ought to take notice of, and be much affected with, his anger, from which they do proceed.

Fifth doctrine: That God's people under affliction are, or should be, more affected with his anger than with their smart. This is that which the church doth complain of, not that the church did so smart, but that God was displeased and angry; that did most affect them.

Sixth doctrine: That God's people are apt to have misgiving thoughts of God when they are in sore afflictions. God was angry with his people, and their hearts did misgive them, as if God did cast off his people.
Seventh doctrine: That God may be angry with his people, so sore, and so long, that in the judgment of sense it may seem that they are for ever cast off. Eighth doctrine: That though the people of God may not murmur against his proceedings, yet they may humbly expostulate with him about the cause. *Joseph Alleine*. 1633-1668.

**Verse 1.** *Why doth thine anger smoke,* etc. Anger is a fire; and in men, and other creatures enraged, a smoke seemeth to go out of their nostrils. Xenophon saith of the Thebans, when they are angry they breathe fire. This then is spoken of God, after the manner of men. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 1.** *The sheep of thy pasture.* There is nothing more imbecile than a sheep: simple, frugal, gentle, tame, patient, prolific, timid, domesticated, stupid, useful. Therefore, while the name of sheep is here used, it is suggested how pressing the necessity is for divine assistance, and how well befitting the Most High it would be to make their cause his own. *Lorinus.*

**Verse 2.** *Remember thy congregation.* It is not without reason that they do not say, Remember *us,* but *remember thy congregation,* not ours, but thine; nor that because it has now begun to be thine, but *which thou hast purchased of old,* the rod of thine inheritance which thou hast redeemed: likewise, this Mount Zion; not wherein we, but wherein *thou hast dwelt.* They had nothing which they could bring before an angry God with greater confidence, than the ancient lovingkindness shown to their fathers in former days. *Musculus.*

**Verse 2.** *The rod of thine inheritance.* hlxg jbv, *the inheritance rod* is the staff with which the inheritance is measured; jkv hdmh hgq, the land surveyor's rod (Eze 40:3); and this is used as lrwg, *the lot,* is for the portion, for the inheritance itself. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

**Verse 2.** *Thine inheritance.* It signifies a nation, which through all successions God had a peculiar right and title to. *Henry Hammond.*

**Verse 2.** *Thou hast redeemed,* i.e., the purchased people, by restoring them when they had been alienated, and had fallen into the hands of others: like a goel, or near kinsman, who ransoms a brother hurried into captivity, and regains an inheritance that has been sold. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 3.** *Lift up thy feet.* Or, *thy hammers,* that is, "thy strokes, "to "stamp" or "beat down" the enemy "unto perpetual desolations." Thus the "feet" are used to "tread down with," Isa 26:6; and so the Greek taketh it here, changing the metaphor, and translating it, "Thy hands, "which are also instruments to strike
down with. Or, *lift up thy feet*, that is, come quickly to see the perpetual desolations, which the enemy hath made. Henry Ainsworth.

**Verse 3.** Lift up thy feet. Abu Walid renders it, *Tread hard upon thine enemies*. The Jewish Arab, *Shew forth thy punishment*, adding in a note that the *lifting up the feet* implies punishment, the bringing under by force being usually expressed by *treading under the feet*. Henry Hammond.

**Verse 3.** Lift up thy feet, etc. To these desolations they seek that God would *lift up his footsteps*, that is, that he would approach. In Ge 29:1, there occurs the phrase, *to lift the feet*; here the expression is much more marked—*to lift up the footsteps*—and must be taken to mean a swift, impetuous, majestic, and powerful approach; like a hero, who strikes the ground with heavy tread, and advances rapidly with far sounding footsteps. Hermann Venema.

**Verse 3.** In the sanctuary. Their cities had been laid waste, their provinces, their farms, their vineyards, their oliveyards. They themselves had been everywhere cut down without striking a blow in defence, and their means of life had been snatched away without resistance. Yet they speak not of these things; not because things of this sort ought not to cause grief, nor yet because the saints are not touched with a sense of their loss; but because those things which threatened the extinction of religion and the worship of God, overtopped the feeling of all these other misfortunes with an intolerable sorrow. Musculus.

**Verse 4.** Thine enemies roar, etc. The word gav is used especially of the roar of the lion... In this place we may justly extend the application of the verb to those noisy words, whether mirthful or boastful, blasphemous against God and calamitous to his people (Ps 74:10), breathing terror and threatenings through edicts; or rude and senseless, as in their idolatrous worship; or in their prayers and thoughtless songs. As in Isa 52:5, its meaning is *to howl*. Hermann Venema.

**Verse 4.** They set up their ensigns for signs. The meaning is, that the enemy, having abolished the signs of the true God, of his people and religion, such as circumcision, the feasts, sacrifices, the other ordinances of religion, and other marks of liberty, substituted his own idolatrous signs, as the signs of his authority and religion. Hermann Venema.

**Verses 4-7.** (The persecution under Antiochus. B.C. 168.) Athenaeus proceeded to Jerusalem, where, with the assistance of the garrison, he prohibited and suppressed every observance of the Jewish religion, forced the people to profane the Sabbath, to eat swine's flesh, and other unclean food, and expressly
forbade the national rite of circumcision. The Temple was dedicated to Jupiter Olympus: the statue of that deity was erected on part of the altar of burnt offerings, and sacrifice duly performed... As a last insult, the feasts of the Bacchanalia, the license of which, as they were celebrated in the later ages of Greece, shocked the severe virtue of the older Romans, were substituted for the national festival of Tabernacles. The reluctant Jews were forced to join in these riotous orgies, and to carry the ivy, the insignia of the god. So near was the Jewish nation, and the worship of Jehovah, to total extermination. Henry Hart Milman (1791-1868), in "A History of the Jews."

(Under Titus.) And now the Romans, upon the flight of the seditious into the city, and upon the burning of the holy house itself, and of all the buildings lying round about it, brought their ensigns to the temple, and set them over against its eastern gate; and there did they offer sacrifices to them, and there did they make Titus imperator, with the greatest acclamation of joy. Josephus.

Verse 8. The synagogues of God. It is the opinion of Spencer, Vitringa, and of the learned in general, that the institution of synagogues for worship originated in the reading of the law publicly after the collection of its volumes by Ezra, and that, consequently, there were no such places of solemn assembly previous to the Babylonish captivity. Some of the Jews themselves have expressed a conviction that this is the fact, and the Scriptures give no intimation of their existence antecedently to that time. We are aware, however, that one of the first Hebraists of the present day, the Rev. Dr. Macaul, inclines to the opinion of an earlier origin than that generally adopted. We quote his words: "The existence of such places before the Babylonish captivity has been much disputed"; and most writers, arguing from the silence of the Old Testament, incline to the opinion that they originated in Babylon, and that after the restoration similar oratories were opened in the land of Israel; and hence some infer that the Seventy-fourth Psalm, which says in the eighth verse, They have burned up all the synagogues in the land, was written in the post Babylonian times. The argument from silence is, however, far from conclusive. The translation of yrewm as synagogues, in the verse just cited, might fairly lead to a similar translation in some other passages which were confessedly written before the captivity; and the circumstances, character, and necessities of the Israelites, the great body of whom were far removed from the temple, prove indubitably that in their towns and villages they must have had some locality where they assembled on their sabbaths, new moons, and other solemn days, for the purpose of receiving instruction in the law, and for public prayer. That locality, however different from subsequent arrangements, was the origin of the
synagogue. How such assemblies were conducted before the captivity it is now impossible to say. F. A. Cox.

**Verse 8. Synagogues.** Dr. Prideaux affirms that they had no synagogues before the Babylonish captivity; for the main service of the synagogue, says he, being the reading of the law unto the people, where there was no book of the law to be read, there certainly could be no synagogues. But how rare the book of the law was through all Judaea, before the Babylonish captivity, many texts of Scripture tell us. When Jehoshaphat sent teachers through all Judaea, to instruct the people in the law of God, they carried a book of the law with them (2Ch 17:9), which they needed not have done if there had been any copies of the law in those cities to which they went; which certainly there would have been had there been any synagogues in them. And when Hilkiah found the law in the temple (2Ki 22:8), neither he nor king Josiah needed to have been so surprised at it, had books of the law been common on those times. Their behaviour on that occasion sufficiently proves they had never seen it before, which could not be the case had there then been any other copies of it to be found among the people; and if there were no copies of the law at that time among them, there could then be most certainly no synagogues for them to resort to for the hearing of it read unto them. From whence he concludes there could be no synagogues among the Jews, till after the Babylonish captivity. Cruden's Concordance.

**Verse 8. Synagogues.** The assertion of those who are in favour of the Maccabean origin of the Psalm, that these words describe the destruction of the synagogues, is met by the remark, that in all the copious accounts which we have of the transactions of these times, there is nothing said of any such work of destruction. E. W. Hengstenberg.

**Verse 8. Synagogues.** In the Old Testament we find no traces of meetings for worship in synagogues. Temporary altars, groves, and high places were used alike by the Jewish saints and sinners for the worship of God and idols. The only pre-exile instance which seems to indicate that the devout in Israel were in the habit of resorting to pious leaders for blessings and instruction on stated occasions, is to be found in 2Ki 4:23, where the Shunammite's husband asks, "Wherefore wilt thou go to him (Elisha) today? It is neither new moon nor Sabbath." Yet 2Ki 22:8, etc.; 2Ch 34:14, etc., testify undoubtedly against the existence of places of worship under the monarchy. It is during the exile, whilst the temple worship was in abeyance, that we find indubitable proof of the systematic meetings on fasts for devotion and instruction (Zec 7:3-5 8:19). Religious meetings were also held on Sabbaths and fasts, to instruct the exiles in the divine law, and to admonish them to obey the divine precepts, (Ezr 10:1-9 Ne 8:1-3 9:1-3 13:1-3). These meetings, held near the temple and in other
localities, were the origin of the synagogue, and the place in which the people assembled was denominated the house of assembly. Hence, also, the synagogue in the temple itself... These synagogues soon became very popular, so that the psalmist in depicting worship in the time of the Maccabees declares that the many meeting places of God—or the Synagogues of God as the A.V. rightly renders it—have been laid waste. Christian D. Ginsburg, in Cyclopaedia of Biblical Literature.

Verse 8. (second clause). The sense seems to be, they (the Chaldaean invaders) have abolished all the solemnities in the land. They have taken away the daily sacrifice; they have put an end to the festivals and feasts of our holy ritual. Compare La 2:6: "He hath violently taken away his tabernacle; he hath destroyed his places of the assembly," (or rather, his assembly, his moed). "The Lord hath caused the solemn feasts and sabbaths to be forgotten in Zion." Christopher Wordsworth.

Verse 9. We see not our signs. As if they had said, heretofore God was wont to give us signs and tokens, he would even work miracles for us, or he would send a prophet to instruct and advise us what to do; we had those who could tell us how long, that is, how long our troubles should last, and when we should have our expected end of them; but now we are in trouble, and no man can tell us how long, now we are left to the wide world, to shift for ourselves as well as we can; the Lord will not advise us what to do, nor give us his mind what's best to be done, or how to proceed; thus deplorable was their condition upon the hiding of God's face from them. Joseph Caryl.

Verse 9. We see not our signs. These signs, which he mourned that he did not see, were certain outward marks of God's special favour, certain testimonies of his presence, certain memorials that he was with them to bless them. And it is said that there were five things in Solomon's temple destroyed by Nebuchadnezzar, which were not in the second temple, which was erected after the Babylonish captivity. Five memorials or tokens of God's special presence were then wanting. One was the ark of the covenant; another, the fire from heaven upon the brazen altar; the third, the Shechaniah, or cloud that rested upon the mercyseat; the fourth, the Urim and Thummim which were in the breastplate of the high priest; and the fifth, the spirit of prophecy. For though there were the prophets, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi, at the time of, and shortly after, the restoration; yet the spirit of prophecy ceased with Malachi, and did not reappear until John the Baptist, the forerunner of the Lord Jesus... The lamentation of the church here, then, was, that she saw not her signs. So now, the church of the living God, the regenerate family of Zion, have often reason to pour out the same melancholy complaint. Signs of God's favour,
marks and testimonies of his work of grace upon their souls, are often so out of
sight, so buried in obscurity, so enveloped in clouds of darkness, that the living
family are compelled, from soul feeling, to take up the language of lamentation
here expressed, and say, We see not our signs. J. C. Philpot. 1802-1869.

Verse 9. Our signs. The ordinary signs of Israel being God's peculiar people
are the passover (Ex 12:13), the Sabbath (Ex 21:13), the temple, the altar, the
sacrifices; the extraordinary ones are God's miracles wrought in his people's
behalf (Ps 78:43). A. R. Fausset.

Verse 9. There is no more any prophet. By us it ought to be observed what they
do not say: It is not,—here is no more any giant or warlike leader who may
deliver us from the adversary: but, there is no more any prophet. And yet when
the prophets were with them, they were contemptible in the eyes of all,
maltreated by the wicked and put to death. Musculus.

Verse 10. Shall the enemy blaspheme the name for ever? The sinner never
leaves his sin till sin first leaves him: did not death put a stop to his sin, he
would never cease from sin. This may be illustrated by a similitude thus: A
company of gamesters resolve to play all night, and accordingly they sit down
to chess tables, or some other game; their candle, accidentally or unexpectedly,
goes out, or is put out, or burnt out; their candle being out, they are forced to
give over their game, and go to bed in the dark; but had the candle lasted all
night, they would have played all night. This is every sinner's case in regard of
sin: did not death put out the candle of life, the sinner would sin still. Should
the sinner live for ever, he would sin for ever; and, therefore, it is a righteous
thing with God to punish him for ever in hellish torments. Every impenitent
sinner would sin to the days of eternity, if he might live to the days of eternity.
O God, how long shall the adversary reproach? shall the enemy blaspheme thy
name for ever? For ever, and evermore; or for ever and yet—for so the Hebrew
loves to exaggerate: as if the sinner, the blasphemer, would set a term of
duration longer than eternity to sin in. The psalmist implicitly saith, Lord, if
thou dost but let them alone for ever, they will certainly blaspheme thy name
for ever and ever. I have read of the crocodile, that he knows no maximum quod
sic, he is always growing bigger and bigger, and never comes to a certain pitch
of monstrosity so long as he lives. Quamdiu vivit crescit. Every habituated
sinner would, if he were let alone, be such a monster, perpetually growing
worse and worse. Thomas Brooks.

Verse 12. God is my King of old, etc. Let us learn from this verse how to think
of our God. First, that he is our King, and therefore we ought to be encouraged
to pray for his help against the ungodly, and to place ourselves in entire
Psalm 74

submission to his will and government. Secondly, that he is not a new God, but
the Ancient of Days, and that whatever salvation has been wrought not only in
the midst of his own people, but in the midst of the whole earth, even among
those by whom he is not acknowledged, has been wrought by him. Let this
meaning strike at the root of all trust in other gods, or in any creature.
*Musculus.*

**Verse 13.** *Thou didst divide the sea.* Thou, O Lord, didst make firm the flowing
sea, that there might be a way for our fathers to pass over, and in those very
waters through which thou didst lead thy ransomed, thou didst utterly
overthrow the hosts of Egypt, who were like dragons for ferocity, as they
sought to devour thy people. *Jansenius.*

**Verse 14.** *Thou brakest the heads of leviathan,* etc. It is spoken of Pharaoh's
army which God destroyed in the Red Sea; that is, the destruction of the
Egyptians was a pledge of the accomplishment of God's promise to cast the
Canaanite out of the promised land, and to give them possession of it. Many
hardships they were to pass through in the wilderness, but God gave them this
mercy as food, not to their bodies, but food to their faith, while they were in the
wilderness: therefore, those former great and glorious promises were
accomplished. So that former mercies are food that God gives unto the faith of
his people to feed upon, till he hath perfectly accomplished whatever he hath

**Verse 14.** *Leviathan.* The Arabic Lexicographers (quoted by Bochart) affirm
that *Pharao,* in the Egyptian language, signified a crocodile. Parkhurst remarks
that in Schenckzer's *Physica Sacra* may be seen a medal with Julius Caesar's
head on one side, and on the reverse a crocodile with this inscription: *AGYPTO
CAPTA,* *Egypt taken.* M. Mariette has discovered at Karnak a monumental
stele of Thothmes on which the king says of himself,

"Fierce as the huge crocodile, I made them see the glory of my God;
Terrible Lord of the waters, none dare even approach him."

**Verse 14.** *Leviathan* is a name given not only to the crocodile, but to the whale
and other large fishes. The Zum, or people inhabiting the wilderness, are
supposed, by many sensible writers, to be the Ichthyophagy, or fish eaters, who
occupied, according to ancient authors, a part of the coast of the Red Sea. The
psalmist is here speaking of Israel's passage through its waters; and it is a
singular fact that Diodorus, who lived about two thousand years ago, mentions
a tradition, prevalent amongst these very persons, to the effect that in the time
of their remote forefathers an extraordinary reflux took place, the channel of
the gulf becoming dry, and the green bottom appearing, whilst the whole body of waters rolled away in an opposite direction. There can be little doubt that this strange people would have used for food, and various purposes, such great fish as might have been cast ashore on the termination of the miracle. Most writers give this text a figurative meaning, but that is no reason why it may not be also literally understood; for such a mode of speaking is common in the Bible. But whether we understand it one way or the other, we have the testimony of heathens to its propriety and force. If, by the term Leviathan, we believe Egypt to be intended, and by its heads those petty states into which that country was divided, the traditions of India, and the East, inform us that such designations were well understood, and therefore beautifully applicable. Anon., in "Biblical and Theological Gleanings"; by William O'Neill. 1854.

**Verse 14.** *Meat to the people inhabiting the wilderness.* May not the exact meaning be that even as the sea monsters washed upon the shore furnished food for the inhabitants of the Red Sea, even so the symbolic dragon power of Egypt when destroyed at the Red Sea, became food for Israel's faith, and even furnished provision for their wilderness journey by the spoil which was cast up by the tide. C. H. S.

**Verse 15.** *Flood.* God in dividing Jordan did not only divide the water that ordinarily belonged to the river, or the water which came from its fountains, but also the extraordinary additional waters by the great rains a little before harvest. So God cleaved both the fountain, i.e., the fountain water, and the flood.

Jonathan Edwards.

**Verse 16.** *The day is thine, the night also is thine.*

Ah! do not be sorrowful, darling,
And do not be sorrowful, pray—
Taking the year together, my dear,
There is not more night than day.

And God is God, my darling,
Of night as well as day;
And we feel and know that we can go,
Wherever he leads the way.

A God of the night, my darling,
Of the night of death so grim,
The gate that leads out of life, good wife,
Is the gate that leads to Him.
Verse 16. Day. Night. These changes are according to a fixed law. Day and night are the ordinances of heaven upon earth for the growth of earth's life, and, if we could trace the sunshine and the dark in every follower of God, we should see them arranged with equal wisdom. It is a more complex work, but, be sure of this, there is order in it all, and the hand that rules the world in its orbit, and that makes it fulfil its course through light and shade, is governing our lives for a higher than earthly end. One feature of the law is presented so far for our guidance. It is a law of alternation. It is day and night, and, let us thank God, it is also in due time night and day. Each has its time and use. John Ker. 1869.

Verse 16. Thou hast prepared the light. It is but recently that we have been able to form any conception of the power of light as an agent in the economy of the globe; the discoveries of Actinism are among the most interesting and marvellous of natural science. The discovery that "no substance can be exposed to the sun's rays without undergoing a chemical change," has been described as scarcely less important in its effects than the discovery of the law of gravitation. A sunbeam is one of the most powerful of all the agencies of nature; magical as it is, it breaks up the strongest chemical affinities; it is the author of colour, and it is the creator of a myriad combinations, which all tend to the harmony of the world. Nor ought we to forget the moral influence of light. We are all aware of the sensible difference produced in our moral natures by a fine day or a dark day. Light gives zest and tone to the spirits; light gives buoyancy and joy to the soul; light crowds the chambers of the mind with ideas; Light is Life: the merest insect could not live without light; and even blind natures receive, in those organs which are not the property of vision, the assurance of its benignant operations. Light is Order: and at its wand and command the separation takes place, and dark and light pair off into their separate ranks. Light is Beauty: whether in the refulgence of the moon; the chill sparkle of the stars; the unrivalled play of colours in the attenuated film of the soap bubble, at once the toy of childhood and the tool of the sage; the rich play of tints in the mother of pearl, or the rich gorgeous rays in the plumes of birds. Light is Purity: forms that rankle out of the glance of its clear, steady beam, contract around themselves loathness and disgust, and become the seats of foulness and shame. Light is Growth: where it is, we know that nature pursues her work in life and in vigour; light gives vitality to the sap; light removes obstructions from the pathway of the growing agencies, while, in its absence, forms become stunted, gnarled, and impaired. Light is Health: as it darts its clear and brilliant points to and fro, it brings in its train those blessings of elasticity and energy, which give the fulness of being—which is perfect health.
Psalm 74

Verse 16. The light and the sun. I was considerably affected in my younger days by the long standing objection, that Moses made light to exist before the creation of the sun; as books then usually taught, what some still fancy, that there could not have been light without this luminary. But not choosing, on such important point, to attach my faith to any general assertion, I sought to find out if any investigator of the nature of light had perceived any distinction in its qualities or operation, which made it a fluid or matter independent of the sun. It was not easy, before the year 1791, to meet with the works of any student of nature on such a subject, as it had been little attended to; but I at length saw the fact asserted by Henckel, a German of the old school, of some value in his day, and soon afterwards some experiments were announced in England which confirmed the supposition. It has been a favourite point of attention with me ever since; and no truth in philosophy seems to be now more clearly ascertained than that light has a distinct existence, separate and independent of the sun. This is a striking confirmation of the Mosaic record; for that expressly distinguishes the existence and operation of light from the solar action upon it, and from that radiation of it which is connected with his beams and presence. By Moses, an interval of three days is placed between the luminous creation, and the appearance and position of the sun and moon. Light was, therefore, operating by its own laws and agencies, without the sun, and independently of his peculiar agency, from the first day to the fourth of our terrestrial fabrication. But from the time that the sun was placed in his central position, and his rays were appointed to act on our earth, they have been always...
performing most beneficial operations, essential to the general course of things. *Sharon Turner (1768-1847), in "The Sacred History of the World."*

**Verse 17. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth.** The actual distribution of sea and land over the surface of the globe is likewise of the highest importance to the present condition of organic life. If the ocean were considerably smaller, or if Asia and America were concentrated within the tropics, the tides, the oceanic currents, and the meteorological phenomenon on which the existence of the vegetable and animal kingdoms depend, would be so profoundly modified, that it is extremely doubtful whether man could have existed, and absolutely certain that he could never have risen to a high degree of civilisation. The dependence of human progress upon the existing configuration of the globe necessarily leads us to the conclusion that both must be the harmonious work of the same Almighty Power, and that a divine and immutable plan has from all eternity presided over the destinies of our planet. It is almost superfluous to point out how largely the irregular windings and undulations of the coasts, the numerous islands scattered over the face of the waters, the promontories stretching far away into the domains of the sea, and the gulfs plunging deeply into the bosom of the land, have contributed to the civilisation of the human race by multiplying its points of contact with the ocean, the great highway of nations. *G. Hartwig, in "The Harmonies of Nature."* 1866.

**Verse 17. Thou hast set all the borders of the earth.** Consider the form of the earth. It is known to be globular, and in shape nearly like an orange. And why has God chosen that form? With a view that it might be inhabited by living creatures on its whole surface. In order to this, every part of the globe must have sufficient light and heat, the wind must have a free circulation, and the water must be diffused over all its parts. The rotundity of the earth is best calculated to promote these conveniences: for this round form admits light and heat, without which there could be no life all over the globe. The revolutions of day and night, the changes in the temperature of the air, heat, cold, dryness or moisture, could not have taken place without this form. Had the earth been square, had it been conic, had it been an hexagon, or any other angular form, what must the consequence have been? The greatest part of our earth would have been drowned, whilst the rest, would have languished with drought. Some countries must have been torn in pieces by storms, while others would have been deprived of the wholesome circulation of wind. I have new reason to admire the supreme wisdom, when I reflect on the enormous mass which composes our world. Were the earth softer, or more spongy than it is, men and animals would sink into it; were it harder and less penetrable, it would resist the toil of the labourer, and lose its capacity for producing and nourishing the
multitude of plants, herbs, roots, and flowers, which now spring out of its bosom. There are regular and distinct strata found in the earth; some of stone, others of metal and minerals. There are numerous and evident advantages which result from these in favour of mankind. Do not the strata of gravel, sunk deep in the earth, purify and in a manner filter the water and render it sweet and fit for use? On the surface of the earth there is a varied prospect; there is an admirable mixture of plains and valleys, of small hills and mountains. The man must be blind indeed that does not see the wise purpose of the Great Author of nature, in thus diversifying the surface of the earth. Were the earth an even plain, how much beauty would it lose? Besides, this variety of valley and mountain is very favourable to the health of living creatures, and were there no hills, the earth would be less peopled with men and animals. There would be fewer plants, fewer simples and trees. We should be deprived of metals and minerals: the vapours would not be condensed, nor should we have either springs or rivers. Must we not then acknowledge that the whole plan of the earth, its form, its inward and outward construction, are all regulated according to the wise laws, which all combine towards the pleasure and happiness of mankind? O thou supreme Author of nature, thou hast done all things well! Whichever way I turn my eyes, whether I penetrate into the interior structure of the globe thou hast appointed me to inhabit, or whether I examine its surface, I everywhere discover marks of profound wisdom and infinite goodness. 

Christopher Christian Sturm.

Verse 17. *Thou hast made summer and winter. Plasmasti ea.* Now thou hast done all this and more for mankind in general, wilt thou be wanting to thy church? John Trapp.

Verse 17. *Winter.* As if fatigued with so many cares, nature now rests; this, however, is only to collect new force, again to be employed for the good of the world. But even this rest, which nature enjoys in winter, is a secret activity. A new creation is preparing in silence. The necessary dispositions are already making, that the desolate earth may again recover the children she has lost. The corn which is to serve us for food, already shoots. The fibres of plants, which are to adorn our fields and gardens, begin insensibly to open. O my beneficent Creator! Here I find fresh cause to adore thy wisdom and power. The repose which nature takes it as worthy to enter into the plan of thy wise providence, as the activity she shows in spring and summer. Thou hast wisely combined the several revolutions of the earth, thou hast equally divided its rest and labour. It is thy will that each day should vary the scenes of nature, in that way which is most proper for the perfection of the whole. Pardon, O God, my temerity, If I have been so stupid as to blame anything in the government of the world. I am
more than ever convinced that all the plans of thy providence, though they may appear extraordinary to my weak reason, are replete with wisdom and goodness. *Christopher Christian Sturm. 1750-1786.*

**Verse 19.** *O deliver not,* etc. How weak soever the church be, and how many and strong soever the enemy be, yet cannot they all devour the church, except the Lord should deliver his church over into their hands, against which evil the church hath ground of confidence to pray, *O deliver not the soul of thy turtledove unto the multitude of the wicked;* for he hath given his church wings, and a hiding place too, as the comparison imports, if he please to give her the use thereof also. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 19.** The people of God are taught in this form of supplication how to edge and keen their prayers, and make them vigorous; to wit, by disclaiming any ability or sufficiency in themselves; by styling themselves a congregation of poor, silly, weak doves, no way able to encounter an army of bestial, cunning, crafty, bloody, boisterous enemies. This plea the people of God make use of: "With thee the fatherless findeth mercy," *Ho 14:3. John Langley.*

**Verse 19.** *The soul of thy turtledove.* They compare themselves to a turtledove, whose nature leads it, in whatever way it may be afflicted, not to indulge in noisy impatience, but to mourn in secret; so the afflicted people of Israel were unable to do anything but breathe their sighs and groans to God. *Musculus.*

**Verse 19.** *Thy turtledove.* God's people are an harmless, innocent people, altogether unable and insufficient to help themselves against their enemies, who are numerous, cruel, and barbarous. Hence they are resembled to sheep, doves; called in the Word, fatherless, orphans, little ones, babes, poor, simple, needy. They are men bound to their good behaviour, may not harbour so much as a bad thought against any; are called to suffer, not to do wrong. Julian did jeer at them for this; he would strike them on the one cheek, and tell them that their Master taught them to turn the other; his soldiers would take away their cloaks, and mind them that they must part with their coats also. Out of their own dispositions they judge of others, therefore may easily be deceived and entrapped. Thus Gedaliah, that sweet man, would not believe the relation of Johanan touching the conspiracy of the crocodile Ishmael against him; nay, was even angry with him for his faithful dealing that way, and it cost him his life. *Jer 40:16,41.* That famous admiral of France, Jasper Coligny, though he had information and intelligence from sundry parts beyond the seas, that the court did intend to mischief him, and that there was no security in their promises and agreements, though backed with oaths, thrust himself, notwithstanding, upon the lion, and was smoothed with one paw and torn with the other: being such,
they lie open to the rage of many adversaries... One would think these turtles should rather win the love of all that come near them than incur the hatred of any, for they are quiet and peaceable persons. In the mount of the Lord there is no hurt done (Isa 11:9), yet, notwithstanding, they are maligned by a world of people. Because they are not like them (1Pe 4:4); because they are not of their number (Joh 15:19); because their persons and their sacrifices are more acceptable with God than the others' (Ge 4:4); because they reprove them for their evil ways (Joh 3:20); because they are for the most part poor and mean, have no great forecast in worldly affairs, are no deep politicians, they are such as those pauperes Lugdunensis, those poor men of Lyons in France, therefore are exposed to beasts and lions (Mt 1:25); because they mourn for sin in themselves and others: they quarrel with the dove even because of her mournful note. They will jeer at sighing sisters, and men that hang the head like a bulrush; yet, seeing this bulrush cannot grow without mire and mud, why should it not hang the head? John Langley.

Verse 19. Thy turtledove. This expression may, perhaps, be further illustrated from the custom, ancient and modern, of keeping doves as favourite birds (see Theocritus v. 96, and Virgil Eclog. 3. v 68, 69), and from the care taken to secure them from such animals as are dangerous to them. James Merrick.

Verse 19. Turtle Doves, of whatever species they be, whether travellers or domesticated, are equally preserved by the inhabitants of Egypt: they do not kill, and never eat them. Wishing to know the motive of this abstinence among people who possess so little in the greater part of their action, I learnt that it was for the honour of humanity. It is a consequence of the respect due to hospitality, which the Arabs hold in such high estimation, and of which they have communicated some shades to the people who dwell among them. They would regard it as a violation of this hospitality not to spare those birds, which come with a perfect confidence to live amongst them, and there to become skilful but useless receptors of love and tenderness. The very farmer, who sees his harvest a prey for the flights of turtle doves which alight on his fields, neither destroys nor harasses them, but suffers them to multiply in tranquillity. C. N.S. de M. Sonnini. 1775-1811.

Verse 19. Forget not the congregation of thy poor. Thy poor, by way of discrimination. There may be a greater distance between poor and poor, than there is between poor and rich. There are many "ragged regiments, "congregations of poor, "whom the Lord will forget for ever; but his poor shall be saved. And these poor are of two sorts; either poor in regard of wealth and outward substance, or poor in regard of friends or outward assistance. A rich man, especially a godly rich man, may be in a poor case, destitute and forsaken,
wanting patronage and protection. God saveth the poor in both notions, both those that have no friends, and those that have no estates. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 20.** *Have respect.* The word, in the original signification of it, imports a fastening of the eyes upon some object, that a man desires to look into. Hence, by a metaphor, it is transferred to the eyes of the mind, and signifies a serious weighing and consideration of a thing. God is said to "wink at the times of ignorance," or not to regard it, Ac 17:30. God's people here look at God, as if he did wink at his covenant, and neither look at it, nor them in their miseries. The psalmist desires him that he would be mindful of it for his people's deliverance. *Francis Taylor,* in "*A Sermon preached before the House of Commons,*" entitled "*God's Covenant the Churches Plea.*" 1645.

**Verse 20.** *Have respect unto the covenant.* This presseth the Lord more than the former; this is the close grappling, as it were, with him in the words of Jacob: "I will not let thee go till thou hast blessed me." This is the throwing out of the greatest sheet anchor in the tempest, for it lays hold on God's faithfulness, and truth, and fatherly goodness. If they be not in covenant with God, it may be charged upon them.—"You have violated my holy law, you have incensed my wrath against you by your perverse ways, therefore I will not help you, but give you up; "but now the souls that be in covenant with God will not be put off so (be it spoken with holy reverence), but will cry out, O Lord, though our iniquities testify against us, yet *have respect unto thy covenant.* Yet be sure you walk uprightly before the Lord...With what face can any one say, *Lord, have respect unto thy covenant,* when he casts his own covenant behind his back, and cannot say with the prophet David, "I have a respect to all thy commandments"? How canst thou say, "Deliver me not up to the many beasts without, "when thou art not afraid to be delivered up to thy vile, bestial lusts and affections that are within? Thou hypocrite, first labour the subduing of the monsters that are within thee, then a fair way will be open to have thine enemies subdued round about thee. *John Langley.*

**Verse 20.** *Have respect unto the covenant.* Those persons and preachers who decline to think and speak of gospel mercies and free salvation as secured by covenant, deprive themselves and others of much of the blessed comforts of God's word. Such was not the manner of the inspired psalmist. *William S. Plumer.*

**Verse 20.** God seems to his people to neglect his covenant, when they are oppressed by ungodly men. So Asaph complains. After an acknowledgment that God was the Shepherd of Israel, and so in covenant with his people, and accordingly had wonderfully brought them out of Egypt, and made them
flourish marvellously in the land of Canaan, he attributes their misery to God's neglect. Many reasons may be given of this unkind carriage of God's people to him. As, first, because their misery blinds them; and blind men when they are smitten suspect every man that comes near them. Secondly, self love makes us suspect any rather than ourselves, yea, even God himself. The people should have reflected upon themselves that were innocent, but in their sorrows they reflect upon God that was innocent. We are all Adam and Eve's children. When Eve had eaten of the forbidden fruit, she tacitly lays the fault upon God: "The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat." Ge 3:13. Hadst thou not made a subtil serpent I had not broken thy commandment. Adam lays it openly upon God: "The woman who thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat." Ge 3:12. Hadst thou not given me such a companion to betray me, I had been innocent. So we their posterity, when trouble is upon us, suspect God's breaking covenant, rather than our own. Thus our nurses beat the stone when children stumble through their own neglect. Thirdly, in time of need we most commonly suspect such as are best able to help us. The sick man, if he be in danger of death, suspects not his ignorant neighbours, but his skilful physician. He that is oppressed in his estate, when the sentence goes against him, suspects none more than the advocate, or the judge. We know God is best able to help us; our corruption, therefore, makes us to suspect him most, if our troubles continue. Fourthly, we most suspect those who, as we think, have most reason to help us in our miseries, and do it not. If the servant wants meal or apparel, he complains not of his fellow servants but of his master, who is tied by covenant to provide for him; if the child be wronged by the servants, he lays not the fault upon his brethren but upon his father, who by bands of nature is obliged to take care of him. So we, being in covenant with God, wonder not much if others fail us, but complain heavily if God seems to neglect us. Francis Taylor.

Verse 20. The psalmist moves God in prayer to look to his covenant by this argument: For the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty; that is, of cruel men, or of men so full of cruelty, that they deserve rather to be called cruelty than cruel: this sort of men inhabit and fill up all those places where the light of holy truth doth not shine. Now, if they who want the light, or have no true knowledge of God among them, are hereby prepared for the acting of all manner of wickedness, how much more are they prepared for the acting of wickedness who have thrust the light from them, and are in dark places of their own making? The prophet Hosea shows (Ho 4:1), that where there is no knowledge of God in a land, for want of means, there is no truth nor mercy (that is, there is none exercised) in that land, but oppression, deceit, and falsehood bear down all: how much more must it be so when there is no knowledge of God in a land, because of the contempt of means, and rebellion
against the light? What wickedness will not they do in the dark, who put out the candle that they may not see what they do? *Joseph Caryl."

**Verse 20. (second clause).** This might have some literal meaning. *The dark places of the earth,* some have thought, may here describe in the first instance, the caves, the dens, and the woods of the land; for there are many such (as travellers testify) in the land of Judaea, and in unsettled times they have often been the abode of robbers and murderers, who have thence sallied forth to molest and cut off the travellers, to ravish peaceful villages, to waylay and plunder the merchant, to commit all sorts of crimes, and then to return in impunity to these dark retreats, where they laugh at all law, human or divine; they quaff, with horrid pleasure, the recollection of the widow's tears, and listen with inhuman joy to the echoing remembrances of the orphan's moan and the dying father's shriek. But what a land thus infested would be, is but a faint image of the heathen world. Wherever heathenism spreads itself, there are *the dark places of the earth.* The Scripture often tells us that. *John Hambleton.* 1839.

**Verse 20. The dark places.** An allusion, as sometimes interpreters conceive, to the dens of wild beasts, wherein they hide themselves to seize upon their prey, Ps 104:21-22. To these cruel men are compared. Ps 10:8-9. "He sitteth in the lurking places of the villages: in the secret places doth he murder the innocent. He lieth in wait secretly as a lion in his den: he lieth in wait to catch the poor." Such places oppressors and robbers choose. Others take it for an allusion to prisons and dark dungeons void of light. As the prophet, Isa 42:7, describes a prison: "To open the blind eyes, to bring out the prisoners from the prison, and them that sit in darkness out of the prison house." So trouble in Scripture is compared to darkness, and prosperity to light; because darkness is irksome, and light comfortable: "The people that walked in darkness have seen a great light; "and then the sorry hiding places whither God's people went to hide themselves are here meant. Yet, could they not there be quiet, but were pursued, found out, and spoiled by their adversaries. Others take *dark places* for obscure and mean places, as *dark men,* in the original, are called *mean men* in our translation, Pr 22:29. And then it may either signify that the meanest men did oppress God's people, or that the poorest and meanest of God's people were not spared. Such usage have we found in our time, when the poor cottages of our foes have sent out pillagers, and no cottagers of ours have escaped spoiling in diverse places. *Francis Taylor.*

**Verse 20. Cruelty.** Heathenism is cruel. It is not changed in character since the days when parents made their children to pass through fire to Moloch. At this very day, for instance, infanticide prevails in China; and the "law, "says a book
of authority—"the law, otherwise so rigorous, does not take the slightest
cognisance of that crime, nor ever subject those guilty of it to punishment.
Every morning before it is light, waggons traverse the different quarters of the
city of Pekin to receive the dead infants." Well may they go "before it is light;
""the dark places of the earth are full of the habitations of cruelty." "The
missionaries of that city obtained details, which justify belief that the number
of infants (chiefly females) destroyed there is upwards of three thousand
annually." Think of this same proportion, extended throughout that densely
peopled empire. Among the same people suicide is also of frequent occurrence.
What a contrast with the religion which stays the rash hand, and calls out, "Do
thyself no harm!" We might pass to India; and there the flames of the funeral
piles, on which so many widows were annually burnt, had hardly expired, when
we were shocked, only a few years since, with other proofs of the cruelty of
heathenism. What painful details were those, which our government brought to
light respecting the secret murderers of India! What think you of a vast
fraternity of murderers, consisting of many thousands of persons, which has
existed from generation to generation, which has been ramified over the whole
country from Cape Comorin to the Himalayan mountains, which has flourished
alike under Hindu, Mahometan, and British rulers, and which has every year
destroyed multitudes of victims—and all this under the sanction of religion?
The murderous system, they say, has been enjoined them by the goddess Kalee,
who is represented as having made a grant of half the human race to her
votaries, (to be murdered, that is) according to certain prescribed forms. John
Hambleton.

Verse 23. If we are compelled to close our most solemn and urgent devotions,
and our most earnest supplications, without seeing one ray of light beaming
upon our path, it may comfort us to remember that so the pious psalmist closed
this complaint. To hope against hope is the most blessed kind of hope. William
S. Plumer.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1.

1. The divine displeasure a fact.

2. It is but in measure, and we are very liable to exaggerate it.

3. Even while it lasts our relation to him is unaffected: Sheep of thy pasture.
4. Our business is to enquire the reason of it, and act accordingly.

Verse 1. (second clause). The Lord's anger with his people compared to smoke.

1. It is not a consuming fire.
2. It suggests fear of the fire.
3. It darkens the light of joy.
4. It blinds the eyes of faith.
5. It checks the breath of life.
6. It blackens the beauty of our worldly comforts.

Verse 2.

1. The Lord's relation to his people.
   (a) Election.
   (b) Redemption.
   (c) Indwelling.

2. The prayer arising from it: Remember.

Verse 3. Church mischief.

1. The church has enemies.

2. Wickedness in the church is their great weapon.

3. This causes much desolation to weak saints, to enquirers, to peace, to prayer, to usefulness.

4. The cure for it is God's interposition.

Verses 3-4. The power of prayer.

1. On one side were,
   (a) Desolation: perpetual, etc.
   (b) Desecration.
   (c) Declamation: enemies roar.
   (d) Demonstration: they set up.

2. On the other side is,
(a) Supplication.
(b) This brings God to the rescue effectually and quickly.

**Verse 4.** *Ensigns for signs.* The craft of Satan is supplanting truth with deceptive counterfeits.

**Verse 5.** True fame. To build for God with labour, daring, diligence, skill, etc.

**Verse 6.** Vandal work against the truth of God.

**Verses 6-7.** Things feared by a church.

1. Injury to her doctrines or ordinances: *carved work.*

2. The fire of strife, division, etc.

3. The defilement of sin. Either of these three will throw a church down; let her guard and pray against them.

**Verse 8.** The destruction of rural churches, the aim of our enemies: the injury they would so do, and our duty to prevent it: the means the destroyers use: bribery, oppression, etc. Our proper method for sustaining such churches.

**Verse 9.** (*first clause*).

1. There are such things as *signs,* that is, tokens and marks of God's special favour to the soul.

2. There is also *a seeing* those signs when God, the Holy Ghost, is pleased to shine upon them.

3. There is a third state, where there is *not seeing* the signs, those signs being enveloped in darkness, dimness, and obscurity. *J. C. Philpot.*

**Verse 10.** A prayer for revival.

1. How God is reproached.
2. What are the ill effects of it.
3. When we may expect him to arise.

**Verse 11.**
1. The patience of God with man: He 'withdraws his hand, even,' etc., he hesitates to strike.

2. The impatience of man with God: "pluck it, "etc. G. R.

Verse 12.

1. The sovereignty of God.
2. Its antiquity.
3. Our loyalty to it.
4. The practical character of his reign: working.
5. The graciousness of it: working salvation.
6. The place of its operation: in the midst of the earth.

Verse 14. God's defeat of our enemies, and the benefit accruing to ourselves.

Verse 15. The wonderful nature of gracious supplies, illustrated by the smitten rock.

Verse 16. God present alike in all dispensations of providence.

Verses 16-17.

1. The God of grace is the God of nature: The day in thine, etc.

2. The God of nature is the God of grace: the wisdom, the power, the faithfulness the same. See Psalm 19. G. R.

Verse 19. The soul of the believer compared to a turtledove.

Verse 20.

1. The title given to heathen nations: dark places of the earth. Not without the light of nature, or of reason, or of natural conscience, or of philosophy, as of Greece and Rome; but without the light of revelation.

2. Their condition: full of, etc.: cruelty in their public, social, and private relationships. See Romans 1: "without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful."

3. Their part in the covenant. This is known from their part in its promises, and in prophecies: I will give thee the heathen, etc.
4. The prayer of others on their behalf: *Have respect, etc.; Oh send forth thy light, etc.*

The conversion of the world will be in answer to the prayers of the church.

**Verse 22.** God pleading his own cause in providential visitations of nations and individuals, as also in remarkable conversions and awakenings.

**Verse 22.**

1. The glory of our cause: it is the Lord's own.

2. The hope of our cause: he will plead it himself.

3. The hope thus derivable from the violence of man: it will move the Lord to arise.
Psalm 75

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. To the Chief Musician. Here is noble work for him, for the cry of the last Psalm is about to be heard, and the challenge of the foes of Israel taken up by God himself. Here the virgin daughter of Zion despises her foe, and laughs him to scorn. The destruction of Sennacherib's army is a notable illustration of this sacred song. Al-taschith. Here is another of the "destroy not" Psalms, and the title may be intended as a check upon the natural fierceness of the oppressed, or a taunt for the savage foe, who is here bitterly bidden to destroy not, because the nation is well aware that he cannot. Here, in holy faith, the sucking child plays at the hole of the asp, and the weaned child puts his hand on the cockatrice den. A Psalm or Song of Asaph. For reading or singing. A hymn to God and a song for his saints. Happy were the people who having found a Milton in David had an almost equal songster in Asaph: happiest of all, because these poets were not inspired by earth's Castalian fount, but drank of "the fount of every blessing."

DIVISION. The people's song of gratitude and adoration begins the hymn in Ps 75:1. In the next four Ps 75:2-5, the Lord reveals himself as ruling the world in righteousness. Then follows a warning voice from the church to her enemies, Ps 75:6-8, and a closing song anticipatory of the glory due to God and the utter defeat of the foe.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks. Not to ourselves, for we were helpless, but to Elohim who heard our cry, and replied to the taunt of our foes. Never let us neglect thanksgiving, or we may fear that another time our prayers will remain unanswered. As the smiling flowers gratefully reflect in their lovely colours the various constituents of the solar ray, so should gratitude spring up in our hearts after the smiles of God's providence. Unto thee do we give thanks. We should praise God again and again. Stinted gratitude is ingratitude. For infinite goodness there should be measureless thanks. Faith promises redoubled praise for greatly needed and signal deliverances. For that thy name is near thy wondrous works declare. God is at hand to answer and do wonders—adore we then the present Deity. We sing not of a hidden God, who sleeps and leaves the church to her fate, but of one who ever in our darkest days is most near, a very present help in trouble. "Near is his name." Baal is on a journey, but Jehovah dwells in his church. Glory be unto the Lord, whose perpetual deeds of grace and majesty are the sure tokens of his being with us always, even unto the ends of the world.

Verse 2. When I shall receive the congregation I will judge uprightly. This is generally believed to be the voice of God, who will, when he accepts his
people, mount his judgment seat and avenge their cause in righteousness. It is rendered by some, "I will take a set time; "and by others, "I will seize the moment."

"God never is before his time, 
He is never too late."

He determines the period of interposition, and when that arrives swift are his blows and sure are his deliverances. God sends no delegated judge, but sits himself upon the throne. O Lord, let thy set time come for grace. Tarry no longer, but for the truth and the throne of Jesus be thou speedily at work. Let the appointed assize come, O Jesus, and sit thou on thy throne to judge the world in equity.

**Verse 3.** *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved.* When anarchy is abroad, and tyrants are in power, everything is unloosed, dissolution threatens all things, the solid mountains of government melt as wax; but even then the Lord upholds and sustains the right. I bear up the pillars of it. Hence, there is no real cause for fear. While the pillars stand, and stand they must for God upholds them, the house will brave out the storm. In the day of the Lord's appearing a general melting will take place, but in that day our covenant God will be the sure support of our confidence.

"How can I sink with such a prop
As my eternal God, 
Who bears the earth's huge pillars up, 
And spreads the heavens abroad."

Selah. Here may the music pause while the sublime vision passes before our view; a world dissolved and an immutable God uplifting all his people above the terrible commotion.

**Verse 4.** *I said unto the fools, Deal not foolishly.* The Lord bids the boasters boast not, and commands the mad oppressors to stay their folly. How calm is he, how quiet are his words, yet how divine the rebuke. If the wicked were not insane, they would even now hear in their consciences the still small voice bidding them cease from evil, and forbear their pride. And to the wicked, Lift not up the horn. He bids the ungodly stay their haughtiness. The horn was the emblem of boastful power; only the foolish, like wild and savage beasts, will lift it high; but they assail heaven itself with it, as if they would gore the Almighty himself. In dignified majesty he rebukes the inane glories of the
wicked, who beyond measure exalt themselves in the day of their fancied power.

**Verse 5.** *Lift not up your horn on high.* For their abounding pride there is a double rebuke. A word from God soon abases the lofty. Would to God that all proud men would obey the word here given them; for, if they do not, he will take effectual means to secure obedience, and then woe will come upon them, such as shall break their horns and roll their glory in the mire for ever. Speak not with a stiff neck. Impudence before God is madness. The outstretched neck of insolent pride is sure to provoke his axe. Those who carry their heads high shall find that they will be lifted yet higher, as Haman was upon the gallows which he had prepared for the righteous man. Silence, thou silly boaster! Silence! or God will answer thee. Who art thou, thou worm, that thou shouldest arrogantly object against thy Maker's laws and cavil at his truth? Be hushed, thou vainglorious prater, or vengeance shall silence thee to thine eternal confusion.

**Verse 6.** *For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south.* There is a God, and a providence, and things happen not by chance. Though deliverance be hopeless from all points of the compass, yet God can work it for his people; and though judgment come neither from the rising or the setting of the sun, nor from the wilderness of mountains, yet come it will, for the Lord reigneth. Men forget that all things are ordained in heaven; they see but the human force, and the carnal passion, but the unseen Lord is more real far than these. He is at work behind and within the cloud. The foolish dream that he is not, but he is near even now, and on the way to bring in his hand that cup of spiced wine of vengeance, one draught of which shall stagger all his foes.

**Verse 7.** *But God is the judge.* Even now he is actually judging. His seat is not vacant; his authority is not abdicated; the Lord reigneth evermore. He putteth down one, and setteth up another. Empires rise and fall at his bidding. A dungeon here, and there a throne, his will assigns. Assyria yields to Babylon, and Babylon to the Medes. Kings are but puppets in his hand; they serve his purpose when they rise and when they fall. A certain author has issued a work called "Historic Ninepins," (Timbs), a fit name of scorn for all the great ones of the earth. God only is; all power belongs to him; all else is shadow, coming and going, unsubstantial, misty, dream like.

**Verse 8.** *For in the hand of the Lord there is a cup.* The punishment of the wicked is prepared, God himself holds it in readiness; he has collected and concocted woes most dread, and in the chalice of his wrath he holds it. They
scoffed his feast of love; they shall be dragged to his table of justice, and made
to drink their due deserts. And the wine is red. The retribution is terrible, it is
blood for blood, foaming vengeance for foaming malice. The very colour of
divine wrath is terrible; what must the taste be? It is full of mixture. Spices of
anger, justice, and incensed mercy are there. Their misdeeds, their blasphemies,
their persecutions have strengthened the liquor as with potent drugs;

"Mingled, strong, and mantling high;
Behold the wrath divine."

Ten thousand woes are burning in the depths of that fiery cup, which to the
brim is filled with indignation. And he poureth out of the same. The full cup
must be quaffed, the wicked cannot refuse the terrible draught, for God himself
pours it out for them and into them. Vain are their cries and entreaties. They
could once defy him, but that hour is over, and the time to requite them if fully
come. But the dregs thereof, all the wicked of the earth shall wring them out,
and drink them. Even to the bitter end must wrath proceed. They must drink on
and on for ever, even to the bottom where lie the lees of deep damnation; these
they must suck up, and still must they drain the cup. Oh the anguish and the
heart break of the day of wrath! Mark well, it is for all the wicked; all hell for
all the ungodly; the dregs for the dregs; bitters for the bitter; wrath for the heirs
of wrath. Righteousness is conspicuous, but over all terror spreads a tenfold
night, cheerless, without a star. Oh happy they who drink the cup of godly
sorrow, and the cup of salvation: these, though now despised, will then be
envied by the very men who trod them under foot.

Verse 9. But I will declare for ever. Thus will the saints occupy themselves
with rehearsing Jehovah's praises, while their foes are drunken with the wine of
wrath. They shall chant while the others roar in anguish, and justly so, for the
former Psalm informed us that such had been the case on earth,—"thine
enemies roar in the sanctuary, "—the place where the chosen praised the Lord.
I will sing praises to the God of Jacob. The covenant God, who delivered Jacob
from a thousand afflictions, our soul shall magnify. He has kept his covenant
which he made with the patriarch, and has redeemed his seed, therefore will we
spread abroad his fame world without end.

Verse 10. All the horns of the wicked also will I cut off. Power and liberty being
restored to Israel, she begins again to execute justice, by abasing the godless
who had gloried in the reign of oppression. Their power and pomp are to be
smitten down. Men wore horns in those days as a part of their state, and these,
both literally and figuratively, were to be lopped off; for since God abhors the
proud, his church will not tolerate them any longer. But the horns of the
righteous shall be exalted. In a rightly ordered society, good men are counted great men, virtue confers true rank, and grace is more esteemed than gold. Being saved from unrighteous domination, the chief among the chosen people here promises to rectify the errors which had crept into the commonwealth, and after the example of the Lord himself, to abase the haughty and elevate the humble. This memorable ode may be sung in times of great depression, when prayer has performed her errand at the mercyseat, and when faith is watching for speedy deliverance. It is a song of the second advent, CONCERNING THE NEARNESS OF THE JUDGE WITH THE CUP OF WRATH.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS

TITLE. Al-taschith. Destroy not. This seems to have been used by David as a maxim during the violent persecutions of Saul, as if to remind himself to forebear revenge, though it was often in his power to inflict it, upon his unnatural enemy. F. G. Hubbard, in "The Psalms Chronologically arranged, with Historical Introductions". New York. 1856.

Whole Psalm. As these words are really a prayer, while at the same time the Psalm is thrown into the form, not of petitions, but of a thanksgiving, it ought to be considered as a thank prayer, uttered beforehand, and containing petitions within it. Berleb. Bible.

Verse 1. Thy name is near. The name of God is said to be near, because it had come into public notice, and was in every mind and every tongue—opposed to what is unknown and obscure, which is said to be far remote. Compare De 30:11. Hermann Venema.

Verse 1. The psalmist doubles this duty in the practice of the saints; Unto thee, O God, do we give thanks, we give thanks, we do it; as if none else did it but they, or as if they had done noting else. Joseph Caryl, in "A Sermon before the House of Commons, "entitled, "The Saints' Thankful Acclamation."

Verse 3. I bear up the pillars of it. I prevent it from falling to pieces, as a house, supported by columns too weak to bear its weight, would do. Daniel Cresswell.

Verse 3. I bear up the pillars of it. Learn to whom the glory of bearing up the world is due. God's providence is the true Atlas which supports the world, and doth shoulder up the world, whilst it treads on sin and sinners. Upon a serious view taken of providence on this wise displayed, we may say as they said of
old, "The Lord, he is the God; the Lord he is the God," 1Ki 18:39. Thomas Crane.

**Verse 3.** We can imagine a monarch, and especially an eastern monarch, in the plenitude of his power, and the arrogance of his pride, as he casts his haughty glance over the ensign of his might, saying to himself, "I bear up the pillars of the earth." But one could never imagine such a thought arising in the heart, or proceeding from the lips of David or Hezekiah. I know not who of the sons of Adam, frail and feeble at their best estate, could have ever said, *The earth and all the inhabitants thereof are dissolved: I bear up the pillars of it.* I know of none but him who said, "All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth," and who, as he said these words, ascended up into heaven to exercise that sovereignty, and repair that mighty ruin which had been wrought on earth when Satan triumphed in Paradise. Barton Bouchier.

**Verse 4. Fools.** The ungodly are spiritual fools. If one had a child very beautiful, yet if he were a fool, the parent would have little joy in him. The Scripture hath dressed the sinner in a fool's coat: and let me tell you, better be a fool void of reason, than a fool void of grace: this is the devil's fool. Pr 14:9. Is not he a fool who refuseth a rich portion? God offers Christ and salvation, but the sinner refuseth this portion: "Israel would none of me." Ps 81:11. Is not he a fool who prefers an annuity before an inheritance? Is not he a fool who tends his mortal part, and neglects his angelical part? As if one should paint the wall of his house, and let the timber rot. Is not he a fool who will feed the devil with his soul? As that emperor who fed his lion with a pheasant. Is not he a fool who lays a snare for himself? Pr 1:18. Who consults his own shame? Hab 2:10. Who loves death? Pr 8:36. Thomas Watson.

**Verse 5. Horn.** The word *horn* was used in the Hebrew metaphorically to express either *honour*, as Ps 112:9 132:18, etc.; or *strength*, Mic 4:13, "I will make thine horn iron." De 33:17, etc. To humble and cast down was often represented by the figure of breaking or cutting off the horn, as here (Ps 75:10). La 2:3, "Cut off all the horn of Israel." To exalt the horn of any one was to bestow honour and dignity upon him; so also, to make it bud. Ps 132:17 89:18 Eze 29:21. Here, *to lift up the horn* betokens presumption. It was also somewhat later a symbol for kingdom, Zec 1:18, and Daniel. *"Four Friends."*

**Verse 5. Speak not with a stiff neck.** Mr. Bruce has observed that the Abyssinian kings have a *horn* on their *diadem*; and that the keeping it erect, or in a projecting form, makes them appear as if they had a *stiff neck*; and refers to this passage for the antiquity of the usage, and the *appearance* also. Adam Clarke.
Verse 6. *For promotion cometh neither from the east, etc.* The word *promotion* here is used in a very expressive way; it means the desire of self advancement, Myrh (*harim*), and would teach us that all our inward schemes, and outward plans, cannot gain for us advancement, unless based upon the fear and love of God; we look forward to improve our circumstances, like to the ascending of a mountain, and nerve ourselves to the effort of ascent, fondly thinking that no eye watches our efforts; but as "shame is the promotion of fools," so disappointment is often the return of rashness... From the *east* promotion doth not come; the word *east* here is very expressive, *auwm* (*mimmoza*), the rising of the sun, the outgoing of light, the dawning of the day, and the manifesting or revealing of God. We look around; and in the early dawning of youth, with high hopes, mental energies, and perhaps superior talents, anticipate victory over our compeers, and a course of worldly success and prosperity; but alas! how often are all these hopes blighted and a succession of reverses humbles our spirits. Promotion cometh not from the *west*. The original is *bremmw* (*umimmagnarab*) and it means duskiness, darkness, and the setting sun,—hence the west. When the clouds of years press upon us, and darkened shadows overtake us in various ways, such as loss of dear and early friends, the buoyancy of youth gone by, hopes softened down to personal ease, and the power of the constitution reduced; then God often wills that promotion shall not come. We now approach to the last point from whence promotion cometh not, that is from the *south*, *rbrm* (*mid bar*) a waste place, the Arabian desert; hence the south. In dry and solitary places like the sandy desert little advancement can be looked for; like the human intellect, unless cultivated and improved by care and education it is barren as the desert to all holy feelings and improvement, the natural passions like sand choke up every patch susceptible of cultivation, and close up all the avenues to thought and devotion. A godless man is like the Arabian desert, of no profit to himself or his neighbours; like ever shifting sands being tossed to and fro by his own wayward passions; heated with the suns of turbulence, self will, and recklessness, he is a desert, a waste where God will not vouchsafe the light of his countenance for promotion. Like the disobedient Jews of old, Ps 78:49, we may speak of this man saying, "How oft did he provoke him in the wilderness and grieve him in the desert!" Let us then cultivate the higher part of our being, and then we may produce fruit unto holiness; let us not wreck so noble a ship as the soul by careless steering and neglect, but trim its sails with early good instruction, and then may we arrive at the haven where we would be. Having now illustrated the three points mentioned in our text, let us turn to the *one (the north)* where promotion or advancement may be looked for. Coldness is emblematical of purity, and coldness is an attribute of the north. The pure in heart shall see God. God is the northern light that gleams over the stillness of life's night. "He giveth snow like
wool; he scattereth the hoar frost like ashes; he casteth forth his ice like morsels." Be it ours to be humbly dependent upon God; for whatever station he may choose to keep us in, godliness alone will prove our promotion and true riches. If our anxieties are directed toward pleasing him, then shall we prosper, and he will shew us "a pure river of water of life, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God, and the Lamb." (Re 22:1.) Condensed from a Sermon by Gregory Bateman, preached March 16th, 1862, on his entering upon the Vicarage of Ulrome.

Verse 6. For promotion cometh neither from the east, nor from the west, nor from the south. Here are three of the four winds specified, and it is said, "promotion" comes from neither of them. But why is it not also said that promotion comes not from the north? that's the question. I answer;—it were answer enough to say, that we ought not to put questions curiously about such things; it should satisfy us that the Spirit of God is pleased to say it is so, and no more. Yet some tell us, the reason why it is not said promotion cometh not from the north, is because indeed it cometh out of the north, which, say they, is intimated in the Hebrew word for the north, which signifies hidden or secret. Promotion comes not from the east, nor west, nor south, but from the north. It comes from the north in a figure or mystery, that is, it comes from some hidden providence, or secret hand, which many take no more notice of than we do of the furthest part of the north. God promotes many in this world to power, and sends them great prosperity, we see not how or which way: the causes and contrivances of it are hidden close, and in the breast of God. This also is a truth; in that sense we may say, "Fair weather cometh from the north." Promotion is visible, but the manner of it is a secret; we see not the causes for which, nor the ways in which it cometh. It is enough to touch these niceties, and to touch them can do no hurt, while the matter arising from them hath the clear consent of, and is harmonious with other plain places of Scripture. Joseph Caryl.

Verse 6. Promotion; or, lifting up. The word is evidently an emphatic word in the Psalm; it is the same which occurs in verses four and five, and again in verse seven and verse ten. I have, therefore, given the same rendering of it throughout. The rendering of the authorized version promotion, besides losing sight of the manifestly designed repetition of the same word, is peculiarly unfortunate in conveying a wrong idea. Lifting up, in its Hebrew sense, does not mean promotion, as we commonly understand it, but deliverance from trouble, safety, victory. The image, in particular, of lifting up the head or the horn (the last borrowed from wild beasts, such as buffaloes, etc., in whom the horn is the symbol of strength), denotes courage, strength, and victory over enemies. J. J. Stewart Perowne.
Verse 6. *Nor from the south.* "From the wilderness, "the great wilderness lying in that direction. Three quarters are mentioned, the north only being omitted. This may be accounted for, supposing the Psalm to refer to Sennacherib, by the fact that the Assyrian army approached from the north; and therefore it would be natural to look in all directions but that for assistance to repel the invader. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 6-7. "I thought to promote thee to great honour," said the king of Moab to Balaam; and yet that promotion ended in a dishonoured and a bloody death. I have often thought of many of the Lord's servants on earth, so superciliously passed by and passed over in man's catalogue of worthies, with what glad and grateful surprise they will at length receive that promotion denied on earth, when their own Master shall say to them, "Friend, come up higher; "and then, as they sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven, shall they have honour of them that sit at meat with them. *Barton Bouchier.*

Verses 6-10. The rise and fall of nations and empires are in this Psalm ascribed to God. He exalts one and puts down another at his pleasure. In this he generally uses instrumentality, but that instrumentality is always rendered effectual by his own agency. When nations or individuals are prosperous, and glorious, and powerful, they usually ascribe all to themselves or to fortune. But it is God who has raised them to eminence. When they boast he can humble them. In these verses God is considered as the governor of the world, punishing the wicked, and pouring out judgment on his enemies. The calamities of war, pestilence, and famine, are all ministers of providence to execute wrath. *Alexander Carson.*

Verse 7.

"Here he exalts neglected worms
To sceptres and a crown;
Anon the following page he turns,
And treads the monarch down." —*Isaac Watts.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

Verse 1. The unceasing thanksgiving of the church, her grand cause for adoration: the nearness of her God, and the evident proof thereof in the displays of his power.

Verse 1.
1. Do we give thanks?
2. We do give thanks.
3. What thanks do we give.?
4. When do we give thanks?
5. Let us give thanks again.

Good resolutions commendable, how they should be made, strengthened, and performed.

**Verse 3.** The Lord the stay of his people under the worst circumstances.

**Verse 3.** Teacheth us that no disorder or confusion should hinder us from doing that which God requireth of us; nay, rather, the more things are out of order the more readily should we labour to redress them. *Thomas Wilcocks.*

**Verse 4.**

1. Who spoke to them? *I.*
2. Who were they? *Fools, wicked.*
3. What did you say?
4. What was the good of it? Or, Rebuке of sin, a duty.

**Verse 4.** The unhallowed trio:—wickedness, folly, pride.

**Verse 5.** Arguments against pride in heart, appearance, and speech.

**Verses 6-7.** The changes of providence not the tricks of fortune.

**Verse 7.** God acts as a judge and not arbitrarily in his providential arrangements.

**Verse 8.** *In the hand of the Lord there is a cup,* etc.

1. As to matter of preparation, consider it so, and thus it is *in the hand of the Lord.*
2. By way of qualification: it is he that tempers it; it was *full of mixture.*
3. By way of distribution, as giving to every one his share and portion in it. *Thomas Horton.*
Verse 8. The cup of wrath. Where it is, what it is, how full it is, who brings it, who must drink it.

Verse 8. Full of mixture. Wrath of God, remorse, memory of lost joy, fear of future, recriminations, despair, shame, etc., all these are ingredients of the mingled cup.

Verse 8. (last clause).

1. "The dregs" of the cup: the wrath of wrath, the gall of bitterness.

2. The dregs of the people: "all wicked."

Verse 9. Our life work: to declare and to sing.
Psalm 76

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher

**TITLE.** To the Chief Musician on Neginoth. The Precentor is here instructed to perform this song to the music of stringed instruments. The master of the harpers was called for his most skilful minstrelsy, and truly the song is worthy of the sweetest sounds that strings can yield. *A Psalm or Song of Asaph.* The style and matter indicate the same hand as that which wrote the preceding; and it is an admirable arrangement which placed the two in juxtaposition. Faith in the 75th Psalm sung of victories to come, and here it sings of triumphs achieved. The present Psalm is a most jubilant war song, a paean to the King of kings, the hymn of a theocratic nation to its divine ruler. We have no need to mark divisions in a song where the unity is so well preserved.

**EXPOSITION**

**Verse 1. In Judah is God known.** If unknown in all the world beside, he has so revealed himself to his people by his deeds of grace, that he is no unknown God to them. His name is great in Israel. To be known, in the Lord's case, is to be honoured: those who know his name admire the greatness of it. Although Judah and Israel were unhappily divided politically, yet the godly of both nations were agreed concerning Jehovah their God; and truly whatever schisms may mar the visible church, the saints always "appear as one" in magnifying the Lord their God. Dark is the outer world, but within the favoured circle Jehovah is revealed, and is the adoration of all who behold him. The world knows him not, and therefore blasphemes him, but his church is full of ardour to proclaim his fame unto the ends of the earth.

**Verse 2. In Salem also is his tabernacle.** In the peaceful city he dwells, and the peace is perpetuated, because there his sacred tent is pitched. The church of God is the place where the Lord abides and he is to her the Lord and giver of peace. And his dwelling place in Zion. Upon the chosen hill was the palace of Israel's Lord. It is the glory of the church that the Redeemer inhabits her by his Holy Spirit. Vain are the assaults of the enemy, for they attack not us alone, but the Lord himself. Immanuel, God with us, finds a home among his people, who then shall work us ill?

**Verse 3. There brake he the arrows of the bow.** Without leaving his tranquil abode, he sent forth his word and snapped the arrows of his enemies before they could shoot them. The idea is sublime, and marks the ease, completeness, and rapidity of the divine action. The shield, and the sword, and the battle. Every weapon, offensive and defensive, the Lord dashed in pieces; death
Psalm 76

Verse 4. Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey. Far more is Jehovah to be extolled than all the invading powers which sought to oppress his people, though they were for power and greatness comparable to mountains. Assyria had pillaged the nations till it had become rich with mountains of spoil, this was talked of among men as glory, but the psalmist despised such renown, and declares that the Lord was far more illustrious. What are the honours of war but brags of murder? What the fame of conquerors but the reek of manslaughter? But the Lord is glorious in holiness, and his terrible deeds are done in justice for the defence of the weak and the deliverance of the enslaved. Mere power may be glorious, but it is not excellent: when we behold the mighty acts of the Lord, we see a perfect blending of the two qualities.

Verse 5. The stouthearted are spoiled. They came to spoil, and lo! they are spoiled themselves. Their stout hearts are cold in death, the angel of the pestilence has dried up their life blood, their very heart is taken from them. They have slept their sleep. Their last sleep—the sleep of death. And none of the men of might have found their hands. Their arms are palsied, they cannot lift a finger, for the rigour of death has stiffened them. What a scene was that when Sennacherib's host was utterly destroyed in one night. The hands which were furious to pull down Jerusalem, could not even be raised from the sod, the most valiant warriors were as weak as the palsied cripples at the temple gate, yea, their eyes they could not open, a deep sleep sealed their vision in everlasting darkness. O God, how terrible art thou! Thus shalt thou fight for us, and in the hour of peril overthrow the enemies of thy gospel. Therefore in thee will we trust and not be afraid.

Verse 6. At thy rebuke. A word accomplished all, there was no need of a single blow. O God of Jacob. God of thy wrestling people, who again like their father supplant their enemy; God of the covenant and the promise, thou hast in this gracious character fought for thine elect nation. Both the chariot and horse are cast into a dead sleep. They will neither neigh nor rattle again; still are the trampings of the horses and the crash of the cars; the calvary no more creates its din. The Israelites always had a special fear of horses and scythed chariots; and, therefore, the sudden stillness of the entire force of the enemy in this
department is made the theme of special rejoicing. The horses were stretched on the ground, and the chariots stood still, as if the whole camp had fallen asleep. Thus can the Lord send a judicial sleep over the enemies of the church, a premonition of the second death, and this he can do when they are in the zenith of power; and, as they imagine, in the very act of blotting out the remembrance of his people. The world's Rabshakahs can write terrible letters, but the Lord answers not with pen and ink, but with rebukes, which bear death in every syllable.

Verse 7. Thou, even thou, art to be feared. Not Sennacherib, nor Nisroch his god, but Jehovah alone, who with a silent rebuke had withered all the monarch's host.

"Fear him, ye saints, and then ye shall Have nothing else to fear."

The fear of man is a snare, but the fear of God is a great virtue, and has great power for good over the human mind. God is to be feared profoundly, continually, and alone. Let all worship be to him only. And who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry? Who indeed? The angels fell when their rebellion provoked his justice; Adam lost his place in Paradise in the same manner; Pharaoh and other proud monarchs passed away at his frown; neither is there in earth or hell any who can abide the terror of his wrath. How blest are they who are sheltered in the atonement of Jesus, and hence have no cause to fear the righteous anger of the Judge of all the earth.

Verse 8. Thou didst cause judgment to be heard from heaven. So complete an overthrow was evidently a judgment from heaven; those who saw it not, yet heard the report of it, and said, "This is the finger of God." Man will not hear God's voice if he can help it, but God takes care to cause it to be heard. The echoes of that judgment executed on the haughty Assyrian are heard still, and will ring on down all the ages, to the praise of divine justice. The earth feared and was still. All nations trembled at the tidings, and sat in humbled awe. Repose followed the former turmoils of war, when the oppressor's power was broken, and God was reverenced for having given quiet to the peoples. How readily can Jehovah command an audience! It may be that in the latter days he will, by some such miracles of power in the realms of grace, constrain all earth's inhabitants to attend to the gospel, and submit to the reign of his all glorious Son. So be it, good Lord.

Verse 9. When God arose to judgment. Men were hushed when he ascended the judgment seat and actively carried out the decrees of justice. When God is
still the people are in tumult; when he arises they are still as a stone. To save all the meek of the earth. The Ruler of men has a special eye towards the poor and despised; he makes it his first point to right all their wrongs. "Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth." They have little enough of it now, but their avenger is strong and he will surely save them. He who saves his people is the same God who overthrows their enemies; he is as omnipotent to save as to destroy. Glory be unto his name. Selah. Here pause, and let devout contemplation adore the God of Jacob.

Verse 10. Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee. It shall not only be overcome but rendered subservient to thy glory. Man with his breath of threatening is but blowing the trumpet of the Lord's eternal fame. Furious winds often drive vessels the more swiftly into port. The devil blows the fire and melts the iron, and then the Lord fashions it for his own purposes. Let men and devils rage as they may, they cannot do otherwise than subserve the divine purposes. The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain. Malice is tethered and cannot break its bounds. The fire which cannot be utilised shall be damped. Some read it "thou shalt gird, "as if the Lord girded on the wrath of man as a sword to be used for his own designs, and certainly men of the world are often a sword in the hand of God, to scourge others. The verse clearly teaches that even the most rampant evil is under the control of the Lord, and will in the end be overruled for his praise.

Verse 11. Vow, and pay unto the Lord your God. Well may we do so in memory of such mercies and judgments. To vow or not is a matter of choice, but to discharge our vows is our bounden duty. He who would defraud God, his own God, is a wretch indeed. He keeps his promises, let not his people fail in theirs. He is their faithful God and deserves to have a faithful people. Let all that be round about him bring presents unto him that ought to be feared. Let surrounding nations submit to the only living God, let his own people with alacrity present their offerings, and let his priests and Levites be leaders in the sacred sacrifice. He who deserves to be praised as our God does, should not have mere verbal homage, but substantial tribute. Dread Sovereign, behold I give myself to thee.

Verse 12. He shall cut off the spirit of princes. Their courage, skill, and life are in his hands, and he can remove them as a gardener cuts off a slip from a plant. None are great in his hand. Caesars and Napoleons fall under his power as the boughs of the tree beneath the woodman's axe. He is terrible to the kings of the earth. While they are terrible to others, he is terrible to them. If they oppose themselves to his people, he will make short work of them; they shall perish
before the terror of his arm, "for the Lord is a man of war, the Lord is his name." Rejoice before him all ye who adore the God of Jacob.

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**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS**

**Whole Psalm.** No Psalm has a greater right to follow Psalm 75 than this, which is inscribed *To the Precentor, with accompaniment of stringed instruments (vid.) iv. 1, a Psalm by Asaph, a song.* Similar expressions (*God of Jacob, Ps 75:10 77:7; saints, wicked of the earth, Ps 75:9 76:10*), and the same impress throughout speak in favour of unity of authorship. In other respects too, they form a pair: Psalm 75 prepares the way for the divine deed of judgments as imminent, which Psalm 76 celebrates as having taken place. *Franz Delitzsch.*

**Verse 1. In Judah is God known.** God is truly and savingly known only in and through his Son; God indeed is obscurely and darkly known in his works, as a God of power; in his providence, as a God of authority, wisdom, and order; in his common mercies, as a God of bounty; and in his punishments and judgments, as a God of justice; but in Christ opened and preached in the gospel, God is known with a clear, a comfortable, and saving knowledge, as a father of grace and singular mercy and loving-kindness. *In Judah (saith the psalmist) is God known: his name is great in Israel.* In Judah, in his church, where his word and ordinances are, where Christ is preached and the mystery of man's salvation is opened, there God is known truly without error, perspicuously without obscurities, and savingly without uncertainties; there he is known as a King in his courts, for the glory and beauty which he there manifests; as a teacher in his school, for the wisdom and knowledge which he there dispenses; as a dweller in his house, for the holy orders he there prescribes, and gracious rule and dominion he there erects and beareth in the souls of his servants; as a bridegroom in the banqueting house, for the spiritual dainties he there maketh, for the clear and open manifestation of himself, and love and comforts he there ministereth to his spiritual friends and guests; *and his name is great in Israel;* his power, wisdom, truth, love, and goodness is much magnified and very glorious in their apprehensions who know him in Christ Jesus. *Alexander Grosse.*

**Verse 1. His name.** By the name of God here, God himself is understood; for in so many good effects as God uttereth himself towards his kirk, *so many names* he giveth to himself whereby he may be praised of her. As for example, when he promises unto his kirk freely grace and mercy, his kirk giveth him a name, and calleth him merciful. When he keepeth his promise, and uttereth himself a faithful God to his kirk, his kirk giveth him a name, and calleth him a true God.
When he delivereth his kirk out of danger, and sheweth him a mighty God, and terrible against his enemies, the kirk giveth him a name, and calleth him a potent God, and so forth in the rest of his effects: so that by the name of God is understood here God himself, as God maketh himself to be known in his wonderful works. Robert Bruce.

Verse 1. His name is great in Israel. Properly the great name in Israel, that is, the church, is the name of Jesus, which is great, first, by its efficacy: for it signifies Saviour. There is no other name under heaven by which we must be saved. Secondly, it is great in dignity: for it is the name that is above every name... Thirdly, it is great in the breadth if its range, Ps 8:1: How excellent is thy name in all the earth. Thomas Le Blanc.

Verse 2. In Salem also is his tabernacle. It is not without meaning that Jerusalem has the appellation of Salem; for it is thereby insinuated that the tabernacle of God, notwithstanding the assault of foes, in the very heart of the tumults of war remained in peace. How much more now that the invaders had been overthrown, would prosperity be enjoyed? Hermann Venema.

Verse 2. In Salem also is his tabernacle. God the Holy Ghost is a spirit of peace, he is the comforter; he seals up peace (2Co 1:22). This blessed dove brings the olive branch of peace in his mouth: now a peaceable disposition evidences something of God in a man, therefore God loves to dwell there. "In Salem is God's tabernacle:" Salem signifies peace; God dwells in a peaceable spirit. Thomas Watson.

Verse 2. In Salem also is his tabernacle, etc. All the old versions, as well as the two English ones, have missed one especial force of this passage. There is no direct reference in words to any human habitation, but to the lair of the Lion of Judah. The word wkm does not only mean his tabernacle, but his covert, and is so translated in another place (Jer 25:38): "He hath forsaken his covert, as the lion; "and the vaguer word wtgwem which succeeds may well be translated by "den, "or some equivalent phrase. Ps 10:9. Simon De Muis.

Verses 2-3. The care of Salem, or Zion, lies at the bottom of all God's powerful acting and workings among the sons of men. Every mighty work of God throughout the world may be prefaced with these two verses. The whole course of affairs in the world in steered by Providence in reference to the good of Salem. John Owen.

Verse 3. There. Observe how it is said, There he brake, namely, in his temple, his habitation there. For unto that his temple doth the coherence in the verse
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Verse 3. There. These men, to wit the King of Asshur and his accomplices, came to cast out God out of his dwelling place; but he stood to the defence of his own house, and showed them that he would not remove for their pleasure. Robert Bruce.

Verse 4. God was not known in Babylon, in Egypt, in other nations, his tabernacle and dwelling place was not amongst them, therefore they were not glorious. But see what is in the fourth verse, Thou art more glorious and excellent than the mountains of prey: thou Judah, thou Israel, thou Salem, thou Zion, that hast spiritual mercies and blessings, art more glorious than they, whatever their glory be. Have the nations abroad goodly towers? thou hast the temple; have they stately cities? thou hast Jerusalem, the city of God; have they wise men? thou hast the prophets; have they gods of gold, silver, and stones; thou hast the true living God, Jehovah, to be thy God; have they human laws that are good? thou hast divine laws that excel; have they temporal excellencies? thou hast spiritual; have they the glory of the world? thou hast the glory of heaven. William Greenhill.

Verse 4. The mountains of prey. Why are they called the mountains of prey? There is a reference to the lairs of the lions in the mountains, whence they rush forth upon those who come that way, and tear them in pieces. In the same way the dwelling place of God was represented above under the title of a tabernacle or lair. Moreover, this is a mystic epithet of the mountains of Judah, by which it is hinted that the enemies who venture to approach that lair are wont to be torn in sunder: a terrible example of which had just been shown in the case of the Assyrian, there overthrown, torn, and spoiled. Compare Isa 31:4. Hermann Venema.
Verse 5. The stouthearted are spoiled. There is indicated in these words that consternation of mind which deprives of judgment and power. The valiant are spoiled of their heart: that is, they who at other times were wise and courageous have now lost their heart, and have been reduced to foolishness and stupidity. Hermann Venema.

Verse 5. The stouthearted are spoiled. After the breaking of their weapons their spoliation is recorded, for that follows the slaughter of foes. Nor is mention made of that without reason. They had come to spoil, therefore are they deservedly spoiled. Musculus.

Verse 5. The stouthearted are spoiled. Some translate it, They are spoiled of their stout heart. The stouthearted, the strong, are spoiled. The strong man may be spoiled by a stronger; that's a good sense, but it is more elegantly rendered, they are spoiled of their stout heart; that is, the Lord takes their heart out of their bosom. Daring men, who fear nothing, are turned into Magor-missabibs—fear round about; their stout hearts are taken from them, and they are so far from being a terror to other men, that they run from the shadow of a man; their courage is down; they cannot give a child a confident look, much less look dangers or enemies in the face. Joseph Caryl.

Verse 5. (last clause). The strength and power of a man is in his hands; if they be gone, all his hope is gone. If a man's sword be taken from him, he will do what he can with his hands; but if his hands be gone, he may go to sleep for any disturbance he will work. For men not to find their hands, is not to have that power for the execution of their designs which formerly they had. John Owen.

Verse 5. (last clause). As we say of a man that goes lamely or lazily, "he cannot find his feet; "so of a man that acts lamely or lazily, or of a soldier that fights faintly and cowardly, he cannot find his hands. Joseph Caryl.

Verses 5-6.

For the Angel of Death spread his wings on the blast,  
And breathed in the face of the foe as he passed;  
And the eyes of the sleepers waxed deadly and chill,  
And their hearts but once heaved, and for ever were still!

And there lay the steed with his nostril all wide,  
But through it there rolled not the breath of his pride:  
And the foam of his gasping lay white on the turf,  
And cold as the spray of the rock breaking surf.
And there lay the rider distorted and pale,
With the dew on his brow and the rust on his mail;
And the tents were all silent, the banners alone,
The lances unlifted, the trumpet unblown.
—George Gordon, Lord Byron.

**Verse 6.** *Cast into a deep sleep.* It is observable that the verb here used is the same as is used in the narrative of the act of Jael, and of the death of the proud enemy of Israel, Sisera, *cast into a deep sleep,* by God's power, working by the hand of a woman. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

**Verse 7.** *Thou, even thou, art to be feared.* The emphasis in the word *thou,* redoubled, implies as much as if he had said, *Not principalities, not powers, not hell, not death,* nor anything for themselves, but *thou,* O Lord, alone art to be feared. Arguments and reasons to confirm it are two, here laid down in the text: the first is drawn from God's anger, who hath decreed, and accordingly executes vengeance upon all the proud. The second is drawn from his power; not princes, not armies, not men, not angels, are able to endure the breath of his fury; for, *Who may stand in thy sight when once thou art angry?...* The anger of God is a terrible, unspeakable, unsupportable, intolerable, burden. Every word in the text hath a special emphasis to prove this. *Who may stand? Who? Shall angels? They are but like refracted beams or rays, if God should hide his face, they would cease to shine. Shall man? His glory and pomp, like the colours in the rainbow, vanish away, when God puts forth in anger the brightness of his face. Shall devils? If he speak the word, they are tumbled down from heaven like lightning. Stand in thy sight. Stand.* What! a reed against a cedar, a thistle in Lebanon against a cedar in Lebanon; a feather against a flame; a grasshopper against an Almighty, a head of glass against a rod of brass? *When once thou art angry.* *Angry.* By sending out his wrath, that it wounds like arrows; angry, in pouring it out, that it drowns like water; angry, in kindling of it, that it burns like fire; a consuming fire, but you tell me such a fire may be quenched; an unquenchable fire, but since that may cease to burn, when it lacks matter, it is in one word an everlasting fire, that never goes out. That, that's it; such anger as is never fully shown, but in punishment of reprobates; in no punishment, but that in hell; in none in hell, but that eternal. *John Cragge's "Cabinet of Spiritual Jewells."* 1657.

**Verse 9.** *God arose to judgment.* This great judgment was wrought upon the enemies *when God rose:* it was not done when God sat; for the whole time when he sat his enemies were aloft, stirring their time, raging in murder, oppression, and blood... He bringeth in God here after the manner of earthly judges, after the custom of our judges; for first they sit down, they try, seek out,
and advise, and after consideration they resolve, and after resolution they rise up, give forth judgment, and pronounce the sentence; even so the prophet bringeth in God after the same manner; sitting, and after sitting, rising and pronouncing the sentence. Robert Bruce.

**Verse 9.** To save all the meek. We see from this passage what care God takes of the afflicted. When he is angry with the ungodly, he is angry with them chiefly because they have oppressed the poor and the innocent. Although he detests all iniquity, yet he is most indignant with that which is committed against the needy and guiltless. So in Psalm 12, "For the oppression of the poor, for the sighing of the needy, now will I arise, saith the Lord." So in this verse, when God arose to judgment, to save all the meek of the earth. Musculus.

**Verse 9.** Is not this the day when the Saviour comes to reign? the day when the results of things shall best be seen; the day when every saint with anointed eye shall see that events all tended to the glory of God; the day when they shall sing better far than now.

"Surely the wrath of man praiseth thee.
Thou girdest thyself with the remnant of wrath."
—Andrew A. Bonar.

**Verse 10.** Surly the wrath of man shall praise thee. Persecutions tend to correct the failings of good men, and to exercise and illustrate their several graces and virtues. By these, good men are usually made much better and more approved, while they tend to exercise our patience, to quicken our devotion, to evidence out zeal and Christian fortitude, and to show to the whole world what love we bear to the truth, and how much we are willing to undergo for the honour of God. Till they have suffered something for it, truth is too apt to grow cheap and be less prized many times, even by those that are good men in the main; whereas we are apt on the contrary, never to value it at a higher rate, or to be more zealous for it, or to make better use of it, than when it is opposed and persecuted. What more truly beneficial therefore, or tending to the divine glory, than for God, who useth to bring good out of evil, to make use also of the opposers of his truth, to rouse up his servants whom he sees growing more remiss and negligent than they should be, and to suffer such temptations to assault them, by which their drowsy minds may be spurred on into a greater love and zeal for the truth, and a deeper sense of the divine benefit in it, and in general, excited to the more diligent performance of their duty. Richard Pearson. 1684.
Verse 10. *The wrath of man shall praise thee.* In the Septuagint it is, *The wrath of man shall keep holy day to thee,* shall increase a festival for thee. God many times gets up in the world on Satan's shoulders. When matters are ravelled and disordered, he can find out the right end of the thread, and how to disentangle us again; and when we have spoiled a business, he can dispose it for good, and make an advantage of those things which seem to obscure the glory of his name. *Thomas Manton.*

Verse 10. *The wrath of man shall praise thee.* The wrath of wicked men against the people of God is very tributary to his praise.

1. It puts them upon many subtle devices and cunning stratagems, in frustrating of which the wisdom of God and his care of his Church is very much illustrated.

2. The wrath of wicked men impels them to many violent and forcible attempts upon the people of God to destroy them, and so gives him occasion to manifest his power in their defence.

3. It makes them sometimes fit to be his instruments in correcting his people, and so he vindicates himself from the suspicion of being a patron to sin in them that are nearest to him, and makes them that hate holiness promote it in his people, and them that intend them the greatest hurt, to do them the greatest good.

4. It administers occasion to him for the manifestation of the power of his grace in upholding the spirits of his people and the being of his church in despite of all that enemies can do against them.

5. It serves very much to adorn God's most signal undertakings for his people in the world.

6. It serves to manifest the glory of God's justice upon his people's enemies in the day when he rises up to avenge himself upon them, when he shall stand over them, lashing them with scorpions, and at every blow mind their former cruelties. Here, take that for your inhuman rage against my people at such a place, and that for your barbarous usage of them at such a time. Now see how good it is to be imprisoned, beaten, tortured, burnt, and sawn asunder. Thus the enemies themselves are often constrained to acknowledge with Adoni Bezek the righteous hand of God upon them in the day of inquisition. *Condensed from John Warren's Sermon before Parliament.* 1656.
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Verse 10. The wrath of man. Wrath is anger accented unto the highest pitch, or blown up into a flame. The wrath of man, (in the original it is The wrath of Adam, or the wrath of clay, weak, impotent man) shall praise thee, i.e., it shall turn to the praise and glory of God through his overruling providence, though quite otherwise intended. God will bring honour to himself, and serve his own holy and wise designs out of it... This expression, the wrath of man, imports the weakness and impotence of it; it is but the wrath of Adam, or of red clay. How contemptibly doth the Spirit of God speak of man, and of the power of man, in Scripture? "Cease ye from man, whose breath is in his nostrils; for wherein is he to be accounted of?" The wrath of man, when it is lengthened out to its utmost boundaries, can only go to the length of killing the body, or in the breaking the sheath of clay in which the soul lodges, and then it can do no more. Ebenezer Erskine.

Verse 10. Shall praise thee. God turns the wrath of man to the praise of his adorable sovereignty. Never have the Lord's people had such awful impressions of the sovereignty of God, as when they have been in the furnace of man's wrath, then they become dumb with silence. When the Chaldean and Sabean robbers are let loose to plunder and spoil the substance of Job, he is made to view adorable sovereignty in it, saying, "The Lord gave, the Lord hath taken away: blessed be the name of the Lord." It is in such a case as this that God says to his own people, "Be still, and know that I am God; I will be exalted among the heathen." What work of God about the church is advanced by the wrath of men?

1. His discovering work; for by the wind of man's wrath he separates between the precious and the vile, betwixt the chaff and the wheat. In the day of the church's prosperity and quiet, hypocrites and true believers are mingled together, like the chaff and the wheat in the barn floor: but the Lord, like the husbandman, opens the door of his barn, and puts the wind of man's wrath through it, that the world may know which is which. O, sirs, much chaff is cast up already, both among ministers and professors; but it is like the wind and sieve may cast up much more yet ere all be done.

2. God's purging work is advanced among his own children by the wrath of men: there is much of the dross of corruption cleaves to the Lord's people while in the wilderness. Now, the Lord heats the furnace of man's wrath, and casts his people into it, that when he has tried them, he may bring them forth as gold.

3. God's uniting work is hereby advanced. In a time of peace and external tranquillity the sheep of Christ scatter and divide among themselves; but God
lets loose the dogs upon them, and then the flock runs together; or like pieces of metal cast into the fire, they run together in a lump.

4. God's *enlarging* work, or his work of spreading the gospel, is sometimes advanced by the wrath of man. Ac 8:1-5. The gospel, like the chamomile, the more it is trodden upon, the more it spreads. *Ebenezer Erskine.*

**Verse 10.** *The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.* The remainder of wrath, *i.e.* what is left behind of the wrath of men, when God has glorified himself thereby. Even after God has defeated the purposes of wicked men, and made them contribute to his glory, yet there is abundance of wrath remaining. But what becomes of that wrath that is left? God shall *restrain* it. The word signifies to *gird up.* However God may see fit to slacken the bridle of his providence, and suffer wicked men to vent their wrath and enmity, as far as it shall contribute to his glory; yet the super abounding and the remainder of his wrath that is not for his glory and his people's profit, God will gird it up, that they shall not get it vented... If any wrath of man remain beyond what shall bring in a revenue of praise unto God, he will *restrain it,* and bind it up like the waters of a mill: he will suffer as much of the current of water to run upon the wheel, as serves to carry it about and grind his corn, but the remainder of the water he sets it off another way: so God will let out as much of the current of man's wrath as shall serve the ends of his glory and our good, but the remainder of the stream and current he will *restrain,* and turn another way. In Isaiah 28 we are told that God will not be aye "threshing his corn, nor break it with the wheel of his cart, nor bruise it with his horsemen. This cometh forth from the Lord of hosts, which is wonderful in counsel, and excellent in working." All this comfort is sure and certain, there is not the least peradventure about it, that the flame of man's wrath shall praise the Lord, and the superfluous fire shall be quenched, or hemmed in; for here we have God's parole of honour for it: *Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee: the remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.* *Ebenezer Erskine.*

**Verse 10.** *The remainder of wrath shalt thou restrain.* twmh Chemoth, "wrath, "in the plural number, seems to be put in opposition to chamoth, the single wrath of man in the former part of the verse; to shew there is more wrath which God is to restrain, than merely that of man. There is also more pride which needs a like restraint; namely, that of the first Lucifer, who sinned, and, as is thought, fell by aspiring to ascend, and to be like the Most High. There are finally, other *counsels* also, as well as other wrath and pride, besides human, which God confounds. There is a wisdom that descendeth not from above (no, nor grows on earth) but is devilish, Jas 3:15. And both wrath, pride, and wisdom, of devils as well as men, shall God *restrain,* when he pleases not to
turn them to his praise. Let there be hellish plots, yet our God shall confound them. From "A Sermon preached"... before the Queen... By Edward (Wetenhall) Lord Bishop of Corke and Rosse. 1691.

Verse 10. *Thou shalt restrain.* This, in the Hebrew, is expressed in one word, rygxt, which imports the girding or binding of it on every side, that it shall by no means break out, but shall be kept in, as a dog in a chain, as a lion in his den, how violent soever. *Cornelius Burges, in "Another Sermon preached to the Honourable House of Commons... November the fifth, 1641."*

Verse 11. *Round about him.* A description of his people, as the twelve tribes pitched round about the tabernacle, Nu 2:2; and the twenty-four elders were round about God's throne, Re 4:4. So the Chaldee expounds it;—*Ye that dwell about his sanctuary. Henry Ainsworth.*

Verse 12. *Cut off.* He deals with princes as men deal with a vine. An axe is too strong for a cluster of grapes, or a sprig of a vine; it easily cuts them off: so God by a judgment easily cuts off the spirit of princes; they are not able to stand against the least judgments of God: when he puts strength into worms, or any other creature they fall. *William Greenhill, in a Sermon, entitled, "The Axe at the Root."*

Verse 12. The Lord *cuts off the spirit of princes*; the word is, *he slips off*, as one should slip off a flower between one's fingers, or as one should slip off a bunch of grapes from a vine, so soon is it done. How great uncertainty have many great ones, by their miserable experience, found in their outward glory and worldly felicity! What a change hath a little time made in all their honours, riches, and delights! That victorious emperor Henry the Fourth, who had fought fifty-two pitched battles, fell to that poverty before he died, that he was forced to petition to be a prebend in the church of Spier, to maintain him in his old age. And Procopius reports of King Gillimer, who was a potent king of the Vandals, who was so low brought, as to intreat his friends to send him a sponge, a loaf of bread, and a harp; a sponge to dry up his tears, a loaf of bread to maintain his life, and a harp to solace himself in his misery. Philip de Comines reports of a Duke of Exeter, who though he had married Edward the Fourth's sister, yet he saw him in the Low Countries begging barefoot. Bellisarius, the chief man living in his time, having his eyes put out, was led at last in a string, crying, "give a halfpenny to Bellisarius." *Jeremiah Burroughs.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER
Verse 1. Reverence for God's name proportionate to true knowledge of it.

Verse 2. The peculiar relation of God to his church.

Verse 2. (first clause). A peaceful church the tabernacle of God. The benefits peace confers, the evils of strife, the causes of dissension, and the means of promoting unity.

Verse 3. Christian glories, or the victories vouchsafed to the church over heathenism, heresy, persecution, etc.

Verse 3.

1. Where enemies are conquered; "There; "not on the battlefield so much as in the house of God; as Amalek by Moses on the Mount; Sennacherib by Hezekiah in the Sanctuary.

2. How there?

(a) By faith.

(b) By prayer. "The weapons of our warfare, "etc.

Verse 4. The Lord, our portion, compared with the treasures of empires.

Verse 4.

1. What the world is, compared with the church: Mountains of prey.

(a) Cruelty instead of love.

(b) Violence instead of peace.

2. What the church is compared with the world.

(a) More glorious, because more excellent.

(b) More excellent, because more glorious. Both are more real and abiding. G. R.

Verse 5. They have slept their sleep. Divers kinds of deaths or sleeps for the various classes of men.

Verse 7. The anger of God. A very suggestive subject.
Verses 8-9.

1. The characters described: *the meek of the earth.*

2. The need implied.
   (a) To be vindicated.
   (b) To be saved.

3. The divine interposition on their behalf: *Thou didst cause,* etc. *When God arose,* etc.

4. The effect of their deliverance: *The earth feared,* etc. *G. R.*

Verse 10.

1. Evil permitted for good: *the wrath,* etc.
2. Restrained for good: *The remainder,* etc.

Or,

1. Ruled.
2. Overruled. *G. R.*

Verse 11.

1. To whom vows may be made. Not to man, but God.

2. What vows should be thus made.
   (a) Of self dedication.
   (b) Of self service.
   (c) Of self sacrifice.

3. How kept: *Vow and pay.* (a) From duty.
   (b) From fear of his displeasure. *G. R.*

Verse 11. The propriety, obligation, pleasure, and profit of presenting gifts unto the Lord.
Psalm 77

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher
Other Works

TITLE. To the Chief Musician, to Jeduthun. It was meet that another leader of the psalmody should take his turn. No harp should be silent in the courts of the Lord's house. A Psalm of Asaph. Asaph was a man of exercised mind, and often touched the minor key; he was thoughtful, contemplative, believing, but withal there was a dash of sadness about him, and this imparted a tonic flavour to his songs. To follow him with understanding, it is needful to have done business on the great waters, and weathered many an Atlantic gale.

DIVISION. If we follow the poetical arrangement, and divide at the Selahs, we shall find the troubled man of God pleading in Ps 77:1-3, and then we shall hear him lamenting and arguing within himself, Ps 77:4-9. From Ps 77:10-15 his meditations run toward God, and in the close he seems as in a vision to behold the wonders of the Red Sea and the wilderness. At this point, as if lost in an ecstasy, he hurriedly closes the Psalm with an abruptness, the effect of which is quite startling. The Spirit of God knows when to cease speaking, which is more than those do who, for the sake of making a methodical conclusion, prolong their words even to weariness. Perhaps this Psalm was meant to be a prelude to the next, and, if so, its sudden close is accounted for. The hymn now before us is for experienced saints only, but to them it will be of rare value as a transcript of their own inner conflicts.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. I cried unto God with my voice. This Psalm has much sadness in it, but we may be sure it will end well, for it begins with prayer, and prayer never has an ill issue. Asaph did not run to man but to the Lord, and to him he went, not with studied, stately, stilted words, but with a cry, the natural, unaffected, unfeigned expression of pain. He used his voice also, for though vocal utterance is not necessary to the life of prayer, it often seems forced upon us by the energy of our desires. Sometimes the soul feels compelled to use the voice, for thus it finds a freer vent for its agony. It is a comfort to hear the alarm bell ringing when the house is invaded by thieves. Even unto God with my voice. He returned to his pleading. If once sufficed not, he cried again. He needed an answer, he expected one, he was eager to have it soon, therefore he cried again and again, and with his voice too, for the sound helped his earnestness. And he gave ear unto me. Importunity prevailed. The gate opened to the steady knock. It shall be so with us in our hour of trial, the God of grace will hear us in due season.

Verse 2. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. All day long his distress drove him to his God, so that when night came he continued still in the same
search. God had hidden his face from his servant, therefore the first care of the troubled saint was to seek his Lord again. This was going to the root of the matter and removing the main impediment first. Diseases and tribulations are easily enough endured when God is found of us, but without him they crush us to the earth. My sore ran in the night, and ceased not. As by day so by night his trouble was on him and his prayer continued. Some of us know what it is, both physically and spiritually, to be compelled to use these words: no respite has been afforded us by the silence of the night, our bed has been a rack to us, our body has been in torment, and our spirit in anguish. It appears that this sentence is wrongly translated, and should be, "my hand was stretched out all night," this shows that his prayer ceased not, but with uplifted hand he continued to seek succour of his God. My soul refused to be comforted. He refused some comforts as too weak for his case, others as untrue, others as unhallowed; but chiefly because of distraction, he declined even those grounds of consolation which ought to have been effectual with him. As a sick man turns away even from the most nourishing food, so did he. It is impossible to comfort those who refuse to be comforted. You may bring them to the waters of the promise, but who shall make them drink if they will not do so? Many a daughter of despondency has pushed aside the cup of gladness, and many a son of sorrow has hugged his chains. There are times when we are suspicious of good news, and are not to be persuaded into peace, though the happy truth should be as plain before us as the King's highway.

Verse 3. *I remembered God, and was troubled.* He who is the wellspring of delight to faith becomes an object of dread to the psalmist's distracted heart. The justice, holiness, power, and truth of God have all a dark side, and indeed all the attributed may be made to look black upon us if our eye be evil; even the brightness of divine love blinds us, and fills us with a horrible suspicion that we have neither part nor lot in it. He is wretched indeed whose memories of the Ever Blessed prove distressing to him; yet the best of men know the depth of this abyss. I complained, and my spirit was overwhelmed. He mused and mused but only sank the deeper. His inward disquietudes did not fall asleep as soon as they were expressed, but rather they returned upon him, and leaped over him like raging billows of an angry sea. It was not his body alone which smarted, but his noblest nature writhed in pain, his life itself seemed crushed into the earth. It is in such a case that death is coveted as a relief, for life becomes an intolerable burden. With no spirit left in us to sustain our infirmity, our case becomes forlorn; like man in a tangle of briars who is stripped of his clothes, every hook of the thorns becomes a lancet, and we bleed with ten thousand wounds. Alas, my God, the writer of this exposition well knows what thy servant Asaph meant, for his soul is familiar with the way of grief. Deep
glens and lonely caves of soul depressions, my spirit knows full well your awful glooms! Selah. Let the song go softly; this is no merry dance for the swift feet of the daughters of music, pause ye awhile, and let sorrow take breath between her sighs.

**Verse 4. Thou holdest mine eyes waking.** The fears which thy strokes excite in me forbid my eyelids to fall, my eyes continue to watch as sentinels forbidden to rest. Sleep is a great comforter, but it forsakes the sorrowful, and then their sorrow deepens and eats into the soul. If God holds the eyes waking, what anodyne shall give us rest? How much we owe to him who giveth his beloved sleep! I am so troubled that I cannot speak. Great griefs are dumb. Deep streams brawl not among the pebbles like the shallow brooklets which live on passing showers. Words fail the man whose heart fails him. He had cried to God but he could not speak to man, what a mercy it is that if we can do the first, we need not despair though the second should be quite out of our power. Sleepless and speechless Asaph was reduced to great extremities, and yet he rallied, and even so shall we.

**Verse 5. I have considered the days of old, the years of ancient times.** If no good was in the present, memory ransacked the past to find consolation. She fain would borrow a light from the altars of yesterday to light the gloom of today. It is our duty to search for comfort, and not in sullen indolence yield to despair; in quiet contemplation topics may occur to us which will prove the means of raising our spirits, and there is scarcely any theme more likely to prove consolatory than that which deals with the days of yore, the years of the olden time, when the Lord's faithfulness was tried and proven by hosts of his people. Yet it seems that even this consideration created depression rather than delight in the good man's soul, for he contrasted his own mournful condition with all that was bright in the venerable experiences of ancient saints, and so complained the more. Ah, sad calamity of a jaundiced mind, to see nothing as it should be seen, but everything as through a veil of mist.

**Verse 6. I call to remembrance my song in the night.** At other times his spirit had a song for the darkest hour, but now he could only recall the strain as a departed memory. Where is the harp which once thrilled sympathetically to the touch of those joyful fingers? My tongue, hast thou forgotten to praise? Hast thou no skill except in mournful ditties? Ah me, how sadly fallen am I! How lamentable that I, who like the nightingale could charm the night, am now fit comrade for the hooting owl. I commune with mine own heart. He did not cease from introspection, for he was resolved to find the bottom of his sorrow, and trace it to its fountain head. He made sure work of it by talking not with his mind only, but with his inmost heart; it was heart work with him. He was no
idler, no melancholy trifler; he was up and at it, resolutely resolved that he
would not tamely die of despair, but would fight for his hope to the last
moment of life. And my spirit made diligent search. He ransacked his
experience, his memory, his intellect, his whole nature, his entire self, either to
find comfort or to discover the reason why it was denied him. That man will
not die by the hand of the enemy who has enough force of soul remaining to
struggle in this fashion.

Verse 7. Wilt the Lord cast off forever? This was one of the matters he
enquired into. He painfully knew that the Lord might leave his people for a
season, but his fear was that the time might be prolonged and have no close;
eagerly, therefore, he asked, will the Lord utterly and finally reject those who
are his own, and suffer them to be the objects of his contemptuous reprobation,
his everlasting cast offs? This he was persuaded could not be. No instance in
the years of ancient times led him to fear that such could be the case. And will
he be favourable no more? Favourable he had been; would that goodwill never
again show itself? Was the sun set never to rise again? Would spring never
follow the long and dreary winter? The questions are suggested by fear, but
they are also the cure for fear. It is a blessed thing to have grace enough to look
such questions in the face, for their answer is self evident and eminently fitted
to cheer the heart.

Verse 8. Is his mercy clean gone for ever? If he has no love for his elect, has he
not still his mercy left? Has that dried up? Has he no pity for the sorrowful?
Doth his promise fail for evermore? His word is pledged to those who plead
with him; is that become of none effect? Shall it be said that from one
generation to another the Lord's word has fallen to the ground; whereas
aforetime he kept his covenant to all generations of them that fear him? It is a
wise thing thus to put unbelief through the catechism. Each one of the questions
is a dart aimed at the very heart of despair. Thus have we also in our days of
darkness done battle for life itself.

Verse 9. Hath God forgotten to be gracious? Has El, the Mighty One, become
great in everything but grace? Does he know how to afflict, but not how to
uphold? Can he forget anything? Above all, can he forget to exercise that
attribute which lies nearest to his essence, for he is love? Hath he in anger shut
up his tender mercies? Are the pipes of goodness choked up so that love can no
more flow through them? Do the bowels of Jehovah no longer yearn towards
his own beloved children? Thus with cord after cord unbelief is smitten and
driven out of the soul; it raises questions and we will meet it with questions: it
makes us think and act ridiculously, and we will heap scorn upon it. The
argument of this passage assumes very much the form of a reductio ad
Psalm 77

absurdam. Strip it naked, and mistrust is a monstrous piece of folly. Selah. Here rest awhile, for the battle of questions needs a lull.

Verse 10. And I said, This is my infirmity. He has won the day, he talks reasonably now, and surveys the field with a cooler mind. He confesses that unbelief is an infirmity, a weakness, a folly, a sin. He may also be understood to mean, "this is my appointed sorrow," "I will bear it without complaint. When we perceive that our affliction is meted out by the Lord, and is the ordained portion of our cup, we become reconciled to it, and no longer rebel against the inevitable. Why should we not be content if it be the Lord's will? What he arranges it is not for us to cavil at. But I will remember the years of the right hand of the most High. Here a good deal is supplied by our translators, and they make the sense to be that the psalmist would console himself by remembering the goodness of God to himself and others of his people in times gone by: but the original seems to consist only of the words, "the years of the right hand of the most High," and to express the idea that his long continued affliction, reaching through several years, was allotted to him by the Sovereign Lord of all. It is well when a consideration of the divine goodness and greatness silences all complaining, and creates a childlike acquiescence.

Verse 11. I will remember the works of the Lord. Fly back my soul, away from present turmoil, to the grandeurs of history, the sublime deeds of Jehovah, the Lord of Hosts; for he is the same and is ready even now to defend his servants as in days of yore. Surely I will remember thy wonders of old. Whatever else may glide into oblivion, the marvellous works of the Lord in the ancient days must not be suffered to be forgotten. Memory is a fit handmaid for faith. When faith has its seven years of famine, memory like Joseph in Egypt opens her granaries.

Verse 12. I will meditate also of all thy work. Sweet work to enter into Jehovah's work of grace, and there to lie down and ruminate, every thought being absorbed in the one precious subject. And talk of thy doings. It is well that the overflow of the mouth should indicate the good matter which fills the heart. Meditation makes rich talking; it is to be lamented that so much of the conversation of professors is utterly barren, because they take no time for contemplation. A meditative man should be a talker, otherwise he is a mental miser, a mill which grinds corn only for the miller. The subject of our meditation should be choice, and then our task will be edifying; if we meditate on folly and affect to speak wisdom, our double mindedness will soon be known unto all men. Holy talk following upon meditation has a consoling power in it for ourselves as well as for those who listen, hence its value in the connection in which we find it in this passage.
Verse 13. *Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary, or in holiness.* In the holy place we understand our God, and rest assured that all his ways are just and right. When we cannot trace his way, because it is "in the sea," it is a rich consolation that we can trust it, for it is in holiness. We must have fellowship with holiness if we would understand "the ways of God to man." He who would be wise must worship. The pure in heart shall see God, and pure worship is the way to the philosophy of providence. Who is so great a God as our God? In him the good and the great are blended. He surpasses in both. None can for a moment be compared with the mighty One of Israel.

Verse 14. *Thou art the God that doest wonders.* Thou alone art Almighty. The false gods are surrounded with the pretence of wonders, but you really work them. It is thy peculiar prerogative to work marvels; it is no new or strange thing with thee, it is according to thy wont and use. Herein is renewed reason for holy confidence. It would be a great wonder if we did not trust the wonder working God. Thou hast declared thy strength among the people. Not only Israel, but Egypt, Bashan, Edom, Philistia, and all the nations have seen Jehovah's power. It was no secret in the olden time and to this day it is published abroad. God's providence and grace are both full of displays of his power; he is in the latter peculiarly conspicuous as "mighty to save." Who will not be strong in faith when there is so strong an arm to lean upon? Shall our trust be doubtful when his power is beyond all question? My soul see to it that these considerations banish thy mistrusts.

Verse 15. *Thou hast with thine arm redeemed thy people, the sons of Jacob and Joseph.* All Israel, the two tribes of Joseph as well as those which sprang from the other sons of Jacob, were brought out of Egypt by a display of divine power, which is here ascribed not to the hand but to the arm of the Lord, because it was the fulness of his might. Ancient believers were in the constant habit of referring to the wonders of the Red Sea, and we also can unite with them, taking care to add the song of the Lamb to that of Moses, the servant of God. The comfort derivable from such a meditation is obvious and abundant, for he who brought up his people from the house of bondage will continue to redeem and deliver till we come into the promised rest. Selah. Here we have another pause preparatory to a final burst of song.

Verse 16. *The waters saw thee, O God, the waters saw thee; they were afraid.* As if conscious of its Maker's presence, the sea was ready to flee from before his face. The conception is highly poetical, the psalmist has the scene before his mind's eye, and describes it gloriously. The water saw its God, but man refuses to discern him; it was afraid, but proud sinners are rebellious and fear not the Lord. The depths also were troubled. To their heart the floods were made
afraid. Quiet caves of the sea, far down in the abyss, were moved with fear; and the lowest channels were left bare, as the water rushed away from its place, in terror of the God of Israel.

**Verse 17. The clouds poured out water.** Obedient to the Lord, the lower region of the atmosphere yielded its aid to overthrow the Egyptian host. The cloudy chariots of heaven hurried forward to discharge their floods. The skies sent out a sound. From the loftier aerial regions thundered the dread artillery of the Lord of Hosts. Peal on peal the skies sounded over the heads of the routed enemies, confusing their minds and adding to their horror. Thine arrows also went abroad. Lightnings flew like bolts from the bow of God. Swiftly, hither and thither, went the red tongues of flame, on helm and shield they gleamed; anon with blue bale fires revealing the innermost caverns of the hungry sea which waited to swallow up the pride of Mizraim. Behold, how all the creatures wait upon their God, and show themselves strong to overthrow his enemies.

**Verse 18. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven, or in the whirlwind.** Rushing on with terrific swiftness and bearing all before it, the storm was as a chariot driven furiously, and a voice was heard (even thy voice, O Lord!) out of the fiery car, even as when a mighty man in battle urges forward his charger, and shouts to it aloud. All heaven resounded with the voice of the Lord. The lightnings lightened the world. The entire globe shone in the blaze of Jehovah's lightnings. No need for other light amid the battle of that terrible night, every wave gleamed in the fire flashes, and the shore was lit up with the blaze. How pale were men's faces in that hour, when all around the fire leaped from sea to shore, from crag to hill, from mountain to star, till the whole universe was illuminated in honour of Jehovah's triumph. The earth trembled and shook. It quaked and quaked again. Sympathetic with the sea, the solid shore forgot its quiescence and heaved in dread. How dreadful art thou, O God, when thou comest forth in thy majesty to humble thine arrogant adversaries.

**Verse 19. Thy way is in the sea.** Far down in secret channels of the deep is thy roadway; when thou wilt thou canst make a sea a highway for thy glorious march. And thy path in the great waters. There, where the billows surge and swell, thou still dost walk; Lord of each crested wave. And thy footsteps are not known. None can follow thy tracks by foot or eye. Thou art alone in thy glory, and thy ways are hidden from mortal ken. Thy purposes thou wilt accomplish, but the means are often concealed, yea, they need no concealing, they are in themselves too vast and mysterious for human understanding. Glory be to thee, O Jehovah.
Verse 20. *Thou leddest thy people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron.*
What a transition from tempest to peace, from wrath to love. Quietly as a flock Israel was guided on, by human agency which veiled the excessive glory of the divine presence. The smiter of Egypt was the shepherd of Israel. He drove his foes before him, but went before his people. Heaven and earth fought on his side against the sons of Ham, but they were equally subservient to the interests of the sons of Jacob. Therefore, with devout joy and full of consolation, we close this Psalm; the song of one who forgot how to speak and yet learned to sing far more sweetly than his fellows.

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EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAINTE SAYINGS

**Whole Psalm.** Whenever, and by whomsoever, the Psalm may have been written, it clearly is individual, not national. It utterly destroys all the beauty, all the tenderness and depth of feeling in the opening portion, if we suppose that the people are introduced speaking in the first person. The allusions to the national history may indeed show that the season was a season of national distress, and that the sweet singer was himself bowed down by the burden of the time, and oppressed by woes which he had no power to alleviate; but it is his own sorrow, not the sorrow of others under which he sighs, and of which he has left the pathetic record. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

**Verse 1.** In the beginning of the Psalm, before speaking of his sorrows, he hastens to show the necessary and most efficacious remedy for allaying sorrow. He says that he did not, as many do, out of their impatience of grief or murmuring, either accuse God of cruelty or tyranny, or utter blasphemous words by which dishonour might fall upon God, or by indulging in sorrow and distrust hasten his own destruction, or fill the air with vain complaining, but fled straight to God and to him unburdened his sorrow, and sought that he would not shut him out from that grace which he bountifully offers to all. This is the only and sure sovereign remedy which most effectually heals his griefs. *Mollerus.*

**Verse 1.** *I cried.* To the Orientals the word qeu presented the idea of a *crash,* as of the heavens sending out thunders and lightnings. Whence beyond other things he metaphorically says, *he cried for sorrow;* ...shaken with a tempest of thoughts he burst out into an open and loud sounding complaint. *Hermann Venema.*

**Verse 1.** *Even unto God with my voice.* The repetition here is emphatic. The idea is that it was an earnest or fervent cry. *Albert Barnes.*
Verse 1. (last clause). At the second knock, the door of grace flew open: the Lord heard me. John Collings.

Whole Psalm. See Psalms on "Ps 77:1" for further information.

Verse 2. In the day of my trouble I sought the Lord. Days of trouble must be days of prayer; in days of inward trouble, especially when God seems to have withdrawn from us, we must seek him, and seek till we find him. In the day of his trouble he did not seek for the diversions of business or recreation, to shake off his trouble that way, but he sought God, and his favour and grace. Those that are under trouble of mind, must not think to drink it away, or laugh it away, but pray it away. Matthew Henry.

Verse 2. My sore ran in the night. Hebrew: My hand was poured out; that is, stretched out in prayer; or wet with continual weeping. Non fuit remissa, nec retracta in lectum. John Trapp.

Verse 2. My sore ran in the night, and ceased not, etc. There is no healing of this wound, no easing of this sore, no cleansing of the conscience, no quieting of a man's spirit: till God whom the soul seeketh show himself as the Physician, the evil continueth still and groweth. David Dickson.

Verse 2. My soul refused to be comforted. God has provided suitable and sufficient comfort for his people. He sends them comforters just as their circumstances require. But they at times refuse to hear the voice of the charmer. The Lord has perhaps taken away an idol—or he withholds his sensible presence, that they may learn to live by faith—or he has blighted their worldly prospects—or he has written vanity and emptiness upon all their gourds, cisterns, and delights. They give way to passion, as did Jonah—or they sink into sullen gloom—or allow unhumbled pride to rule the spirit—or yield to extreme sorrow, as Rachel did—or fall under the power of temptation—or imbibe the notion that they have no right to comfort. This is wrong, all wrong, decidedly wrong. Look at what is left you, at what the gospel presents to you, at what heaven will be to you. But the psalmist was recovered from this state. He was convinced that it was wrong. He was sorry for his sin. He was reformed in his spirit and conduct. He wrote this Psalm to instruct, caution, and warn us. Observe, they who are entitled to all comfort, often through their own folly, enjoy the least. The Lord's people are often their own tormentors, they put away the cup of comfort from them, and say they are unworthy of it

O Thou source of every blessing,
Chase my sorrows, cheer my heart,
Verse 2. *My soul refused to be comforted.* Poor I, that am but of yesterday, have known some that have been so deeply plunged in the gulf of despair, that they would throw all the spiritual cordials that have been tendered to them against the walls. They were strong in reasoning against their own souls, and resolved against everything that might be a comfort and support unto them. They have been much set against all ordinances and religious services; they have cast off holy duties themselves, and peremptorily refused to join with others in them; yea, they have, out of a sense of sin and wrath, which hath laid hard upon them, refused the necessary comforts of this life, even to the overthrow of natural life, and yet out of this horrible pit, this hell upon earth, hath God delivered their souls, and given them such manifestations of his grace and favour, that they would not exchange them for a thousand worlds. O despairing souls, you see that others, whose conditions have been as bad if not worse than yours, have obtained mercy. God hath turned their hell into a heaven; he hath remembered them in their low estate; he hath pacified their raging consciences, and quieted their distracted souls; he hath wiped all tears from their eyes; and he hath been a well spring of life unto their hearts. Therefore be not discouraged, O despairing souls, but look up to the mercyseat.

Verse 3. *I remembered God, and was troubled.* If our hearts or consciences condemn us, it is impossible to remember him without being troubled. It will then be painful to remember that he is our Creator and Redeemer, for the remembrance will be attended with a consciousness of base ingratitude. It will be painful to think of him as Lawgiver; for such thoughts will remind us that we have broken his law. It will be painful to think of his holiness; for if he is holy, he must hate our sins, and be angry with us as sinners:—of his justice and truth, for these perfections make it necessary that he should fulfil his threatenings and punish us for our sins. It will be painful to think of his omniscience—for this perfection makes him acquainted with our most secret offences, and renders it impossible for conceal them from his view; of his omnipresence—for the constant presence of an invisible witness must be disagreeable to those who wish to indulge their sinful propensities. It will be painful to think of his power—for it enables him to restrain or destroy, as he pleases: of his sovereignty, for sinners always hate to see themselves in the hands of a sovereign God: of his eternity and immutability—for from his possessing these perfections it follows that he will never alter the threatening which he has denounced against sinners, and that he will always live to execute
them. It will be painful to think of him as judge; for we shall feel, that as
sinners, we have no reason to expect a favourable sentence from his lips. It will
even be painful to think of the perfect goodness and excellence of his character;
for his goodness leaves us without excuse in rebelling against him, and makes
our sins appear exceedingly sinful. Edward Payson.

Verse 3. *I remembered God, and was troubled.* All had not been well between
God and him; and whereas formerly, in his remembrance of God, his thoughts
were chiefly exercised about his love and kindness, now they were wholly
possessed with his own sin and unkindness. This causeth his trouble. Herein
lies a share of the entanglements occasioned by sin. Saith such a soul in itself,
"Foolish creature, hast thou thus requited the Lord?" Is this the return that thou
hast made unto him for all his love, his kindness, his consolations, mercies? Is
this thy kindness for him, thy love to him? Is this thy kindness to thy friend? Is
this thy boasting of him, that thou hadst found so much goodness and
excellence in him and his love, that though all men should forsake him, thou
never would do so? Are all thy promises all thy engagements which thou
madest unto God, in times of distress upon prevailing obligations, and mighty
impressions of his good Spirit upon thy soul, now come to this, that thou
shouldest so foolishly forget, neglect, despise, cast him off? Well! now he is
gone; he is withdrawn from thee; and what wilt thou do? Art thou not even
ashamed to desire him to return? They were thoughts of this nature that cut
Peter to the heart upon his fall. The soul finds them cruel as death, and strong
as the grave. It is bound in the chains of them, and cannot be comforted, Ps
38:3-6. *John Owen.*

Verse 3. There are moments in the life of all believers when God and his ways
become unintelligible to them. They get lost in profound meditation, and
nothing is left them but a desponding sigh. But we know from Paul the apostle
that the Holy Spirit intercedes for believers with God, when they cannot utter

Verse 3. *Selah.* In the end of this verse is put the word *Selah.* And it doth note
unto the reader or hearer what a miserable and comfortless thing man is in
trouble, if God be not present with him to help him. It is also put as a spur and
prick for every Christian man and woman to remember and call upon God in
the days of their troubles. For as the Jews say, wheresoever this word *Selah* is,
it doth admonish and stir up the reader or hearer to mark what was said before
it; for it is a word always put after very notable sentences. *John Hooper.*

Verse 4. *Thou holdest mine eyes waking.* Thou art afflicted with want of
sleep:—A complaint incident to distempered bodies and thoughtful minds. Oh,
how wearisome a thing it is to spend the long night in tossing up and down in a restless bed, in the chase of sleep; which the more eagerly it is followed, flies so much the farther from us! Couldst thou obtain of thyself to forbear the desire of it, perhaps it would come alone: now that thou suest for it, like to some froward piece, it is coy and overly, and punishes thee with thy longing. Lo, he that could command a hundred and seven and twenty provinces, yet could not command rest. 'On that night his sleep departed from him, 'Es 6:1, neither could be forced or entreated to his bed. And the great Babylonian monarch, though he had laid some hand on sleep, yet he could not hold it; for "his sleep brake from him, "Da 2:1. And, for great and wise Solomon, it would not so much as come within his view. "Neither day nor night seeth he sleep with his eyes." Ec 8:16. Surely, as there is no earthly thing more comfortable to nature than bodily rest (Jer 31:26); so, there is nothing more grievous and disheartening... Instead of closing thy lids to wait for sleep, lift up thy stiff eyes to him that "giveth his beloved rest, "Ps 127:2. Whatever be the means, he it is that holdeth mine eyes waking. He that made thine eyes, keeps off sleep from thy body, for the good of thy soul: let not thine eyes wake, without thy heart. The spouse of Christ can say, "I sleep, but my heart waketh, "So 5:2. How much more should she say, "Mine eyes wake, and my heart waketh also!"
When thou canst not sleep with thine eyes, labour to see him that is invisible: one glimpse of that sight is more worth than all the sleep that thine eyes can be capable of. Give thyself up into his hands, to be disposed of at his will. What is this sweet acquiescence but the rest of the soul? which if thou canst find in thyself, thou shalt quietly digest the want of thy bodily sleep. 

Verse 4. I am so troubled that I cannot speak. He adds that he was so cut down and lifeless that he could not speak. Little griefs, as it is often said, are uttered, great ones strike us dumb. In great troubles and fears the spirit fails the exterior members, and flows back to its fountain; the limbs stand motionless, the whole body trembles, the eyes remain fixed, and the tongue forgets its office. Hence it is that Niobe was represented by the poets as turned into a stone. The history of Psammentius also, in Herodotus, is well known, how over the misfortunes of his children he sat silent and overwhelmed, but when he saw his friend's calamities he bewailed them with bitter tears. Mollerus.

Verse 4. I am so troubled that I cannot speak. Sometimes our grief is so violent that it finds no vent, it strangles us, and we are overcome. It is with us in our desertions as with a man that gets a slight hurt; at first he walks up and down, but not looking betimes to prevent a growing mischief, the neglected wound begins to fester, or to gangrene, and brings him to greater pain and loss. So it is
with us many times in our spiritual sadness; when we are first troubled, we pray and pour out our souls before the Lord; but afterwards the waters of our grief drown our cries and we are so overwhelmed, that if we might have all the world we cannot pray, or at least we can find no enlargement, no life, no pleasure in our prayers; and God himself seems to take no delight in them, and that makes us more sad, Ps 22:1. Timothy Rogers (1660-1729), in "A Discourse on Trouble of Mind, and the Disease of Melancholy."


Verse 4. I cannot speak. Words are but the body, the garment, the outside of prayer; sighs are nearer the heart work. A dumb beggar getteth an alms at Christ's gates, even by making signs, when his tongue cannot plead for him; and the rather, because he is dumb. Objection. I have not so much as a voice to utter to God; and Christ saith, "Cause me to hear thy voice" (Canticles 2:14). Answer. Yea, but some other thing hath a voice beside the tongue: "The Lord has heard the voice of my weeping" (Ps 6:8). Tears have a tongue, and grammar, and language, that our Father knoweth. Babes have no prayer for the breast, but weeping: the mother can read hunger in weeping. Samuel Rutherford.

Verse 4. If through all thy discouragements thy condition prove worse and worse, so that thou canst not pray, but are struck dumb when thou comest into his presence, as David, then fall making signs when thou canst not speak; groan, sigh, sob, "chatter," as Hezekiah did; bemoan thyself for thine unworthiness, and desire Christ to speak thy requests for thee, and God to hear him for thee. Thomas Goodwin.

Verse 5. The days of old. Doubtless to our first parents the darkness of the first night was somewhat strange; persons who had never seen anything but the light of the day, when the shadows of the night first did encompass them, could not be without some apprehension: yet when at the back of a number of nights they had seen the day spring of the morning lights constantly to arise; the darkness of the blackest nights was passed over without fear, and in as great security, as the light of the fairest days. To men who have always lived upon land, when first they set to sea, the winds, waves, and storms are exceeding terrible; but when they are a little beaten with the experience of tempests, their fears do change into resolution and courage. It is of no small use to remember that those things which vex most our spirit, are not new, but have already been in times before our days. Robert Baylie's Sermon before the House of Commons. 1643.
Verse 6. *I call to remembrance my song in the night.* Either (1) "I will now, in the present night of affliction, remember my former songs." "Though this is a time of distress, and my present circumstances are gloomy, yet I have known brighter days. He that lifted me up, has cast me down, and he can raise me up again." Sometimes this reflection, indeed, adds a poignancy to our distress, as it did to David's trouble, Ps 42:4. Yet it will bear a better improvement, which he seems to make of it; Ps 77:11, and so Job, (Job 2:10.) "Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive evil?" And his case shows that after the most sweeping calamities the Lord can again give things a turn in favour of them that hope in him. Therefore, present troubles should not make us forget former comforts, especially as the former so much exceeded our deserts, and the present afflictions fall so short of our demerits. Or (2) the text may mean, "I will remember how I have been enabled to sing in the former nights of affliction." And surely it is especially seasonable to remember supports and consolations granted under preceding distresses. Elihu complained (Job 35:10), "There is none that saith, Where is God my maker, who giveth songs on the night." David comforted himself with the thought, "Though deep calleth unto deep, yet the Lord will command his lovingkindness in the daytime, and in the night his song shall be with me." Ps 42:8. And the Lord promised by Isaiah (Isa 30:29), "Ye shall have a song, as in the night when a holy solemnity is kept." No doubt Paul and Silas remembered their song in the night, when imprisoned at Philippi; and it afforded them encouragement under subsequent trials. And cannot many of you, my brethren, in like manner, remember the supports and consolations you have enjoyed in former difficulties, and how the Lord turned the shadow of death into morning? And ought you not to trust to him that hath delivered, that he will yet deliver? He that hath delivered in six troubles, will not forsake you in seven. The "clouds may return after the rain," but not a drop can fail without the leave of him, who rides on the heavens for your help, and in his excellency on the sky. Did you not forbode at first a very different termination of the former troubles? and did the Lord disappoint your fears, and put a new song into your mouth; and will you not now begin to trust him, and triumph in him? Surely you have found that the Lord can clear the darkest skies. "Light is sown for the righteous," and ere long you shall see an eternal day. If such songs are given to the pilgrims of the night, how shall they sing in that world where the sun shall set no more! There will be no night there. *John Ryland.* 1753-1825.

Verse 6. *I call to remembrance:* being glad in this scarcity of comfort, to live upon the old store, as bees do in winter. *John Trapp.*
Verse 6. *My song in the night.* The "songs of the night" is as favourite a word of the Old Testament as "glory in tribulation" is of the New, and it is one of those which prove that both Testaments have the self same root and spirit. *John Kerr.*

Verse 6. *My spirit made diligent search.* He falls upon self examination, and searcheth his spirit, to consider why the hand of God was so against him, and why the face of God was so hid from him. Some read it, "I digged into my spirit;" as Ezekiel digged into the wall, to search for and find out the abomination, that made the Lord thus leave him in the dark, and hide his face from him. He searcheth the wound of his spirit; that was another way to cure it. It is a notable way to cure the wounds of the soul, for the soul to search them. *John Collings.*

Verse 6. *My spirit made diligent search.* The verb *vbx,* *chaphas,* signifies such an investigation as a man makes who is obliged to *strip himself* in order to do it; or *to lift up coverings,* to search fold by fold, or in our own phrase, *to leave no stone unturned.* *Adam Clarke.*

Verse 6. *My spirit made diligent search.* As Ahasuerus, when he could not sleep, called for the records and chronicles of his kingdom, so the doubting soul betakes himself to the records of heaven, the word of God in the Scriptures, and one while he is reading there, another while looking into his heart, if he can find there anything that answers the characters of Scripture faith, as the face in the glass doth the face of man. David, when he was at a loss what to think of himself, and many doubts did clog his faith, insomuch that the thinking of God increased his trouble, he did not sit down and let the ship drive, as we say, not regarding whether God loved him or no, but *communes with his own heart,* and *his spirit makes diligent search.* Thus it is with every sincere soul under doubting: he dares no more sit down contented in that unresolved condition, than one who thinks he smells fire in his house dares settle himself to sleep till he hath looked in every room and corner, and satisfied himself that all is safe, lest he should be waked with the fire about his ears in the night: and the poor doubting soul is much more afraid, lest it should wake with hell fire about it: whereas a soul in a state and under the power of unbelief is secure and careless. *William Gurnall.*

Verse 6. *Diligent search.* Thus duty requires diligence. External acts of religion are facile; to lift up the eye to heaven, to bow the knee, to read a prayer, this requires no more labour than for a papist to tell over his beads; but to examine a man's self, to take the heart all in pieces as a watch, and see what is defective, this is not easy. Reflective acts are hardest. The eye can see everything but
itself. It is easy to spy the faults of others, but hard to find out our own. *Thomas Watson.*

**Verse 8. Doth his promise fail for evermore?** Let no appearing impossibilities make you question God's accomplishment of any of his gracious words. Though you cannot see how the thing can be done, it is enough, if God has said that he will do it. There can be no obstructions to promised salvation, which we need to fear. He who is the God of this salvation, and the Author of the promise, will prepare his own way for the doing of his own work, so that "every valley shall be filled, and every mountain and hill brought low." Lu 3:5. Though the valleys be so deep that we cannot see the bottom, and the mountains so high that we cannot see the tops of them, yet God knows how to raise the one and level the other; Isa 53:1: "I that speak in righteousness (or faithfulness) am mighty to save." If anything would keep back the kingdom of Christ, it would be our infidelity; but he will come, though he should find no faith on the earth. See Ro 3:3. Cast not away your confidence because God defers his performances. Though providence run cross, though they move backwards and forwards, you have a sure and faithful word to rely upon. Promises, though they be for a time seemingly delayed, cannot be finally frustrated. Dare not to harbour such a thought within yourselves. The being of God may as well fail as the promise of God. That which does not come in your time, will be hastened in his time, which is always the more convenient season. *Timothy Cruso.*

**Verse 9. Hath God forgotten to be gracious?** In what pangs coudest thou be, O Asaph, that so woeful a word should fall from thee: *Hath God forgotten to be gracious?* Surely, the temptation went so high, that the next step had been blasphemy. Had not that good God, whom thy bold weakness questions for forgetfulness, in great mercies remembered thee, and brought thee speedily to remember thyself and him; that, which you confess to have been infirmity, had proved a sinful despair. I dare say for thee, that word washed thy cheeks with many a tear, and was worthy of more; for, O God, what can be so dear to thee, as the glory of thy mercy? There is none of thy blessed attributes, which thou desirest to set forth so much unto the sons of men, and so much abhorrest to be disparaged by our detraction, as thy mercy. Thou canst, O Lord, forget thy displeasure against thy people; thou canst forget our iniquities, and cast our sins out of thy remembrance, Mic 7:18-19; but thou canst no more forget to be gracious, than thou canst cease to be thyself. O my God, I sin against thy justice hourly, and thy mercy interposes for my remission: but, oh, keep me from sinning against thy mercy. What plea can I hope for, when I have made my advocate my enemy? *Joseph Hall.*
Verse 9. *Hath God forgotten to be gracious?* The poor child crieth after the mother. What shall I do for my mother! Oh, my mother, my mother, what shall I do for my mother! And it may be the mother stands behind the back of the child, only she hides herself, to try the affection of the child: so the poor soul cries after God, and complains, Oh my Father! my Father! Where is my heavenly Father? Hath he forgotten to be gracious? Hath he shut up his lovingkindness in displeasure? when, (all the while), God is nearer than they think for, shining upon them in "a spirit of grace and supplications, "with sighs and "groans that cannot be uttered." Thus the gracious woman, weeps: My dear Saviour, my dear Lord and Master, he is "taken out of the sepulchre, and I know not where they have laid him!" Thus she complains to the disciples, and thus she complains to the angels, when Christ stood at her very back and overheard all: nay, when she turned her about and saw him, yet at first she did not know him; nay, when he spoke to her and she to him, yet she knew him not, but thought he had been the gardener, Joh 20:15. Thus it is with many a gracious soul; though God speaks home to their hearts in his Word, and they speak to him by prayer, and they cannot say but the Spirit "helps their infirmities; "yet they complain for want of his presence, as if there were nothing of God in them. Matthew Lawrence.

Verse 9. *Hath he in anger shut up his tender mercies?* The metaphor here is taken from a spring, the mouth of which is closed, so that its waters can no longer run in the same channel; but, being confined, break out and take some other course. Wilt thou take thy mercy from the Israelites and give it to some other people? Adam Clarke.

Verse 9. *Selah.* Thus was he going on with his dark and dismal apprehensions, when on a sudden he first checked himself with that word, *Selah;* stop there; go no further; let us hear no more of these unbelieving surmises; and then he chid himself, Ps 77:10: This is mine infirmity. Matthew Henry.

Verse 10. *This is my infirmity.* Literally, this is my disease,—which appears to mean, This is my lot and I must bear it; lo! it is a partial evil, for which the equity of God's government should not be questioned. The authorised version, *This is my infirmity,* suggests, perhaps advisedly, another signification, viz., These thoughts are but hallucinations of my agony,—but to this gloss I should scruple to commit myself. C. B. Cayley.

Verse 10. It is the infirmity of a believer to be thinking of himself, and drawing false inferences (for all such inferences are necessarily erroneous), from what he sees or feels, as to the light in which he is beheld and estimated on the part of God. It is his strength, on the other hand, to remember the right hand of the
Psalm 77

Verse 10. Infirmity. An infirmity is this,—some sickness or indisposition of the soul, that arises from the weakness of grace. Or an infirmity is this,—when the purpose and inclination of the heart is upright, but a man wants strength to perform that purpose; when "the spirit is willing, but the flesh is weak" (Mt 26:41); when a man can say with the apostle, "To will is present with me; but how to perform that which is good I find not," Ro 7:18. When the bent and inclination of the soul is right, but either through some violence of corruption or strength of temptation, a man is diverted and turned out of the way. As the needle in the seaman's compass, you know if it be right it will stand always northwards, the bent of it will be toward the North Pole, but being jogged and troubled, it may sometimes be put out of frame and order, yet the bent and inclination of it is still northward; this is an infirmity. James Nalton. 1664.

Verse 10. It is unnecessary to state all the renderings which the learned have given of this verse. It is unquestionably ambiguous, as the word ytwlh may be derived from different roots, which have different significations. I derive it from lwx or llx which signifies to be in pain as a woman in labour, and as it is in the infinitive, I render it, "the time of my sorrow or pain." The next term, twgv, I derive from hgv to change, as the Chaldee does, Ainsworth, Hammond, and others; and I render it potentially. I consider the whole as a beautiful metaphor. The author considers himself as in distress, like a woman in travail; and like her, hopes soon to have his sorrow turned to joy. He confides in God's power to effect such a change; and hence naturally recollects the past instances of God's favour to his people. Benjamin Boothroyd.

Verse 10. I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High. Not the moments, nor the hours, nor days of a few short afflictions, that his left hand hath dealt to me: but the years of his right hand; those long, large, and boundless mercies wherewith he hath comforted me. Thomas Adams.

Verse 10. I will remember the years, etc. The words in the Hebrew text are shenoth jemin gneljon, which I find to be variously rendered and translated by interpreters. I shall not trouble you with them all at this present time, but only take notice of two of them, which I conceive are the principal and most comprehensive; the one is our oldest English translation, and the other of our last and newest; the former reads the words thus: The right hand of the Most High can change all this. The latter reads the words thus, as we have it now.
before us, *I will remember the years*, etc. The main ground of this variation is
the different exposition of the Hebrew word *shenoth*, which may be translated
either *to change*, from the *verb* in the *infinitive mood*, or else may be translated
*years*, from the *noun* in the *plural number*. This hath given the occasion to this
difference and variety of translation, but the sense is very good and agreeable
which way soever we take it—*First*, take it according to the *former* translation,
as it does exhibit to us the power of God. *The right hand of the Lord can change all this.*
This was that whereby David did support himself in his present affliction; that the Lord was able *to change and alter* this his condition to him, and that *for the better*... For the second sense here before us, that's this: *I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High*; where the word *remember* is borrowed from the next following verse, to supply the sense of
this, as otherwise being not in the text. Now here the prophet David fetches a
ground of comfort from God's *practice*, as before he did from his *power*; there,
from what God *could* do; here, from what he has done already in former time,
and ages, and generations. *Thomas Horton.*

**Verse 11.** *I will remember*, etc. *Remember and commemorate*, as the Hebrew
(by a double reading) imports. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 11.** *I will remember*. Faith is a considering grace: he that believes will
not make haste; no, not to think or speak of God. Faith hath a good memory,
and can tell the Christian many stories of ancient mercies; and when his present
meal falls short, it can entertain the soul with a cold dish, and not complain that
God keeps a bad house. Thus David recovered himself, when he was even
tumbling down the hill of temptation: *This is my infirmity; but I will remember
the years of the right hand of the Most High. I will remember thy wonders of old.*
Therefore, Christian, when thou art in the depths of affliction, and Satan
tempts thee to asperse God, as if he were forgetful of thee, stop his mouth with
this: No, Satan, God hath not forgot to do for me, but I have forgot what he
hath done for me, or else I could not question his fatherly care at present over
me. Go, Christian, play over thy own lessons, praise God for past mercies, and
it will not be long before thou hast a new song put into thy mouth for a present
mercy. . . .

Sometimes a little writing is found in a man's study that helps to save his estate,
for want of which he had gone to prison; and some one experience remembered
keeps the soul from despair, a prison which the devil longs to have the
Christian in. "This I recall to my mind, therefore have I hope," *La 3:21.* David
was famous for his hope, and not less eminent for his care to observe and
preserve the experiences he had of God's goodness. He was able to recount the
dealings of God with him; they were so often the subject of his meditation and
matter of his discourse, that he had made them familiar to him. When his hope is at a loss, he doth but exercise his memory a little, and he recovers himself presently, and chides himself for his weakness. *I said, this is my infirmity: but I will remember the years of the right hand of the Most High.* The hound, when he hath lost his scent, hunts backwards and so recovers it, and pursues his game with louder cry than ever. Thus, Christian, when thy hope is at a loss, and you question your salvation in another world, then look backward and see what God hath already done for thee. Some promises have their day of payment here, and others we must stay to receive in heaven. Now the payment which God makes of some promises here, is an earnest given to our faith that the others also shall be faithfully discharged when their date expires; as every judgment inflicted here on the wicked is sent as a pledge of that wrath the full sum whereof God will make up in hell. *William Gurnall.*

**Verse 11.** *The works of the Lord... Thy wonders.* The psalmist does not mean to draw a distinction between the *works* and the *wonders* of God; but, rather, to state that all God's works are wonders... All, whether in providence or grace—all God's works are wonderful. If we take the individual experience of the Christian, of what is that experience made up? Of wonders. The work of his conversion, wonderful!—arrested in a course of thoughtlessness and impiety; graciously sought and gently compelled to be at peace with God, whose wrath he had provoked. The communication of knowledge, wonderful!—Deity and eternity gradually piled up; the Bible taken page by page, and each page made a volume which no searching can exhaust. The assistance in warfare, wonderful!—himself a child of corruption, yet enabled to grapple with the world, the flesh, and the devil, and often to trample them under foot. The solaces in affliction, wonderful!—sorrow sanctified so as to minister to joy, and a harvest of gladness reaped from a field which has been watered with tears. The foretastes of heaven, wonderful!—angels bringing down the clusters of the land, and the spirit walking with lightsome tread the crystal river and the streets of gold. All wonderful! Wonderful that the Spirit should strive with man; wonderful that God should bear with his backslidings; wonderful that God should love him notwithstanding his pollution; wonderful that God should persist in saving him, in spite, as it were, of himself. Oh! those amongst you who know anything, experimentally, of salvation through Christ, well know that the work is wonderful in its commencement, wonderful in its continuance, and they will need no argument to vindicate the transition from *works* to *wonders.* It will be the transition of your own thoughts and your own feelings, and you will never give in the record of God's dealings with yourselves without passing, as the psalmist passed, from mentioning to ascription. Ye may set yourselves to commemorate God's *works,* ye will find yourselves extolling
God's wonders. Ye may begin with saying, I will remember the works of the Lord; but ye will conclude by exclaiming, Surely I will remember thy wonders of old. Henry Melvill.

**Verse 11.** *Thy wonders.* The word is in the singular here, and also in Ps 77:14. So also in the next verse, *Thy work,* because the one great wonder, the one great work in which all others were included, is before his thoughts. J. J. Stewart Perowne.

**Verse 11.** *Thy wonders.* He had before spoken to others, but here he turns to God. It is good for a soul in a hard exercise, to raise itself from thinking of God and of his works, unto speaking unto God directly: no ease or relief will be found till address be made unto himself, till we turn our face toward him and direct our speech unto him, as here the psalmist doth, from the midst of the eleventh verse to the end of the psalm. David Dickson.

**Verse 13.** *Thy way, O God, is in the sanctuary.* The word sanctuary is to be taken either for heaven or for the temple. I am rather inclined to refer it to heaven, conceiving the meaning to be, that the ways of God rise high above the world, so that if we are truly desirous to know them, we must ascend above all heavens. Although the works of God are in part manifest to us, yet all our knowledge of them comes far short of their immeasurable height. Besides, it is to be observed, that none enjoy the least taste of his works but those who by faith rise up to heaven. And yet, the utmost point to which we can ever attain is, to contemplate with admiration and reverence the hidden wisdom and power of God, which, while they shine forth in his works, yet far surpass the limited powers of our understanding. John Calvin.

**Verse 13.** *Thy way is in the sanctuary.* That is, every one of the elect may and ought to learn in thy church the conduct and proceedings of thy providence towards those that were thine. John Diodati.

**Verse 13, 19.** *In the sanctuary* and *In the sea.* His way is in the sanctuary, and His way is in the sea. Now there is a great difference between these two things. First of all, God's way is in the sanctuary, where all is light, all is clear. There is no mistake there. There is nothing, in the least degree, that is a harass to the spirit. On the contrary, it is when the poor, troubled one enters into the sanctuary, and views things there in the light of God, that he sees the end of all else—everything that is entangled, the end of which he cannot find on the earth. But not only is God's way in the sanctuary (and when we are there, all is bright and happy); but God's way is in the "sea." He walks where we cannot always trace his footsteps. God moves mysteriously by times, as we all know.
There are ways of God which are purposely to try us. I need not say that it is not at all as if God had pleasure in our perplexities. Nor is it as if we had no sanctuary to draw near to, where we can rise above it. But, still, there is a great deal in the ways of God that must be left entirely in his own hands. The way of God is thus not only in the sanctuary, but also in the sea. And yet, what we find even in connection with his footsteps being in the sea is, "Thou ledest thy people like a flock, by the hand of Moses and Aaron." That was through the sea; afterwards, it was through the wilderness. But it had been through the sea. The beginnings of the ways of God with his people were there; because, from first to last, God must be the confidence of the saint. It may be an early lesson of his soul, but it never ceases to be the thing to learn. How happy to know that, while the sanctuary is open to us, yet God himself is nearer still—and to him we are brought now. As it is said (1 Peter 3), "Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, to bring us to God." This is a most precious thing; because there we are in the sanctuary at once, and brought to God himself. And I am bold to say, that heaven itself would be but a small matter if it were not to God that we are brought. It is better than any freedom from trial—better than any blessing, to be in the presence of the One we belong to; who is himself the source of all blessing and joy. That we are brought to him now is infinitely precious. There we are in the sanctuary brought to God. But, still, there are other ways of God outside the sanctuary—In the sea. And there we often find ourselves at a loss. If we are occupied with the sea itself, and with trying to scan God's footsteps there, then they are not known. But confidence in God himself is always the strength of faith. May the Lord grant us increasing simplicity and quietness in the midst of all that we pass through, for his name's sake. From "Things New and Old." 1865.

Verse 14. The God that doest wonders. If he said, Thou art the God that hast done wonders, it would be plain that he spake only of those ancient miracles which were wrought in former days: but now that he saith, Thou art the God that doest wonders, he evidently refers to those wonderful works, which he is doing now, and shall not cease to do even to the end of the world. Gerhohus.

Verse 15. The sons of Jacob and Joseph. The distinction between the sons of Jacob and Joseph is not meaningless. For by the sons of Jacob or Israel the believing Jews are properly intended, those that trace their descent to him not only according to the flesh but according to faith. Of whom although Joseph was one, yet since he was sold by his brethren and after many sufferings among foreign tribes raised to high rank, it is highly congruous to distinguish him from the sons of Jacob, and he is fitly regarded as a prince of the Gentiles apart from Jacob's sons, who sold him. Gerhohus.
Verse 15. The sons of Jacob and Joseph. Was it Joseph or was it Jacob that begat the children of Israel? Certainly Jacob begat, but as Joseph nourished them, they are called by his name also. Talmud.

Verse 16. The waters saw thee, O God, etc. "The waters of the Red Sea, "says Bishop Horne, "are here beautifully represented as endued with sensibility; as seeing, feeling, and being confounded, even to the lowest depths, at the presence and power of their great Creator, when he commanded them to open a way, and to form a wall on each side of it, until his people were passed over." This in fact is true poetry; and in this attributing of life, spirit, feeling, action, and suffering to inanimate objects, there are no poets who can vie with those of the Hebrew nation. Richard Mant.

Verse 16. The depths also were troubled. The depths are mentioned in addition to the waters, to show that the dominion and power of God reach not only to the surface of the waters, but penetrate to the most profound abysses, and agitate and restrain the waters from their lowest bottom. Mollerus.

Verses 16-18. The waters saw thee, but men do not see thee. The depths were troubled, but men say in their heart, There is no God. The clouds poured out water, but men pour not out cries and tears unto God. The skies send out a sound, but men say not, Where is God my Maker? Thine arrows also went abroad, but no arrows of contrition and supplication are sent back by men in return. The voice of thy thunder was in the heaven, but men hear not the louder thunders of the law. The lightnings lightened the world, but the light of truth shines in darkness and the darkness comprehends it not. The earth trembled and shook, but human hearts remain unmoved.

"My heart it shakes not at the wrath
And terrors of a God." George Rogers.

Verse 16-19. As soon as ever the whole Egyptian army was within it, the sea flowed to its own place, and came down with a torrent raised by storms of wind, and encompassed the Egyptians. Showers of rain also came down from the sky, and dreadful thunders and lightning, with flashes of fire. Thunderbolts also were darted upon them; nor was there anything which used to be sent by God upon men, as indications of his wrath, which did not happen at this time; for a dark and dismal might oppressed them. And thus did all these men perish, so that there was not one man left to be a messenger of this calamity to the rest of the Egyptians. Josephus.
Verse 19. Thy way is in the sea, and thy path in the great waters, etc. Until lately, not much was known of oceanic currents, nor of their influences on the condition of particular localities and the intercourse of man with man. They are now seen to be the way or path of the Creator in the great waters. Numerous agencies tend to the production of these currents. Amongst them we may reckon the propagation of the tide wave in its progress over the globe, the duration and strength of certain winds, the variations in density which seawater undergoes in different latitudes, and at different depths, by change of temperature, and the quantity of salt it contains, and by the hourly alterations of atmospheric pressure which take place within the tropics. The oceanic currents are nearly constant in breadth, crossing the sea in many directions. Long bands of seaweed carried by the currents shew at once their velocity, and the line of demarcation between the waters at rest and the waters in motion. Between the tropics there is a general movement of the sea from east to west, called the equatorial current, supposed to be due to the trade winds, and the progress of the tide wave. There are narrower currents carrying warm water to higher and cold water to lower latitudes. Edwin Sidney, in "Conversations on the Bible and Science." 1860.

Verse 19. Thy way is in the sea, where no man can wade, except God be before him, but where any man may walk if God take him by the hand and lead him through. David Dickson.

Verse 19. Thy footsteps are not known. He often goeth so much out of our sight, that we are unable to give an account of what he doeth, or what he is about to do. Frequently the pillar of divine providence is dark throughout, to Israelites as well as Egyptians; so that his own people understand not the riddles, till he is pleased to be his own interpreter, and to lead them into his secrets. Samuel Slater(-1704), in "The Morning Exercises."

Verse 19. Thy footsteps are not known. That is, they are not always known; or, they are not known in all things; yea, they are not altogether known in anything. Joseph Caryl.

Verse 19. Thy footsteps are not known. Upon some affair of great consequence which had occurred in some providential dispensation, Luther was very importunate at the throne of grace to know the mind of God in it; and it seemed to him as if he heard God speak to his heart thus: "I am not to be traced." Referring to this incident, one adds, "If he is not to be traced, he may be trusted; 'and that religion is of little value which will not enable a man to trust God where he can neither trace nor see him. But there is a time for everything beneath the sun, and the Almighty has his 'times and seasons.' It has been
frequently with my hopes and desires, in regard to providence, as with my
watch and the sun, which has often been ahead of true time; I have gone faster
than providence, and have been forced to stand still and wait, or I have been set
back painfully. That was a fine sentiment of Flavel, "Some providence, like
Hebrew letters, must be read backwards." Quoted in "Christian Treasury,
"1849. Author not mentioned.

Verse 20. Thou leddest thy people like a flock, etc. From this verse the afflicted
may learn many consolations. First, that the best people that be are no better
able to resist temptation, than the simple sheep is able to withstand the brier
that catcheth him. The next, that man is of no more ability to beware of
temptations, than the poor sheep is to avoid the brier, being preserved only by
the diligence of the shepherd. The third, that as the shepherd is careful of his
entangled and briard sheep, so is God of his afflicted faithful. And the fourth is,
that the people of Israel could take no harm of the water, because they entered
the sea at God's commandment. Whereof we learn, that no danger can hurt
when God doth command us to enter into it; and all dangers overcome us if we
choose them ourselves, besides God's commandment; as Peter, when he went at
God's commandment upon the water, took no hurt; but when he entered into the
bishop's house upon his own presumption, was overcome and denied Christ.
The Israelites, when they fought at God's commandment, the peril was nothing;
but when they would do it of their own heads, they perished: so that we are
bound to attend upon God's commandment, and then no danger shall destroy
us, though it pain us. The other doctrine is in this, that God used the ministry of
Moses and Aaron in the deliverance of his people, who did command them to
do nothing but that the Lord did first bid. Whereof we learn that such as be
ministers appointed of God, and do nothing but as God commandeth, are to be
followed; as Paul saith, "Follow me, as I follow Christ." John Hooper.

Verse 20. Thou leddest thy people like a flock. Observe, the good shepherd
leads his followers like sheep: First, with great solicitude and care, to protect
them from wolves. Secondly, with consideration and kindness, for the sheep is
a harmless animal. Thirdly, with a wise strictness, for sheep easily wander, and
they are of all animals the most stupid. Thomas Le Blanc.

Verse 20. Leddest thy people. Our guiding must be mild and gentle, else it is
not duxisti, but traxisti; drawing and driving, and no leading. Leni spiritu non
dure manu, rather by an inward sweet influence to be led, than by an outward
extreme violence to be forced forward. So did God lead his people here. Not
the greatest pace, I wist, for they were a year marching that they might have
posted in eleven days, as Moses saith. (De 1:2.) No nor yet the nearest way
neither, as Moses telleth us. (Ex 8:18.) For he fetched a compass divers times,
as all wise governors by his example must do, that desire rather safely to lead, than hastily to drive forward. "The Spirit of God leadeth this people, "saith Isaiah (Isa 63:14) "as an horse is ridden down the hill into a valley; " which must not be at a gallop, lest horse and ruler both come down one over another; but warily and easily. Lancelot Andrewes.

Verse 20. By the hand of Moses and Aaron. He says not, Moses and Aaron led the people of Israel; but, Thou ledest the people, and that thy people, by the hand of Moses and Aaron. Great was the power of these two men; nevertheless neither of them was the shepherd of the sheep, but each was a servant to the one and only true shepherd, to whom the sheep exclusively belonged. Nor yet was either the leader of the sheep, but the shepherd himself was present and led his own flock, to whom these two acted as servants. There are therefore three things to be learned from this passage. First, the sheep do not belong to the servants, but to the true shepherd. Secondly, the true shepherd is the leader of his own sheep. Thirdly, the offices of Moses and Aaron was to attend to this duty, that the Lord's sheep should be properly led and pastured. So Christ himself leads the sheep, his own sheep, and for this work he employs the ministry of his servants. Musculus.

Verse 20. The psalmist has reached the climax of his strain, he has found relief from his sorrow by forcing his thoughts into another channel, by dwelling on all God's mightiest wonders of old; but there he must end: in his present intensity of passion he cannot trust himself to draw forth in detail any mere lessons of comfort. There are seasons when even the holiest faith cannot bear to listen to words of reasoning; though it can still find a support whereon to rest, in the simple contemplation, in all their native grandeur, of the deeds that God hath wrought. Joseph Francis Thrupp.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The benefit of using the voice in private prayer.

Verses 1, 3, 5, 10. Note the wise man's progress out of his soul trouble.

1. I cried.
2. I remembered.
3. I considered.
4. I said.

Verse 2.

1. Special prayer: In the days, etc.

2. Persevering prayer: hands lifted up to God by night as well as by day.

3. Agonizing prayer: my soul refused to be comforted, until the answer came. "Being in an agony, he prayed, "etc.

Verse 2. (last clause). When this is wise, and when it is censurable.

Verse 4.

1. A good man cannot rest on his bed until his soul rests on God.

2. He cannot speak freely to others until God speaks peace to his soul. G. R.

Verse 4. Occupation for the sleepless, and consolation for the speechless.

Verses 5-6. There are four rules for obtaining comfort in affliction.

1. The consideration of God's goodness to his people of old.

2. Remembrance of our own past experience.

3. Self examination.

4. The diligent study of the word. G. R.

Verse 6. Remembrance. A good memory is very helpful and useful.

1. It is a great means of knowledge: for what signifies your reading or hearing, if you remember nothing?

2. It is a means of faith: 1Co 15:2.

3. It is a means of comfort. If a poor Christian in distress could remember God's promises they would inspire him with new life; but when they are forgotten, his spirits sink.
4. It is a means of thankfulness.

5. It is a means of hope; for "experience worketh hope" (Ro 5:4), and the memory is the storehouse of experience.

6. It is a means of repentance; for, how can we repent or mourn for that which we have forgotten?

7. It is a means of usefulness. When one spark of grace is truly kindled in the heart, it will quickly endeavour to heat others also. R. Steele.

Verse 7. (first clause). To place the question in a strong light, let us consider,

1. Of whom is the question raised? the Lord.

2. What course of action is in question? cast off for ever.

3. Towards whom would the action be performed?

Verse 8. These questions,

1. Suppose a change in the immutable Jehovah in two glorious attributes.

2. Are contrary to all past evidence.

3. Can only arise from the flesh and Satan; and, therefore,

4. Are to be met in the power of the Spirit, with strong faith in the Eternal God.

Verse 10. A confession applicable to many other matters. Such as, fear of death, fear of desertion, dread of public service, sensitiveness of neglect, etc.

Verse 10. My infirmity. Different meanings of this word. These would furnish a good subject. Some infirmities are to be patiently endured, others gloried in, others taken in prayer to God for his Spirit's help, and others lamented and repented of.

Verses 10-12. Remember, meditate, talk.

Verses 11-12.

1. Consolation derived from the remembrance of the past.
2. Consolation increased by meditation.

3. Consolation strengthened by communication: "and talk," etc. G. R.

Verses 11-12.

1. Consolation derived from the remembrance of the past.

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3. Consolation strengthened by communication: "and talk," etc. G. R.

Verse 12. Themes for thought and topics for conversation. Creation, Providence, Redemption, etc.

Verses 13, 19. In the sea, in the sanctuary. God's way incomprehensible, though undoubtedly right: in his holiness lies the answer to its enigmas.

Verse 14. Thaumaturgeis, or the Great Wonder worker.

Verse 15. And Joseph. The honour of nourishing those who have been begotten of God by other men's labours.

Verse 15. Redemption thy power, the consequence, evidence, and necessary attendant of redemption by price.

Verse 15.

1. The redeemed: thy people; the sons of, etc.

(a) In captivity though they are his people.

(b) His people though they are in captivity.

2. The redemption: from Egyptian bondage.

3. The Redeemer: Thou, with thine arm, etc. God by Christ, his arm: Mine own arm brought, etc. To whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? G. R.

Verses 16-18.

1. The homage of nature to the God of grace.
2. Its subserviency to his designs. G. R.

Verse 19.

1. The ways of God to men are peculiar: In the sea: thy path, etc.
2. They are uniform, they lie in regular footsteps.
3. They are inscrutable: like the path of the ship upon the waters, not of the ploughshare on the land.

Verse 19. God's way is in the sea. In things changeable, ungovernable, vast, unfathomable, terrible, overwhelming, the Lord has the ruling power.

Verse 20.

1. The subjects of divine guidance: thy people.
2. The manner of their guidance: like a flock—separated, united, dependent.
3. The agents employed: by the hand; the Great Shepherd leads by the hand of under shepherds. "May every under shepherd keep his eye intent on Thee."

Verse 20. Church history.

1. The church a flock.
2. God seen as leading it on.
3. Instrumentality always used.

WORK UPON THE SEVENTY-SEVENTH PSALM

"An Exposition upon the Seventy-seventh Psalm, made by the constant Martyr of Christ, Master John Hooper, Bishop of Gloucester and Worcester." In the "Later Writings of Bishop Hooper." (In Parker Society's Publications, and also in the "British Reformer's" series of the Religious Tract Society.)
Psalm 78

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher
Other Works

TITLE. Maschil of Asaph. This is rightly entitled an instructive Psalm. It is not a mere recapitulation of important events in Israelitish history, but is intended to be viewed as a parable setting forth the conduct and experience of believers in all ages. It is a singular proof of the obtuseness of mind of many professors that they will object to sermons and expositions upon the historical parts of Scripture, as if they contained no instruction in spiritual matters: were such persons truly enlightened by the Spirit of God, they would perceive that all Scripture is profitable, and would blush at their own folly in undervaluing any portion of the inspired volume.

DIVISION. The unity is well maintained throughout, but for the sake of the reader's convenience, we may note that Ps 78:1-8 may be viewed as a preface, setting forth the psalmist's object in the epic which he is composing. From Ps 78:9-41 the theme is Israel in the wilderness; then intervenes an account of the Lord's preceding goodness towards his people in bringing them out of Egypt by plagues and wonders, Ps 78:42-52. The history of the tribes is resumed at Ps 78:53, and continued to Ps 78:66, where we reach the time of the removal of the ark to Zion and the transference of the leadership of Israel from Ephraim to Judah, which is rehearsed in song from Ps 78:67-72.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. **Give ear, O my people, to my law.** The inspired bard calls on his countrymen to give heed to his patriotic teaching. We naturally expect God's chosen nation to be first in hearkening to his voice. When God gives his truth a tongue, and sends forth his messengers trained to declare his word with power, it is the least we can do to give them our ears and the earnest obedience of our hearts. Shall God speak, and his children refuse to hear? His teaching has the force of law, let us yield both ear and heart to it. Incline your ears to the words of my mouth. Give earnest attention, bow your stiff necks, lean forward to catch every syllable. We are at this day, as readers of the sacred records, bound to study them deeply, exploring their meaning, and labouring to practice their teaching. As the officer of an army commences his drill by calling for "Attention," even so every trained soldier of Christ is called upon to give ear to his words. Men lend their ears to music, how much more then should they listen to the harmonies of the gospel; they sit enthralled in the presence of an orator, how much rather should they yield to the eloquence of heaven.

Verse 2. **I will open my mouth in a parable.** Analogies are not only to be imagined, but are intended by God to be traced between the story of Israel and
the lives of believers. Israel was ordained to be a type; the tribes and their marchings are living allegories traced by the hand of an all wise providence. Unspiritual persons may sneer about fancies and mysticisms, but Paul spake well when he said "which things are an allegory, "and Asaph in the present case spake to the point when he called his narrative "a parable." That such was his meaning is clear from the quotation, "All these things spake Jesus unto the multitude in parables; and without a parable spake he not unto them: that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet, saying, I will open my mouth in parables; I will utter things which have been kept secret from the foundation of the world." Mt 13:34-35. I will utter dark sayings of old;—enigmas of antiquity, riddles of yore. The mind of the poet prophet was so full of ancient lore that he poured it forth in a copious stream of song, while beneath the gushing flood lay pearls and gems of spiritual truth, capable of enriching those who could dive into the depths and bring them up. The letter of this song is precious, but the inner sense is beyond all price. Whereas the first verse called for attention, the second justifies the demand by hinting that the outer sense conceals an inner and hidden meaning, which only the thoughtful will be able to perceive.

Verse 3. Which we have heard and known, and our fathers have told us. Tradition was of the utmost service to the people of God in the olden time, before the more sure word of prophecy had become complete and generally accessible. The receipt of truth from the lips of others laid the instructed believer under solemn obligation to pass on the truth to the next generation. Truth, endeared to us by its fond associations with godly parents and venerable friends, deserves of us our best exertions to preserve and propagate it. Our fathers told us, we hear them, and we know personally what they taught; it remains for us in our turn to hand it on. Blessed be God we have now the less mutable testimony of written revelation, but this by no means lessens our obligation to instruct our children in divine truth by word of mouth: rather, with such a gracious help, we ought to teach them far more fully the things of God. Dr. Doddridge owed much to the Dutch tiles and his mother's explanations of the Bible narratives. The more of parental teaching the better; ministers and Sabbath school teachers were never meant to be substitutes for mother's tears and father's prayers.

Verse 4. We will not hide them from their children. Our negligent silence shall not deprive our own and our father's offspring of the precious truth of God, it would be shameful indeed if we did so. Shewing to the generation to come the praises of the Lord. We will look forward to future generations, and endeavour to provide for their godly education. It is the duty of the church of God to
maintain, in fullest vigour, every agency intended for the religious education of
the young; to them we must look for the church of the future, and as we sow
towards them so shall we reap. Children are to be taught to magnify the Lord;
they ought to be well informed as to his wonderful doings in ages past, and
should be made to know his strength and his wonderful works that he hath
done. The best education is education in the best things. The first lesson for a
child should be concerning his mother's God. Teach him what you will, if he
learn not the fear of the Lord, he will perish for lack of knowledge. Grammar is
poor food for the soul if it be not flavoured with grace. Every satchel should
have a Bible in it. The world may teach secular knowledge alone, it is all she
has a heart to know, but the church must not deal so with her offspring; she
should look well to every Timothy, and see to it that from a child he knows the
Holy Scriptures. Around the fireside fathers should repeat not only the Bible
records, but the deeds of the martyrs and reformers, and moreover the dealings
of the Lord with themselves both in providence and grace. We dare not follow
the vain and vicious traditions of the apostate church of Rome, neither would
we compare the fallible record of the best human memories with the infallible
written word, yet would we fain see oral tradition practised by every Christian
in his family, and children taught cheerfully by word of mouth by their own
mothers and fathers, as well as by the printed pages of what they too often
regard as dull, dry task books. What happy hours and pleasant evenings have
children had at their parents knees as they have listened to some "sweet story of
old." Reader, if you have children, mind you do not fail in this duty.

Verse 5. For he established a testimony in Jacob. The favoured nation existed
for the very purpose of maintaining God's truth in the midst of surrounding
idolatry. Theirs were the oracles, they were the conservators and guardians of
the truth. And appointed a law in Israel, which he commanded our fathers, that
they should make them known to their children. The testimony for the true God
was to be transmitted from generation to generation by the careful instruction
of succeeding families. We have the command for this oral transmission very
frequently given in the Pentateuch, and it may suffice to quote one instance
from De 6:7: "And thou shalt teach them diligently unto thy children, and shalt
talk of them when thou sittest in thine house, and when thou walkest by the
way, and when thou liest down, and when thou risest up." Reader, if you are a
parent, have you conscientiously discharged this duty?

Verse 6. That the generation to come might know them, even the children
which should be born. As far on as our brief life allows us to arrange, we must
industriously provide for the godly nurture of youth. The narratives,
commands, and doctrines of the word of God are not worn out; they are
calculated to exert an influence as long as our race shall exist. Who should arise and declare them to their children. The one object aimed at is transmission; the testimony is only given that it may be passed on to succeeding generations.

Verse 7. *That they might set their hope in God.* Faith cometh by hearing. Those who know the name of the Lord will set their hope in him, and that they may be led to do so is the main end of all spiritual teaching. And not forget the works of God. Grace cures bad memories; those who soon forget the merciful works of the Lord have need of teaching; they require to learn the divine art of holy memory. But keep his commandments. Those who forget God's works are sure to fail in their own. He who does not keep God's love in memory is not likely to remember his law. The design of teaching is practical; holiness towards God is the end we aim at, and not the filling of the head with speculative notions.

Verse 8. *And might not be as their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation.* There was room for improvement. Fathers stubborn in their own way, and rebellious against God's way, are sorry examples for their children; and it is earnestly desired that better instruction may bring forth a better race. It is common in some regions for men to count their family custom as the very best rule; but disobedience is not to be excused because it is hereditary. The leprosy was none the less loathsome because it had been long in the family. If our fathers were rebellious we must be better than they were, or else we shall perish as they did. A generation that set not their heart aright. They had no decision for righteousness and truth. In them there was no preparedness, or willingness of heart, to entertain the Saviour; neither judgments, nor mercies could bind their affections to their God; they were fickle as the winds, and changeful as the waves. And whose spirit was not steadfast with God. The tribes in the wilderness were constant only in their inconstancy; there was no depending upon them. It was, indeed, needful that their descendants should be warned, so that they might not blindly imitate them. How blessed it would be if each age improved upon its predecessor; but, alas! it is to be feared that decline is more general than progress, and too often the heirs of true saints are far more rebellious than even their fathers were in their unregeneracy. May the reading of this patriotic and divine song move many to labour after the elevation of themselves and their posterity.

Verse 9. *The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle.* Well equipped and furnished with the best weapons of the times, the leading tribe failed in faith and courage and retreated before the foe. There were several particular instances of this, but probably the psalmist refers to the general failure of Ephraim to lead the tribes to the conquest of Canaan. How often have we also, although supplied with every gracious
weapon, failed to wage successful war against our sins, we have marched onward gallantly enough till the testing hour has come, and then "in the day of battle "we have proved false to good resolutions and holy obligations. How altogether vain is unregenerate man! Array him in the best that nature and grace can supply, he still remains a helpless coward in the holy war, so long as he lacks a loyal faith in his God.

**Verse 10.** *They kept not the covenant of God.* Vows and promises were broken, idols were set up, and the living God was forsaken. They were brought out of Egypt in order to be a people separated unto the Lord, but they fell into the sins of other nations, and did not maintain a pure testimony for the one only true God. And refused to walk in his law. They gave way to fornication, and idolatry, and other violations of the decalogue, and were often in a state of rebellion against the benign theocracy under which they lived. They had pledged themselves at Sinai to keep the law, and then they wilfully disobeyed it, and so became covenant breakers.

**Verse 11.** *And forgat his works, and his wonders that he had shewed them.* Had they remembered them they would have been filled with gratitude and inspired with holy awe: but the memory of God's mercies to them was as soon effaced as if written upon water. Scarcely could one generation retain the sense of the divine presence in miraculous power, the succeeding race needed a renewal of the extraordinary manifestations, and even then was not satisfied without many displays thereof. Ere we condemn them, let us repent of our own wicked forgetfulness, and confess the many occasions upon which we also have been unmindful of past favours.

**Verse 12.** Egypt, here called the field of Zoan, was the scene of marvellous things which were done in open day in the sight of Israel. These were extraordinary, upon a vast scale, astounding, indisputable, and such as ought to have rendered it impossible for an Israelite to be disloyal to Jehovah, Israel's God.

**Verse 13.** *He divided the sea, and caused them to pass through.* A double wonder, for when the waters were divided the bottom of the sea would naturally be in a very unfit state for the passage of so vast a host as that of Israel; it would in fact have been impassable, had not the Lord made the road for his people. Who else has ever led a nation through a sea? Yet the Lord has done this full often for his saints in providential deliverances, making a highway for them where nothing short of an almighty arm could have done so. And he made the waters to stand as an heap. He forbade a drop to fall upon his chosen, they felt no spray from the crystal walls on either hand. Fire will
descend and water stand upright at the bidding of the Lord of all. The nature of creatures is not their own intrinsically, but is retained or altered at the will of him who first created them. The Lord can cause those evils which threaten to overwhelm us to suspend their ordinary actions, and become innocuous to us.

Verse 14. In the daytime also he led them with a cloud. HE did it all. He alone. He brought them into the wilderness, and he led them through it; it is not the Lord's manner to begin a work, and then cease from it while it is incomplete. The cloud both led and shadowed the tribes. It was by day a vast sun screen, rendering the fierce heat of the sun and the glare of the desert sand bearable. And all the night with a light of fire. So constant was the care of the Great Shepherd that all night and every night the token of his presence was with his people. That cloud which was a shade by day was as a sun by night. Even thus the grace which cools and calms our joys, soothes and solaces our sorrows. What a mercy to have a light of fire with us amid the lonely horrors of the wilderness of affliction. Our God has been all this to us, and shall we prove unfaithful to him? We have felt him to be both shade and light, according as our changing circumstances have required.

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

May this frequently renewed experience knit our hearts to him in firmest bonds.

Verse 15. He clave the rocks in the wilderness. Moses was the instrument, but the Lord did it all. Twice he made the flint a gushing rill. What can he not do? And gave them drink as out of the great depths,—as though it gushed from earth's innermost reservoirs. The streams were so fresh, so copious, so constant, that they seemed to well up from the earth's primeval fountains, and to leap at once from "the deep which coucheth beneath." Here was a divine supply for Israel's urgent need, and such an one as ought to have held them for ever in unwavering fidelity to their wonder working God.

Verse 16. The supply of water was as plenteous in quantity as it was miraculous in origin. Torrents, not driblets came from the rocks. Streams followed the camp; the supply was not for an hour or a day. This was a marvel of goodness. If we contemplate the abounding of divine grace we shall be lost in admiration. Mighty rivers of love have flowed for us in the wilderness. Alas, great God! our return has not been commensurate therewith, but far otherwise.
Verse 17. *And they sinned yet more against him.* Outdoing their former sins, going into greater deeps of evil: the more they had the more loudly they clamoured for more, and murmured because they had not every luxury that pampered appetites could desire. It was bad enough to mistrust their God for necessaries, but to revolt against him in a greedy rage for superfluities was far worse. Ever is it the nature of the disease of sin to proceed from bad to worse; men never weary of sinning, but rather increase their speed in the race of iniquity. In the case before us the goodness of God was abused into a reason for greater sin. Had not the Lord been so good they would not have been so bad. If he had wrought fewer miracles before, they would not have been so inexcusable in their unbelief, so wanton in their idolatry. By provoking the most High in the wilderness. Although they were in a position of obvious dependence upon God for everything, being in a desert where the soil could yield them no support, yet they were graceless enough to provoke their benefactor. At one time they provoked his jealousy by their hankering after false gods, anon they excited his wrath by their challenges of his power, their slanders against his love, their rebellions against his will. He was all bounty of love, and they all superfluity of naughtiness. They were favoured above all nations, and yet none were more ill favoured. For them the heavens dropped manna, and they returned murmurs; the rocks gave them rivers, and they replied with floods of wickedness. Herein, as in a mirror, we see ourselves. Israel in the wilderness acted out, as in a drama, all the story of man's conduct towards his God.

Verse 18. *And they tempted God in their heart.* He was not tempted, for he cannot be tempted by any, but they acted in a manner calculated to tempt him, and it always just to charge that upon men which is the obvious tendency of their conduct. Christ cannot die again, and yet many crucify him afresh, because such would be the legitimate result of their behaviour if its effects were not prevented by other forces. The sinners in the wilderness would have had the Lord change his wise proceedings to humour their whims, hence they are said to tempt him. By asking meat for their lust. Would they have God become purveyor for their greediness? Was there nothing for it but that he must give them whatever their diseased appetites might crave? The sin began in their hearts, but it soon reached their tongues. What they at first silently wished for, they soon loudly demanded with menaces, insinuations, and upbraidings.

Verse 19. From this verse we learn that unbelief of God is a slander against him. Yea, they spake against God. But how? The answer is, They said, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? To question the ability of one who is manifestly Almighty, is to speak against him. These people were base enough
to say that although their God had given them bread and water, yet he could not properly order or furnish a table. He could give them coarse food, but could not prepare a feast properly arranged, so they were ungrateful enough to declare. As if the manna was a mere makeshift, and the flowing rock stream a temporary expedient, they ask to have a regularly furnished table, such as they had been accustomed to in Egypt. Alas, how have we also quarrelled with our mercies, and querulously pined for some imaginary good, counting our actual enjoyments to be nothing because they did not happen to be exactly conformed to our foolish fancies. They who will not be content will speak against providence even when it daily loadeth them with benefits.

Verse 20. Behold, he smote the rock, that the waters gushed out, and the streams overflowed. They admit what he had done, and yet, with superabundant folly and insolence, demand further proofs of his omnipotence. Can he give bread also? can he provide flesh for his people? As if the manna were nothing, as if animal food alone was true nourishment for men. If they had argued, "can he not give flesh?" the argument would have been reasonable, but they ran into insanity; when, having seen many marvels of omnipotence, they dared to insinuate that other things were beyond the divine power. Yet, in this also, we have imitated their senseless conduct. Each new difficulty has excited fresh incredulity. We are still fools and slow of heart to believe our God, and this is a fault to be bemoaned with deepest penitence. For this cause the Lord is often wroth with us and chastens us sorely; for unbelief has in it a degree of provocation of the highest kind.

Verse 21. Therefore the Lord heard this, and was wroth. He was not indifferent to what they said. He dwelt among them in the holy place, and, therefore, they insulted him to his face. He did not hear a report of it, but the language itself came into his ears. So a fire was kindled against Jacob. The fire of his anger which was also attended with literal burnings. And anger also came up against Israel. Whether he viewed them in the lower or higher light, as Jacob or as Israel, he was angry with them: even as mere men they ought to have believed him; and as chosen tribes, their wicked unbelief was without excuse. The Lord doeth well to be angry at so ungrateful, gratuitous and dastardly an insult as the questioning of his power.

Verse 22. Because they believed not in God, and trusted not in his salvation. This is the master sin, the crying sin. Like Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, it sins and makes Israel to sin; it is in itself evil and the parent of evils. It was this sin which shut Israel out of Canaan, and it shuts myriads out of heaven. God is ready to save, combining power with willingness, but rebellious man will not trust his Saviour, and therefore is condemned already. In the text it appears as if
all Israel's other sins were as nothing compared with this; this is the peculiar
spot which the Lord points at, the special provocation which angered him.
From this let every unbeliever learn to tremble more at his unbelief than at
anything else. If he be no fornicator, or thief, or liar, let him reflect that it is
quite enough to condemn him that he trusts not in God's salvation.

Verse 23. Though he had commanded the clouds from above. Such a marvel
ought to have rendered unbelief impossible: when clouds become granaries,
seeing should be believing, and doubts should dissolve. And opened the doors
of heaven. The great storehouse doors were set wide open, and the corn of
heaven poured out in heaps. Those who would not believe in such a case were
hardened indeed; and yet our own position is very similar, for the Lord has
wrought for us great deliverances, quite as memorable and undeniable, and yet
suspicions and forebodings haunt us. He might have shut the gates of hell upon
us, instead of which he has opened the doors of heaven; shall we not both
believe in him and magnify him for this?

Verse 24. And had rained down manna upon them to eat. There was so much
of it, the skies poured with food, the clouds burst with provender. It was fit
food, proper not for looking at but for eating; they could eat it as they gathered
it. Mysterious though it was, so that they called it manna, or "what is it?" yet it
was eminently adapted for human nourishment; and it was both abundant and
adapted, so also was it available! They had not far to fetch it, it was nigh them,
and they had only to gather it up. O Lord Jesus, thou blessed manna of heaven,
how all this agrees with Thee! We will even now feed on Thee as our spiritual
meat, and will pray Thee to chase away all wicked unbelief from us. Our
fathers ate manna and doubted; we feed upon Thee and are filled with
assurance. And had given them of the corn of heaven. It was all a gift without
money and without price. Food which dropped from above, and was of the best
quality, so as to be called heavenly corn, was freely granted them. The manna
was round, like a coriander seed, and hence was rightly called corn; it did not
rise from the earth, but descended from the clouds, and hence the words of the
verse are literally accurate. The point to be noted is that this wonder of wonders
left the beholders, and the feasters, as prone as ever to mistrust their Lord.

Verse 25. Man did eat angel's food. The delicacies of kings were outdone, for
the dainties of angels were supplied. Bread of the mighty ones fell on feeble
man. Those who are lower than the angels fared as well. It was not for the
priests, or the princes, that the manna fell; but for all the nation, for every man,
woman, and child in the camp: and there was sufficient for them all, for he sent
them meat to the full. God's banquets are never stinted; he gives the best diet,
and plenty of it. Gospel provisions deserve every praise that we can heap upon
them; they are free, full, and preeminent; they are of God's preparing, sending, and bestowing. He is well fed whom God feeds; heaven's meat is nourishing and plentiful. If we have ever fed upon Jesus we have tasted better than angel's food; for

"Never did angels taste above
Redeeming grace and dying love."

It will be our wisdom to eat to the full of it, for God has so sent it that we are not straitened in him, but in our own bowels. Happy pilgrims who in the desert have their meat sent from the Lord's own palace above; let them eat abundantly of the celestial banquet, and magnify the all sufficient grace which supplies all their needs, according to His riches in glory, by Christ Jesus.

**Verse 26.** *He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven.* He is Lord Paramount, above the prince of the power of the air: storms arise and tempests blow at his command. Winds sleep till God arouses them, and then, like Samuel, each one answers, "Here am I, for thou didst call me." And by his power he brought in the south wind. Either these winds followed each other, and so blew the birds in the desired direction, or else they combined to form a south east wind; in either case they fulfilled the design of the Lord, and illustrated his supreme and universal power. If one wind will not serve, another shall; and if need be, they shall both blow at once. We speak of *fickle* winds, but their obedience to their Lord is such that they deserve a better word. If we ourselves were half as obedient as the winds, we should be far superior to what we are now.

**Verse 27.** *He rained flesh also upon them as dust.* First he rained bread and then flesh, when he might have rained fire and brimstone. The words indicate the speed, and the abundance of the descending quails. And feathered fowls like as the sand of the sea; there was no counting them. By a remarkable providence, if not by miracle, enormous numbers of migratory birds were caused to alight around the tents of the tribes. It was, however, a doubtful blessing, as easily acquired and super abounding riches generally are. The Lord save us from meat which is seasoned with divine wrath.

**Verse 28.** *And he let it fall in the midst of their camp.* They had no journey to make; they had clamoured for flesh, and it almost flew into their mouths, round about their habitations. This made them glad for the moment, but they knew not that mercies can be sent in anger, else they had trembled at sight of the good things which they had lusted after.


Verse 29. So they did eat, and were well filled. They greedily devoured the birds, even to repletion. The Lord shewed them that he could "provide flesh for his people, "even enough and to spare. He also shewed them that when lust wins its desire it is disappointed, and by the way of satiety arrive at distaste. First the food satiates, then it nauseates. For he gave them their own desire. They were filled with their own ways. The flesh meat was unhealthy for them, but as they cried for it they had it, and a curse with it. O my God, deny me my most urgent prayers sooner than answer them in displeasure. Better hunger and thirst after righteousness than to be well filled with sin's dainties.

Verses 30-31. They were not estranged from their lust. Lust grows upon that which it feeds on. If sick of too much flesh, yet men grow not weary of lust, they change the object, and go on lusting still. When one sin is proved to be a bitterness, men do not desist, but pursue another iniquity. If, like Jehu, they turn from Baal, they fall to worshipping the calves of Bethel. But while their meat was yet in their mouths, before they could digest their coveted meat, it turned to their destruction. The wrath of God came upon them before they could swallow their first meal of flesh. Short was the pleasure, sudden was the doom. The festival ended in a funeral. And slew the fattest of them, and smote down the chosen men of Israel. Perhaps these were the ringleaders in the lusting; they are first in the punishment. God's justice has no respect of persons, the strong and the valiant fall as well as the weak and the mean. What they ate on earth they digested in hell, as many have done since. How soon they died, though they felt not the edge of the sword! How terrible was the havoc, though not amid the din of battle! My soul, see here the danger of gratified passions; they are the janitors of hell. When the Lord's people hunger God loves them; Lazarus is his beloved, though he pines upon crumbs; but when he fattens the wicked he abhors them; Dives is hated of heaven when he fares sumptuously every day. We must never dare to judge men's happiness by their tables, the heart is the place to look at. The poorest starveling believer is more to be envied than the most full fleshed of the favourites of the world. Better be God's dog than the devil's darling.

Verse 32. For all this they sinned still. Judgments moved them no more than mercies. They defied the wrath of God. Though death was in the cup of their iniquity, yet they would not put it away, but continued to quaff it as if it were a healthful potion. How truly might these words be applied to ungodly men who have been often afflicted, laid upon a sick bed, broken in spirit, and impoverished in estate, and yet have persevered in their evil ways, unmoved by terrors, unswayed by threatenings. And believed not for his wondrous works. Their unbelief was chronic and incurable. Miracles both of mercy and judgment
were unavailing. They might be made to wonder, but they could not be taught to believe. Continuance in sin and in unbelief go together. Had they believed they would not have sinned, had they not have been blinded by sin they would have believed. There is a reflex action between faith and character. How can the lover of sin believe? How, on the other hand, can the unbeliever cease from sin? God's ways with us in providence are in themselves both convincing and converting, but unrenewed nature refuses to be either convicted or converted by them.

Verse 33. *Therefore their days did he consume in vanity.* Apart from faith life is vanity. To wander up and down in the wilderness was a vain thing indeed, when unbelief had shut them out of the promised land. It was meet that those who would not live to answer the divine purpose by believing and obeying their God should be made to live to no purpose, and to die before their time, unsatisfied, unblessed. Those who wasted their days in sin had little cause to wonder when the Lord cut short their lives, and sware that they should never enter the rest which they had despised. And their years in trouble. Weary marches were their trouble, and to come to no resting place was their vanity. Innumerable graves were left all along the track of Israel, and if any ask, "Who slew all these?" the answer must be, "They could not enter in because of unbelief." Doubtless much of the vexation and failure of many lives results from their being sapped by unbelief, and honeycombed by evil passions. None live so fruitlessly and so wretchedly as those who allow sense and sight to override faith, and their reason and appetite to domineer over their fear of God. Our days go fast enough according to the ordinary lapse of time, but the Lord can make them rust away at a bitterer rate, till we feel as if sorrow actually ate out the heart of our life, and like a canker devoured our existence. Such was the punishment of rebellious Israel, the Lord grant it may not be ours.

Verse 34. *When he slew them, then they sought him.* Like whipped curs, they licked their Master's feet. They obeyed only so long as they felt the whip about their loins. Hard are the hearts which only death can move. While thousands died around them, the people of Israel became suddenly religious, and repaired to the tabernacle door, like sheep who run in a mass while the black dog drives them, but scatter and wander when the shepherd whistles him off. And they returned and enquired early after God. They could not be too zealous, they were in hot haste to prove their loyalty to their divine King. "The devil was sick and the devil a monk would be." Who would not be pious while the plague is abroad? Doors, which were never so sanctified before, put on the white cross then. Even reprobates send for the minister when they lie a dying. Thus sinners
pay involuntary homage to the power of right and the supremacy of God, but their hypocritical homage is of small value in the sight of the Great Judge.

Verse 35. *And they remember that God was their rock.* Sharp strokes awoke their sleepy memories. Reflection followed infliction. They were led to see that all their dependence must be placed upon their God; for he alone had been their shelter, their foundation, their fountain of supply, and their unchangeable friend. What could have made them forget this? Was it that their stomachs were so full of flesh that they had no space for ruminating upon spiritual things? And the high God their redeemer. They had forgotten this also. The high hand and outstretched arm which redeemed them out of bondage had both faded from their mental vision. Alas, poor man, how readily dost thou forget thy God! Shame on thee, ungrateful worm, to have no sense of favours a few days after they have been received. Will nothing make thee keep in memory the mercy of thy God except the utter withdrawal of it?

Verse 36. Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth. Bad were they at their best. False on their knees, liars in their prayers. Mouth worship must be very detestable to God when dissociated from the heart: other kings love flattery, but the King of kings abhors it. Since the sharpest afflictions only extort from carnal men a feigned submission to God, there is proof positive that the heart is desperately set on mischief, and that sin is ingrained in our very nature. If you beat a tiger with many stripes you cannot turn him into a sheep. The devil cannot be whipped out of human nature, though another devil, namely, hypocrisy may be whipped into it. Piety produced by the damps of sorrow and the heats of terror is of mushroom growth; it is rapid in its springing up—"they enquired early after God"—but it is a mere unsubstantial fungus of unabiding excitement. And they lied unto him with their tongues. Their godly speech was cant, their praise mere wind, their prayer a fraud. Their skin deep repentance was a film too thin to conceal the deadly wound of sin. This teaches us to place small reliance upon professions of repentance made by dying men, or upon such even when the basis is evidently slavish fear, and nothing more. Any thief will whine out repentance if he thinks the judge will thereby be moved to let him go scot free.

Verse 37. *For their heart was not right with him.* There was no depth in their repentance, it was not heart work. They were fickle as a weathercock, every wind turned them, their mind was not settled upon God. Neither were they stedfast in his covenant. Their promises were no sooner made than broken, as if only made in mockery. Good resolutions called at their hearts as men do at inns; they tarried awhile, and then took their leave. They were hot today for holiness, but cold towards it tomorrow. Variable as the hues of the dolphin,
they changed from reverence to rebellion, from thankfulness to murmuring. One day they gave their gold to build a tabernacle for Jehovah, and the next they plucked off their earrings to make a golden calf. Surely the heart is a chameleon. Proteus had not so many changes. As in the ague we both burn and freeze, so do inconstant natures in their religion.

**Verse 38.** *But he, being full of compassion, forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not.* Though they were full of flattery, he was full of mercy, and for this cause he had pity on them. Not because of their pitiful and hypocritical pretensions to penitence, but because of his own real compassion for them he overlooked their provocations. Yea, many a time turned he his anger away. When he had grown angry with them he withdrew his displeasure. Even unto seventy times seven did he forgive their offences. He was slow, very slow, to anger. The sword was uplifted and flashed in midair, but it was sheathed again, and the nation yet lived. Though not mentioned in the text, we know from the history that a mediator interposed, the man Moses stood in the gap; even so at this hour the Lord Jesus pleads for sinners, and averts the divine wrath. Many a barren tree is left standing because the dresser of the vineyard cries, "let it alone this year also." And did not stir up all his wrath. Had he done so they must have perished in a moment. When his wrath is kindled but a little men are burned up as chaff; but were he to let loose his indignation, the solid earth itself would melt, and hell would engulf every rebel. Who knoweth the power of thine anger, O Lord? We see the fulness of God's compassion, but we never see all his wrath.

**Verse 39.** *For he remembered that they were but flesh.* They were forgetful of God, but he was mindful of them. He knew that they were made of earthy, frail, corruptible material, and therefore he dealt leniently with them. Though in this he saw no excuse for their sin, yet he constrained it into a reason for mercy; the Lord is ever ready to discover some plea or other upon which he may have compassion. A wind that passeth away, and cometh not again. Man is but a breath, gone never to return. Spirit and wind are in this alike, so far as our humanity is concerned; they pass and cannot be recalled. What a nothing is our life. How gracious on the Lord's part to make man's insignificance an argument for staying his wrath.

**Verse 40.** *How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness.* Times enough did they rebel: they were as constant in provocation as he was in his patience. In our own case, who can count his errors? In what book could all our perverse rebellions be recorded? The wilderness was a place of manifest dependence, where the tribes were helpless without divine supplies, yet they wounded the hand which fed them while it was in the act of feeding them. Is there no
likeness between us and them? Does it bring no tears into our eyes, while as in a glass, we see our own selves? And grieve him in the desert. Their provocations had an effect; God was not insensible to them, he is said to have been grieved. His holiness could not find pleasure in their sin, his justice in their unjust treatment, or his truth in their falsehood. What must it be to grieve the Lord of love! Yet we also have vexed the Holy Spirit, and he would long ago have withdrawn himself from us, were it not that he is God and not man. We are in the desert where we need our God, let us not make it a wilderness of sin by grieving him.

Verses 41. Yea, they turned back. Their hearts sighed for Egypt and its fleshpots. They turned to their old ways again and again, after they had been scourged out of them. Full of twists and turns, they never kept the straight path. And tempted God. As far as in them lay they tempted him. His ways were good, and they in desiring to have them altered tempted God. Before they would believe in him they demanded signs, defying the Lord to do this and that, and acting as if he could be cajoled into being the minion of their lusts. What blasphemy was this! Yet let us not tempt Christ lest we also be destroyed by the destroyer. And limited the Holy One of Israel. Doubted his power and so limited him, dictated to his wisdom and so did the same. To chalk out a path for God is arrogant impiety. The Holy One must do right, the covenant God of Israel must be true, it is profanity itself to say unto him thou shalt do this or that, or otherwise I will not worship thee. Not thus is the Eternal God to be led by a string by his impotent creature. He is the Lord and he will do as seemeth him good.

Verse 42. They remembered not his hand. Yet it must have been difficult to forget it. Such displays of divine power as those which smote Egypt with astonishment, it must have needed some more than usual effort to blot it from the tablets of memory. It is probably meant that they practically, rather than actually, forgot. He who forgets the natural returns of gratitude, may justly be charged with not remembering the obligation. Nor the days when he delivered them from the enemy. The day itself was erased from their calendar, so far as any due result from it or return for it. Strange is the faculty of memory in its oblivion as well as its records. Sin perverts man's powers, makes them forceful only in wrong directions, and practically dead for righteous ends.

Verse 43. How he had wrought his signs in Egypt. The plagues were ensigns of Jehovah's presence and proofs of his hatred of idols; these instructive acts of power were wrought in the open view of all, as signals are set up to be observed by those far and near. And his wonders in the field of Zoan. In the whole land were miracles wrought, not in cities alone, but in the broad territory,
in the most select and ancient regions of the proud nation. This the Israelites ought not to have forgotten, for they were the favoured people for whom these memorable deeds were wrought.

**Verse 44.** *And had turned their rivers into blood.* The waters had been made the means of the destruction of Israel's newborn infants, and now they do as it were betray the crime—they blush for it, they avenge it on the murderers. The Nile was the vitality of Egypt, its true life blood, but at God's command it became a flowing curse; every drop of it was a horror, poison to drink, and terror to gaze on. How soon might the Almighty One do this with the Thames or the Seine. Sometimes he has allowed men, who were his rod, to make rivers crimson with gore, and this is a severe judgment; but the event now before us was more mysterious, more general, more complete, and must, therefore, have been a plague of the first magnitude. And their floods, that they could not drink. Lesser streams partook in the curse, reservoirs and canals felt the evil; God does nothing by halves. All Egypt boasted of the sweet waters of their river, but they were made to loathe it more than they had ever loved it. Our mercies may soon become our miseries if the Lord shall deal with us in wrath.

**Verse 45.** *He sent diverse sorts of flies among them, which devoured them.* Small creatures become great tormentors. When they swarm they can sting a man till they threaten to eat him up. In this case, various orders of insects fought under the same banner; lice and beetles, gnats and hornets, wasps and gadflies dashed forward in fierce battalions, and worried the sinners of Egypt without mercy. The tiniest plagues are the greatest. What sword or spear could fight with these innumerable bands? Vain were the monarch's armour and robes of majesty, the little cannibals were no more lenient towards royal flesh than any other; it had the same blood in it, and the same sin upon it. How great is that God who thus by the minute can crush the magnificent. And frogs, which destroyed them. These creatures swarmed everywhere when they were alive, until the people felt ready to die at the sight; and when the reptiles died, the heaps of their bodies made the land to stink so foully, that a pestilence was imminent. Thus not only did earth and air send forth armies of horrible life, but the water also added its legions of loathsomeness. It seemed as if the Nile was first made nauseous and then caused to leave its bed altogether, crawling and leaping in the form of frogs. Those who contend with the Almighty, little know what arrows are in his quiver; surprising sin shall be visited with surprising punishment.

**Verse 46.** *He gave also their increase unto the caterpillar, and their labour unto the locust.* Different sorts of devourers ate up every green herb and tree. What one would not eat another did. What they expected from the natural
fertility of the soil, and what they looked for from their own toil, they saw
devoured before their eyes by an insatiable multitude against whose
depredation no defense could be found. Observe in the text that the Lord did it
all—"he sent," "he gave, ""he destroyed, ""he gave up, "etc.; whatever the
second agent may be, the direct hand of the Lord is in every national visitation.

Verse 47. He destroyed their vines with hail. No more shall thy butler press the
clusters into thy cup, O Pharaoh! The young fruit bearing shoots were broken
off, the vintage failed. And their sycomore trees with frost. Frost was not usual,
but Jehovah regards no laws of nature when men regard not his moral laws.
The sycomore fig was perhaps more the fruit of the many than was the vine,
therefore this judgment was meant to smite the poor, while the former fell most
heavily upon the rich. Mark how the heavens obey their Lord and yield their
stores of hail, and note how the fickle weather is equally subservient to the
divine will.

Verse 48. He gave up their cattle also to the hail. What hail it must have been
to have force enough to batter down bullocks and other great beasts. God
usually protects animals from such destruction, but here he withdraws his
safeguards and gave them up: may the Lord never give us up. Some read, "shut
up," and the idea of being abandoned to destructive influences is then before us
in another shape. And their flocks to hot thunderbolts. Fire was mingled with
the hail, the fire ran along upon the ground, it smote the smaller cattle. What a
storm must that have been: its effects were terrible enough upon plants, but to
see the poor dumb creatures stricken must have been heartbreaking.
Adamantine was that heart which quailed not under such plagues as these,
harder than adamant those hearts which in after years forgot all that the Lord
had done, and broke off from their allegiance to him.

Verse 49. He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and
indignation, and trouble. His last arrow was the sharpest. He reserved the
strong wine of his indignation to the last. Note how the psalmist piles up the
words, and well he might; for blow followed blow, each one more staggering
than its predecessor, and then the crushing stroke was reserved for the end. By
sending evil angels among them. Messengers of evil entered their houses at
midnight, and smote the dearest objects of their love. The angels were evil to
them, though good enough in themselves; those who to the heirs of salvation
are ministers of grace, are to the heirs of wrath executioners of judgment. When
God sends angels, they are sure to come, and if he bids them slay they will not
spare. See how sin sets all the powers of heaven in array against man; he has no
friend left in the universe when God is his enemy.
Verse 50. *He made a way to his anger,* coming to the point with them by slow degrees; assailing their outworks first by destroying their property, and then coming in upon their persons as through an open breach in the walls. He broke down all the comforts of their life, and then advanced against their life itself. Nothing could stand in his way; he cleared a space in which to do execution upon his adversaries. He spared not their soul from death, but gave their life over to the pestilence. In their soul was the origin of the sin, and he followed it to its source and smote it there. A fierce disease filled the land with countless funerals; Jehovah dealt out myriads of blows, and multitudes of spirits failed before him.

Verse 51. *And smote all the firstborn in Egypt.* No exceptions were made, the monarch bewailed his heir as did the menial at the mill. They smote the Lord's firstborn, even Israel, and he smites theirs. The chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham. Swinging his scythe over the field, death topped off the highest flowers. The tents of Ham knew each one its own peculiar sorrow, and were made to sympathise with the sorrows which had been ruthlessly inflicted upon the habitations of Israel. Thus curses come home to roost. Oppressors are repaid in their own coin, without the discount of a penny.

Verse 52. *But made his own people to go forth like sheep.* The contrast is striking, and ought never to have been forgotten by the people. The wolves were slain in heaps, the sheep were carefully gathered, and triumphantly delivered. The tables were turned, and the poor serfs became the honoured people, while their oppressors were humbled before them. Israel went out in a compact body like a flock; they were defenceless in themselves as sheep, but they were safe under their Great Shepherd; they left Egypt as easily as a flock leaves one pasture for another. And guided them in the wilderness like a flock. Knowing nothing of the way by their own understanding or experience, they were, nevertheless, rightly directed, for the All wise God knew every spot of the wilderness. To the sea, through the sea, and from the sea, the Lord led his chosen; while their former taskmasters were too cowed in spirit, and broken in power, to dare to molest them.

Verse 53. *And he led them on safely, so that they feared not.* After the first little alarm, natural enough when they found themselves pursued by their old taskmasters, they plucked up courage and ventured forth boldly into the sea, and afterwards into the desert where no man dwelt. But the sea overwhelmed their enemies. They were gone, gone for ever, never to disturb the fugitives again. That tremendous blow effectually defended the tribes for forty years from any further attempt to drive them back. Egypt found the stone too heavy and was glad to let it alone. Let the Lord be praised who thus effectually freed
his elect nation. What a grand narrative have we been considering. Well might the mightiest master of sacred song select "Israel in Egypt" as a choice theme for his genius; and well may every believing mind linger over every item of the amazing transaction. The marvel is that the favoured nation should live as if unmindful of it all, and yet such is human nature. Alas, poor man! Rather, alas, base heart! We now, after a pause, follow again the chain of events, the narration of which had been interrupted by a retrospect, and we find Israel entering into the promised land, there to repeat her follies and enlarge her crimes.

**Verse 54.** *And he brought them to the border of his sanctuary.* He conducted them to the frontier of the Holy Land, where he intended the tabernacle to become the permanent symbol of his abode among his people. He did not leave them halfway upon their journey to their heritage; his power and wisdom preserved the nation till the palm trees of Jericho were within sight on the other side of the river. Even to this mountain, which his right hand had purchased. Nor did he leave them then, but still conducted them till they were in the region round about Zion, which was to be the central seat of his worship. This the Lord had purchased in type of old by the sacrifice of Isaac, fit symbol of the greater sacrifice which was in due season to be presented there: that mountain was also redeemed by power, when the Lord's right hand enabled his valiant men to smite the Jebusites, and take the sacred hill from the insulting Canaanite. Thus shall the elect of God enjoy the sure protection of the Lord of hosts, even to the border land of death, and through the river, up to the hill of the Lord in glory. The purchased people shall safely reach the purchased inheritance.

**Verse 55.** *He cast out the heathen also before them,* or "he drove out the nations." Not only were armies routed, but whole peoples displaced. The iniquity of the Canaanites was full; their vices made them rot above ground; therefore, the land ate up its inhabitants, the hornets vexed them, the pestilence destroyed them, and the sword of the tribes completed the execution to which the justice of long provoked heaven had at length appointed them. The Lord was the true conqueror of Canaan; he cast out the nations as men cast out filth from their habitations, he uprooted them as noxious weeds are extirpated by the husbandman. And divided them an inheritance by line. He divided the land of the nations among the tribes by lot and measure, assigning Hivite, Perizzite, and Jebusite territory to Simeon, Judah, or Ephraim, as the case might be. Among those condemned nations were not only giants in stature, but also giants in crime: those monsters of iniquity had too long defiled the earth; it was time that they should no more indulge the unnatural crimes for which they were
infamous; they were, therefore, doomed to forfeit life and lands by the hands of
the tribes of Israel. The distribution of the forfeited country was made by divine
appointment; it was no scramble, but a judicial appointment of lands which had
fallen to the crown by the attainder of the former holders. And made the tribes
of Israel to dwell in their tents. The favoured people entered upon a furnished
house: they found the larder supplied, for they fed upon the old corn of the
land, and the dwellings were already builded in which they could dwell. Thus
does another race often enter into the lot of a former people, and it is sad indeed
when the change which judgment decrees does not turn out to be much for the
better, because the incomers inherit the evils as well as the goods of the ejected.
Such a case of judicial visitation ought to have had a salutary influence upon
the tribes; but, alas, they were incorrigible, and would not learn even from
examples so near at home and so terribly suggestive.

Verse 56. Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God. Change of
condition had not altered their manners. They left their nomadic habits, but not
their tendencies to wander from their God. Though every divine promise had
been fulfilled to the letter, and the land flowing with milk and honey was
actually their own, yet they tried the Lord again with unbelief, and provoked
him with other sins. He is not only high and glorious, but most High, yea, the
most High, the only being who deserves to be so highly had in honour; yet,
instead of honouring him, Israel grieved him with rebellion. And kept not his
testimonies. They were true to nothing but hereditary treachery; steadfast in
nothing but in falsehood. They knew his truth and forgot it, his will and
disobeyed it, his grace and perverted it to an occasion for greater transgression.
Reader, dost thou need a looking glass? See here is one which suits the present
expositor well; does it not also reflect thine image?

Verse 57. But turned back. Turned over the old leaf, repeated the same
offences, started aside like an ill made bow, were false and faithless to their
best promises. And dealt unfaithfully like their fathers, proving themselves
legitimate by manifesting the treachery of their sires. They were a new
generation, but not a new nation—another race yet not another. Evil
propensities are transmitted; the birth follows the progenitor; the wild ass
breeds wild asses; the children of the raven fly to the carrion. Human nature
does not improve, the new editions contain all the errata of the first, and
sometimes fresh errors are imported. They were turned aside like a deceitful
bow, which not only fails to send the arrow towards the mark in a direct line,
but springs back to the archer's hurt, and perhaps sends the shaft among his
friends to their serious jeopardy. Israel boasted of the bow as the national
weapon, they sang the song of the bow, and hence a deceitful bow is made to
be the type and symbol of their own unsteadfastness; God can make men's glory the very ensign of their shame, he draws a bar sinister across the escutcheon of traitors.

**Verse 58.** *For they provoked him to anger with their high places.* This was their first error—will worship, or the worship of God, otherwise than according to his command. Many think lightly of this, but it was no mean sin; and its tendencies to further offence are very powerful. The Lord would have his holy place remain as the only spot for sacrifice; and Israel, in wilful rebellion, (no doubt glossed over by the plea of great devotion,) determined to have many altars upon many hills. If they might have but one God, they insisted upon it that they would not be restricted to one sacred place of sacrifice. How much of the worship of the present day is neither more nor less than sheer will worship! Nobody dare plead a divine appointment for a tithe of the offices, festivals, ceremonies, and observances of certain churches. Doubtless God, so far from being honoured by worship which he has not commanded, is greatly angered at it. And moved him to jealousy with their graven images. This was but one more step; they manufactured symbols of the invisible God, for they lusted after something tangible and visible to which they could shew reverence. This also is the crying sin of modern times. Do we not hear and see superstition abounding? Images, pictures, crucifixes, and a host of visible things are had in religious honour, and worst of all men now a days worship what they eat, and call that a God which passes into their belly, and thence into baser places still. Surely the Lord is very patient, or he would visit the earth for this worst and basest of idolatry. He is a jealous God, and abhors to see himself dishonoured by any form of representation which can come from man's hands.

**Verse 59.** *When God heard this, he was wroth.* The mere report of it filled him with indignation; he could not bear it, he was incensed to the uttermost, and most justly so. And greatly abhorred Israel. He cast his idolatrous people from his favour, and left them to themselves, and their own devices. How could he have fellowship with idols? What concord hath Christ with Belial? Sin is in itself so offensive that it makes the sinner offensive too. Idols of any sort are highly abhorrent to God, and we must see to it that we keep ourselves from them through divine grace, for rest assured idolatry is not consistent with true grace in the heart. If Dagon sit aloft in any soul, the ark of God is not there. Where the Lord dwells no image of jealousy will be tolerated. A visible church will soon become a visible curse if idols be set up in it, and then the pruning knife will remove it as a dead branch from the vine. Note that God did not utterly cast away his people Israel even when he greatly abhorred them, for he returned in mercy to them, so the subsequent verses tell us: so now the seed of
Abraham, though for awhile under a heavy cloud, will be gathered yet again,
for the covenant of salt shall not be broken. As for the spiritual seed, the Lord
hath not despised nor abhorred them; they are his peculiar treasure and lie for
ever near his heart.

Verse 60. So that he forsook the tabernacle of Shiloh, the tent which he placed
among men. His glory would no more reveal itself there, he left Shiloh to
become a complete ruin. At the door of that tent shameless sin had been
perpetrated, and all around it idols had been adored, and therefore the glory
departed and Ichabod was sounded as a word of dread concerning Shiloh and
the tribe of Ephraim. Thus may the candlestick be removed though the candle is
not quenched. Erring churches become apostate, but a true church still remains;
if Shiloh be profaned Zion is consecrated. Yet is it ever a solemn caution to all
the assemblies of the saints, admonishing them to walk humbly with their God,
when we read such words as those of the prophet Jeremiah in is seventh
chapter, "Trust ye not in lying words, saying, The temple of the Lord, The
temple of the Lord, The temple of the Lord, are these. Go ye now unto my
place which was in Shiloh, where I set my name at the first, and see what I did
to it for the wickedness of my people Israel." Let us take heed, lest as the ark
never returned to Shiloh after its capture by the Philistines, so the gospel may
be taken from us in judgment, never to be restored to the same church again.

Verse 61. And delivered his strength into captivity. The ark was captured by
the Philistines in battle, only because the Lord for the punishment of Israel
chose to deliver it into their hands, otherwise they could have had no power at
all against it. The token of the divine presence is here poetically called "his
strength; ", and, indeed, the presence of the Lord is his strength among his
people. It was a black day when the mercyseat was removed, when the
cherubim took flight, and Israel's palladium was carried away. And his glory
into the enemy's hand. The ark was the place for the revealed glory of God, and
his enemies exulted greatly when they bore it away into their own cities.
Nothing could more clearly have shown the divine displeasure. It seemed to say
that Jehovah would sooner dwell among his avowed adversaries than among so
false a people as Israel; he would sooner bear the insults of Philistia than the
treacheries of Ephraim. This was a fearful downfall for the favoured nation, and
it was followed by dire judgments of most appalling nature. When God is gone
all is gone. No calamity can equal the withdrawal of the divine presence from a
people. O Israel, how art thou brought low! Who shall help thee now that thy
God has left thee!

Verse 62. He gave his people over also unto the sword. They fell in battle
because they were no longer aided by the divine strength. Sharp was the sword,
but sharper still the cause of its being unsheathed. And was wroth with his
inheritance. They were his still, and twice in this verse they are called so; yet
his regard for them did not prevent his chastening them, even with a rod of
steel. Where the love is most fervent, the jealousy is most cruel. Sin cannot be
tolerated in those who are a people near unto God.

Verse 63. The fire consumed their young men. As fire slew Nadab and Abihu
literally, so the fire of divine wrath fell on the sons of Eli, who defiled the
sanctuary of the Lord, and the like fire, in the form of war, consumed the
flower of the people. And their maidens were not given to marriage. No nuptial
hymn were sung, the bride lacked her bridegroom, the edge of the sword had
cut the bands of their espousals, and left unmarried those who else had been
extolled in hymns and congratulations. Thus Israel was brought very low, she
could not find husbands for her maids, and therefore her state was not
replenished; no young children clustered around parental knees. The nation had
failed in its solemn task of instructing the young in the fear of Jehovah, and it
was a fitting judgment that the very production of a posterity should be
endangered.

Verse 64. Their priests fell by the sword. Hophni and Phineas were slain; they
were among the chief in sin, and, therefore, they perished with the rest.
Priesthood is no shelter for transgressors; the jewelled breastplate cannot turn
aside the arrows of judgment. And their widows made no lamentation. Their
private griefs were swallowed up in the greater national agony, because the ark
of God was taken. As the maidens had no heart for the marriage song, so the
widows had no spirit, even to utter the funeral wail. The dead were buried too
often and too hurriedly to allow of the usual rites of lamentation. This was the
lowest depth; from this point things will take a gracious turn.

Verse 65. The Lord awaked as one out of sleep. Justly inactive, he had suffered
the enemy to triumph, his ark to be captured, and his people to be slain; but
now he arouses himself, his heart is full of pity for his chosen, and anger
against the insulting foe. Woe to thee, O Philistia, now thou shalt feel the
weight of his right hand! Waking and putting forth strength like a man who has
taken a refreshing draught, the Lord is said to be, like a mighty man that
shouteth by reason of wine. Strong and full of energy the Lord dashed upon his
foes, and made them stagger beneath his blows. His ark from city to city went
as an avenger rather than as a trophy, and in every place the false gods fell
helplessly before it.

Verse 66. He smote his enemies in the hinder parts. The emerods rendered
them ridiculous, and their numerous defeats made them yet more so. They fled
but were overtaken and wounded in the back to their eternal disgrace. He put them to a perpetual reproach. Orientals are not very refined, and we can well believe that the haemorrhoids were the subject of many a taunt against the Philistines, as also were their frequent defeats by Israel until at last they were crushed under, never to exist again as a distinct nation.

**Verse 67.** *Moreover he refused the tabernacle of Joseph.* God had honoured Ephraim, for to that tribe belonged Joshua the great conqueror, and Gideon the great judge, and within its borders was Shiloh the place of the ark and the sanctuary; but now the Lord would change all this and set up other rulers. He would no longer leave matters to the leadership of Ephraim, since that tribe had been tried and found wanting. And chose not the tribe of Ephraim. Sin had been found in them, folly and instability, and therefore they were set aside as unfit to lead.

**Verse 68.** *But chose the tribe of Judah.* To give the nation another trial this tribe was elected to supremacy. This was according to Jacob's dying prophecy. Our Lord sprang out of Judah, and he it is whom his brethren shall praise. The Mount Zion which he loved. The tabernacle and ark were removed to Zion during the reign of David; no honour was left to the wayward Ephraimites. Hard by this mountain the Father of the Faithful had offered up his only son, and there in future days the great gatherings of his chosen seed would be, and therefore Zion is said to be lovely unto God.

**Verse 69.** *And he built his sanctuary like high palaces.* The tabernacle was placed on high, literally and spiritually it was a mountain of beauty. True religion was exalted in the land. For sanctity it was a temple, for majesty it was a palace. Like the earth which he hath established for ever. Stability was well as stateliness were seen in the temple, and so also in the church of God. The prophets saw both in vision.

**Verse 70.** *He chose David also his servant.* It was an election of a sovereignly gracious kind, and it operated practically by making the chosen man a willing servant of the Lord. He was not chosen because he was a servant, but in order that he might be so. David always esteemed it to be a high honour that he was both elect of God, and a servant of God. And took him from the sheepfolds. A shepherd of sheep he had been, and this was a fit school for a shepherd of men. Lowliness of occupation will debar no man from such honours as the Lord's election confers, the Lord seeth not as man seeth. He delights to bless those who are of low estate.
Verse 71. *From following the ewes great with young he brought him to feed Jacob his people, and Israel his inheritance.* Exercising the care and art of those who watch for the young lambs, David followed the ewes in their wanderings; the tenderness and patience thus acquired would tend to the development of characteristics most becoming in a king. To the man thus prepared, the office and dignity which God had appointed for him, came in due season, and he was enabled worthily to wear them. It is wonderful how often divine wisdom so arranges the early and obscure portion of a choice life, so as to make it a preparatory school for a more active and noble future.

Verse 72. *So he fed them according to the integrity of his heart.* David was upright before God, and never swerved in heart from the obedient worship of Jehovah. Whatever faults he had, he was unfeignedly sincere in his allegiance to Israel's superior king; he shepherded for God with honest heart. And guided them by the skilfulness of his hands. He was a sagacious ruler, and the psalmist magnifies the Lord for having appointed him. Under David, the Jewish kingdom rose to an honourable position among the nations, and exercised an influence over its neighbours. In closing the Psalm which has described the varying conditions of the chosen nation, we are glad to end so peacefully; with all noise of tumult or of sinful rites hushed into silence. After a long voyage over a stormy sea, the ark of the Jewish state rested on its Ararat, beneath a wise and gentle reign, to be wafted no more hither and thither by floods and gales. The psalmist had all along intended to make this his last stanza, and we too may be content to finish all our songs of love with the reign of the Lord's anointed. Only we may eagerly enquire, when will it come? When shall we end these desert roamings, these rebellions, and chastenings, and enter into the rest of a settled kingdom, with the Lord Jesus reigning as "the Prince of the house of David?" Thus have we ended this lengthy parable, may we in our life parable have less of sin, and as much of grace as are displayed in Israel's history, and may we close it under the safe guidance of "that great Shepherd of the sheep." AMEN.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS

**Whole Psalm.** This Psalm appears to have been occasioned by the removal of the sanctuary from Shiloh in the tribe of Ephraim to Judah, and the coincident transfer of preeminence in Israel from the former to the latter tribe, as clearly evinced by David's settlement as the head of the church and nation. Though this was the execution of God's purpose, the writer here shows that it also proceeded from the divine judgment on Ephraim, under whose leadership the people had manifested the same sinful and rebellious character which had

**Verse 1.** *Give ear, O my people, to my law: incline your ears.* Inclining the ears does not denote any ordinary sort of hearing, but such as a disciple renders to the words of his master, with submission and reverence of mind, silent and earnest, that whatever is enunciated for the purpose of instruction may be heard and properly understood, and nothing be allowed to escape. He is a hearer of a different stamp, who hears carelessly, not for the purpose of learning or imitation, but to criticise, to make merry, to indulge animosity, or to kill time. *Musculus.*

**Verse 1.** *Incline your ears.* Lay them close to my lips, that no parcel of this sacred language fall to the ground by your default. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 1.** *To the words of my mouth.* Was it not sufficient for the parallelism to say, *To my words?* Obviously. Why then is there any notice taken of the *mouth?* Because those who can prescribe laws to their subjects are also those who scorn to address them with their mouth. Such is the custom of kings, princes, pontiffs, both Roman and others. For the higher every one rises in dignity, the less he considers it becoming to him to speak to the people, to teach and instruct them by word of mouth. They think they owe nothing to the people, but are altogether taken up with this, that they may be looked up to as princes, and so retain a certain secular majesty of command. But, with one's own mouth to teach the ignorant, is a singular proof of love and paternal affection, such as becomes the preceptor, pastor and teacher. This Christ most constantly employed, because he was touched with paternal affection towards the lost sheep, and came as a shepherd to seek them. The manner of earthly princes he therefore rejected, and clothed himself with that paternal custom which becomes the shepherd and teacher, going about and opening his mouth in order to give instruction. See Matthew 5. Rightly, therefore, was the prophet not content with saying, *Give ear, O my people, to my law:* he adds, *Incline your ears to the words of my mouth.* Thus he indicates that he was about to address and instruct them with paternal affection. *Musculus.*

**Verse 2.** *Parable. Dark sayings.* *lvm,* an authoritative weighty speech or saying. The Hebrew term very nearly answers to the Greek, kuriai doxai, i.e., authoritative sentences or maxims, or weighty sayings, expressing or implying a comparison, as such sayings frequently do. hdyx *an enigma, a parable,* which penetrates the mind, and when understood makes a deep impression of what is intended or represented by it. Here twdyx seems to refer to the historical facts
mentioned in the subsequent part of the Psalm, considered as *enigmas* of spiritual concern. *John Parkhurst.*

**Verse 2.** *Parable.* Parables are the speeches of wise men, yea, they are the extracts and spirits of wisdom. The Hebrew word signifies to rule, or have authority, because such speeches come upon us with authority, and subdue our reason by the weight of theirs. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 2.** *I will utter.* The metaphor in this word is taken from a fountain which pours forth water abundantly. For *ebg* properly means to gush forth, or bubble up. The heart of teachers in the Church ought to be full, and ready to pour forth those streams by which the Church is watered. Their spring ought not to become exhausted, and fail in the summer. *Mollerus.*

**Verse 3.** *Which we have heard and known.* We have heard the law and known the facts. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 3.** *Fathers.* Those are worthy of the name of *fathers* in the church, in relation to posterity, who transmit to posterity the truth of God contained in Scripture, such as here is set down in this Psalm: and this is the only infallible sort of tradition, which delivereth to posterity what God delivered to the prophets or their predecessors by Scripture, such as is the doctrine delivered in this Psalm. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 4.** *We will not hide from their children,* etc. Thou must not only praise God thyself, but endeavour to transmit the memorial of his goodness to posterity. Children are their parent's heirs; it were unnatural for a father, before he dies, to bury up his treasure in the earth where his children should not find or enjoy it; now the mercies of God are not the least part of a good man's treasure, nor the least of his children's inheritance, being both helps to their faith, matter for their praise, and spurs to their obedience. "Our fathers have told us what works thou didst in their days, how thou didst drive out the heathen" etc., Ps 44:1-2; from this they ground their confidence, Ps 44:4, "Thou art my King, O God; command deliverances for Jacob," and excite their thankfulness, Ps 44:8, "In God we boast all the day long, and praise thy name for ever." Indeed, as children are their parents heirs, so they become in justice liable to pay their parents' debts: now the great debt which the saint at death stands charged with, is that which he owes to God for his mercies, and, therefore, it is but reason he should tie his posterity to the payment thereof. Thus mayest thou be praising God in heaven and earth at the same time. *William Gurnall.*
Verses 4-6. The cloth that is dyed in the wool will keep colour best. Disciples in youth will prove angels in age. Use and experience strengthen and confirm in any art or science. The longer thy child hath been brought up in Christ's school, the more able he will be to find out Satan's wiles and fallacies, and to avoid them. The longer he hath been at the trade the more skill and delight will he have in worshipping and enjoying the blessed God. The tree when it is old stands strongly against the wind, just as it was set when it was young. The children of Merindal so answered one another in the matters of religion, before the persecuting Bishop of Cavailon, that a bystander said unto the bishop, I must needs confess I have often been at the disputations of the doctors in the Sorbonne, but I never learned so much as by these children. Seven children at one time suffered martyrdom with Symphrosia, a godly matron, their mother. Such a blessing doth often accompany religious breeding; therefore Julian the apostate, to hinder the growth and increase of Christianity, would not suffer children to be taught either human or divine learning.

Philip was glad that Alexander was born whilst Aristotle lived, that he might be instructed by Aristotle in philosophy. It is no mean mercy that thy children are born in the days of the gospel, and in a valley of vision, a land of light, where they may be instructed in Christianity. Oh, do not fail, therefore, to acquaint thy children with the nature of God, the natures and offices of Christ, their own natural sinfulness and misery, the way and means of their recovery, the end and errand for which they were sent into the world, the necessity of regeneration and a holy life, if ever they would escape eternal death! Alas! how is it possible they should ever arrive at heaven if they know not the way thither? The inhabitants of Mitylene, sometime the lords of the seas, if any of their neighbours revolted, did inflict this punishment,—they forbade them to instruct their children, esteeming this a sufficient revenge.—(Aelian.) Reader, if thou art careless of this duty, I would ask thee what wrong thy children have done thee that thou shouldest revenge thyself by denying them that which is their due. I mean pious instruction. The Jewish rabbis speak of a very strict custom and method for the instruction of their children, according to their age and capacity. At five years old they were filii legis, sons of the law, to read it. At thirteen they were filli praecepti, sons of the precept, to understand the law. At fifteen they were Talmudistae, and went to deeper points of the law, even to Talmudic doubts. As thy children grow up, so do thou go on to instruct them in God's will. They are "born like the wild ass's colt, "Job 11:12—that is, unruly, foolish, and ignorant. We often call a fool an ass, but here it is a "wild ass's colt, "which is most rude, unruly, and foolish. How, then, shall thy ignorant children come to know God or themselves without instruction?
Thy duty is to acquaint thy children with the works of God. Teach them his doings as well as his sayings. "Take heed to thyself, lest thou forget the things which thine eyes have seen: but teach them thy sons, and thy sons' sons, "De 4:9. God's wonders should be had in everlasting remembrance. "He hath made his wonderful works to be remembered, "Ps 109:4. Now, one special way to do this is by writing them in our children's memories, hereby they are transmitted to posterity. This was the godly practice of the patriarchs, to instruct their children concerning the creation of the world, transgression of man, destruction of the old world, God's providence, the Messiah to be revealed, and the like. The parents' mouths were large books, in which their children did read the noble acts of the Lord. The precept is here urged (Ps 78:2-7) upon a double ground, partly for God's praise, in the perpetuity of his worthy deeds: his words are of great weight, and therefore, as curious pictures or precious jewels, must in memory of him be bequeathed from father to son whilst the world continueth. If they are written on paper or parchment they may perish (and is it not a thousand pities that such excellent records should be lost?); but if they be written by fathers successfully on their children's hearts, no time shall blot or wear them out, Ex 12:26-27. Therefore, as the rabbis observe, the night before the passover the Jews (to keep God's mercies in memory to his honour) were wont to confer with their children on this wise. The child said, Why is it called the passover? The father said, Because the angel passed over us when it slew the Egyptians, and destroyed us not. The child said, Why do we eat unleavened bread? The father answered, Because we were forced to hasten out of Egypt. The child said, Why do we eat bitter herbs? The father answered, To mind us of our afflictions in Egypt.

But the duty is also urged, partly for their own profit, Ps 78:7, That they might set their hope in God, etc. Acquaintance with God's favour will encourage their faith; knowledge of his power will help them to believe his promise. Reader, obedience to this precept may tend much to thy own and thy children's profit. By teaching thy children God's actions, thou wilt fix them the faster, and they will make the greater impression, upon thy own spirit. A frequent mention of things is the best art of memory: what the mouth preacheth often the mind will ponder much. Besides, it may work for thy children's weal; the more they be acquainted with the goodness, wisdom, power, and faithfulness of God which appear in his works, the more they will fear, love, and trust him. George Swinnock.

Verses 5-6. Five generations appear to be mentioned:

1. Fathers;
2. Their children;
3. The generation to come;
4. And their children;
5. And their children.
—Adam Clarke.

Verse 6. Children should earnestly hearken to the instruction of their parents that they themselves may afterwards be able to tell the same to their sons, and so a golden chain be formed, wherewith being bound together, the whole family may seek the skies. Whilst the father draws the son, the son the grandson, the grandson his children to Christ, as the magnet of them all, that they all may be made one. Thomas Le Blanc.

Verse 7. Set their hope in God. Their hope was to be set not in the law which punishes, but in grace freely given which redeems; therefore is it added and not forget the works of God. Johannes De Turrecremata. 1476.

Verse 8. And might not be as their fathers. The warning is taken from an example at home. He does not say, That they might not be as the nations, which know not God: but, That they might not be as their fathers. Domestic examples of vice are much more pernicious than foreign ones. Hence one says: Sic natura jubet, velocius et citius nos corrumpunt vitiorum exempla domestica. Let us learn from this place, that it is not safe in all things to cleave to the footsteps of our fathers. He speaks of those fathers who perished in the wilderness: of whom, see Numbers 14; Deuteronomy 1, and Ps 68:6. Musculus.

Verse 8. As their fathers, a stubborn and rebellious generation. Forasmuch as this bad emulation of their ancestors is with difficulty plucked from the minds of men, because of our innate reverence for our fathers, the prophet heaps up words in the description of the crimes of their fathers. He says they were hrm rwd, that is, a generation detracting from the authority of God, and continually breaking the bonds of the law, and in their petulance shaking off the yoke, as a violent and refractory horse, or an untamed bullock, enduring not the rein, or refusing to yield its neck to the yoke, but constantly drawing back and rejecting the bridle. Mollerus.

Verses 8-9. Look carefully to the ground of thy active obedience, that it be sound and sincere. The same right principles whereby the sincere soul acts for Christ, will carry him to suffer for Christ, when a call from God comes with such an errand. "The children of Ephraim, being armed, and carrying bows, turned back in the day of battle." Why? what is the matter? so well armed, and yet so cowardly? This seems strange: read the preceding verse and you will cease wondering; they are called there, A generation that set not their heart
aright, and whose spirit was not steadfast with God. Let the armour be what it will, yea, if soldiers were in a castle, whose foundations were rock, and walls brass; yet if their hearts be not right to their prince, an easy storm will drive them from the walls, and a little scare open their gate, which hath not this bolt of sincerity on it to hold it fast. In our late wars we have seen that the honest hearts within thin and weak works have held the town, when no walls could defend treachery from betraying trust. William Gurnall.

Verse 9. The children of Ephraim, being armed, etc. "When ye had girded on every man is weapons of war, ye were ready to go up into the hill. And the Lord said unto me, Say unto them, Go not up, neither fight; for I am not among you; lest ye be smitten before your enemies. So I spake unto you; and ye would not hear, but rebelled against the commandment of the Lord, and went presumptuously up into the hill. And the Amorites, which dwelt in that mountain, came out against you, and chased you, as bees do, and destroyed you in Seir, even unto Hormah." De 1:41-44.

Verse 9. Many person suppose the passage to refer to the event recorded in 1Ch 7:21-22, where are mentioned the sons of Ephraim, "whom the men of Gath that were born in the land slew, because they came down to take away their cattle. And Ephraim their father mourned many days, and his brethren came to comfort him." The manner of the relation shows that the slaughter must have been great; and this flight and defeat, and their not acknowledging their dependence upon God, it is supposed the psalmist has in view in this place. But the objection to this interpretation is, that the event referred to in the book of Chronicles, evidently occurred at a time anterior to that of the Israelitish exodus from Egypt; whilst Ps 78:11 speaks of these same Ephraimites being forgetful of God's doings and wonderful works which he did at the time of their exit from Egypt. It is, therefore, more probable that Myrka ygk may designate the Israelitish people generally, which Mendelssohn thinks to be the case. He observes that "the meaning of the noun Ephraim was that of a general term for Israel before the reigning of the house of David, because that Joshua the son of Nun, the first judge, was of this tribe; also because the territory assigned to this tribe was in the region of Shiloh: and it is possible that because of the reputation of this tribe in those days, all those who were in high esteem were also called Ephraimites." He might have added another and stronger reason than any of the preceding for this application of the term to Israel, and it is, that Jeroboam, who may be regarded as the founder of the Israelitish monarchy, is said, in 1Ki 11:26, to have been a descendant of Ephraim. The war alluded to may have been one of those which were waged between the ten tribes and the people of Judah. George Phillips.
Verse 10. Walk in his law. Note, we must walk in the law of God, this is that narrow and sacred way which Christ traces before us. At Athens there was ierodov, the sacred way, by which, as Harpocrates relates, the priests of the mysteries travelled to Elusin. At Rome also there was a way which was called *Via Sacra*. To us also there is a way to the skies, consecrated by the footsteps of the saints. It behooves us therefore not to loiter, but to be ever on the march. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 12. Zoan. The name of a city in Egypt (Nu 13:22), though it be not set down in the story in Exodus, is twice specified by the writer of this psalm, here, and Ps 78:43, as the scene wherein the wondrous works were wrought on Pharaoh by Moses; either because really the first and principal of the miracles were shewed Pharaoh there, this city being the seat of the king, and a most ancient city, as appears by the expression used of Hebron, in Nu 13:22, where to set out the antiquity of that city, where Abraham, the tenth from Noah dwelt, it is said, that "it was built seven years before Zoan in Egypt; "or perhaps only in poetical style, as "the field" or country of Zoan, is all one with the "land of Egypt" foregoing. Thus, in other prophetic writings, when judgments are threatened, instead of "Egypt" sometimes we find "Zoan" alone, Isa 19:11, where the "princes of Zoan" are all one with the counsellors of Pharaoh; sometimes "the princes of Zoan, "with the addition of some other city, as Isa 19:13, "the princes of Zoan, the princes of Noph, "i.e., again, the counsellors of that kingdom, which as it follows, "have seduced Egypt,"—brought the whole nation to ruin. So Isa 30:4, where they sent to Egypt for relief, it is said, their "princes were at Zoan, their ambassadors at Hanes." *Henry Hammond.*

Verse 12. In the field of Zoan. We see in this passage that it was not without reason that God most powerfully displayed his wondrous works, his virtue and his glory in the more famous cities: not that he despised the humbler and obscure, but that he might more conveniently in this way scatter abroad the knowledge and renown of his name. For this cause he desired Moses to perform his miracles in the royal city, and in its field; for the same reason he afterwards fixed his dwelling place in the most famous city of Canaan, in which he decreed also that Christ his Son should be crucified and the foundation of his heavenly kingdom laid. *Musculus.*

Verse 13. He made the waters to stand as an heap. The original word imports, those great heaps which are made use of as dykes or banks to restrain the waters. But the Jews have not only understood these expressions literally, but have likewise taken upon them to add particular circumstances, as if the history had been so concise, that it wanted to be supplied therewith. They say, that the
sea had formed, as it were, twelve roads or causeways, according to the number of the tribes of the Israelites. *James Saurin.*

**Verse 13.** *He made the waters to stand as an heap.* God did not wish altogether to take the sea from the gaze of the Hebrews, but to interrupt and divide it, that like a wall it might stand firm on either side of the way. This was done, first, that the miracle might be evident, for in that sea there is no tidal rise or fall of the waters. Secondly, that the people might have greater joy at the sight of so great a miracle. Thirdly, that in their whole passage they might depend more upon the providence of God, who, in a single moment, could allow the sea to return to its bed and drown all of them. It is God's will than we should flee to him the more ardently as the aspect of present danger. Fourthly and lastly, that the people might pass over the more rapidly, since they knew not how long God wished the miracle to last. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

**Verse 14.** That there was a mystery in this *pillar of cloud and fire* is clear from Isa 4:5-6, for there never was a *literal* cloud and fire upon Mount Zion. This fiery pillar did cease when they were entered into Canaan; Isaiah therefore intends a *spiritual* thing under those expressions. So it is represented by the Apostle as representing a gospel mystery: 1Co 10:2. It signified and shadowed forth, 1. Something of *Christ himself;* 2. The *benefits* of Christ; 3. The *ordinances* of Christ.

1. *Christ himself.* Some have noted a shadow both of his *Deity* and *humanity.* There was a *fiery brightness* in the clouds, which yet was but a dark shadow of the glory of his Deity, which was often in vision so represented; but his divine nature was veiled and over clouded by his human, as in this shadow there was a pillar of *cloud* as well as *fire.* In Re 10:1 Christ is represented as *clothed with a cloud, and his feet as pillars of fire;* expressions notably answering this ancient type and shadow.

2. It holds forth something of the *benefits* of Christ. What benefits had they from this pillar of fire and cloud? They had three: (1) Light and direction. (2) Defence and protection. (3) Ornament and glory. All which we have in a higher manner in Christ by the gospel.

3. It figured also the *ordinances,* and his presence in and with them; for the ordinances are the outward and visible tokens of God's presence with his people, as this fiery pillar was of old. And, therefore, when the Tabernacle was made and set up, *it rested upon the Tabernacle,* Ex 40:38. There be some duties are secret, which the world sees not, nor may see; as alms deeds and personal and secret prayer. But the *ordinances* of institution are things that ought to be
practised with all the publickness that may be: they are outward and visible tokens of God's presence, particularly that great ordinance of baptism, as in 1Co 10:2. The cloud, it seems, had a refreshing moisture in it, to shade, refresh, and cool them from the burning heat; and they were bedewed (Rather "baptised" in it, as Paul puts it in 1Co 10:2) with it, as we are with the water of baptism; whereby this legal cloud became a type of gospel baptism. And so you see how it represented something of Christ himself; and something of his benefits, and something of all his ordinances under the New Testament. — Samuel Mather.

Verse 14. All the night. We need not dwell long upon the thought of what this all was to the Israelites. In night marchings, and night restings, it was very precious; whether they were in motion or at rest, it was alike needed, alike good. This light of fire, unless continuous, would have been of comparatively little worth. Were it suddenly extinguished as they marched, all Israel would have been plunged into confusion and dismay; the quenching of the light would have changed into a disordered rabble, the marshalled host. Philip Bennett Power, in "Breviates: or Short Texts and Their Teachings."

Verse 15. The rocks. They were typical of Christ, 1Co 10:4; who is frequently compared to one for height, strength, and duration, shade, shelter, and protection; and is called the "Rock of Israel," the "Rock of offence to both houses of Israel," the "Rock of salvation," the "Rock of refuge," the "Rock of strength," the "Rock that is higher than," the saints, and on which the church is built, and who is "the shadow of a great rock in a weary land." John Gill.

Verse 15. Gave them drink as out of the great depths. As if he had formed a lake or an ocean, furnishing an inexhaustible supply. Albert Barnes.

Verse 16. He brought streams also out of the rock, etc. "Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound." The second murmuring for water at Kadesh seems to have been a more aggravated act of rebellion than the former, and yet the water is given in greater abundance. Oh, the freeness of the sovereign grace of God! W. Wilson.

Verse 17. And they sinned yet more against him. He does not say that they sinned only, but that they sinned against God. And they sinned yet more against him, namely, God. Against what God? Against him who had delivered them by great and unheard of wonders out of Egypt, who had led them as free men across the Red Sea with a dry foot, who had continued to lead and to protect them will pillars of cloud and fire by day and night, and had given them to drink abundantly of water drawn from the arid rock. Against this God they had
added sin to sin. Simply to sin is human, and happens to the saints even after they have received grace: but to sin against God argues a singular degree of impiety. To sin against God is to injure and dishonour him in things immediately pertaining to himself. So they sinned against God, because after so many distinguished proofs and testimonies of his care made manifest to them, they continued to think and speak evil against him. All sins indeed, of whatever class they may be, are done against God, because they are opposed to his will; but those which are committed peculiarly against God, are certainly greater than others. Such are those wrought against his name, goodness, providence, power, truth, and worship, and against those things which specially concern him, whatever they may be. So we read of the sins of the sons of Eli, 1Sa 2:24-25: "It is no good report that I hear: ye make the Lord's people to transgress. If one man sin against another, the judge shall judge him; but if a man sin against the Lord, who shall intreat for him?" Musculus.

Verse 17. They sinned yet more. Their sin was not murmuring only, sinful as that is, but uncontrolled desire. And for what was that desire? It was for meat. They had grown so weary of the bread of heaven which God so mercifully provided; and they wanted something in addition—something, too, which was not absolutely necessary to their existence. When they murmured for water at Massah, they murmured for something needful. Their sin then was in murmuring, instead of praying. But here they lusted for something unnecessary, and this was an aggravation of their sin. And thus the psalmist, evidently comparing this sin with the murmuring at Massah, says, "They sinned yet more against him." George Wagner, in "The Wanderings of the Children of Israel."

Verse 18. They tempted God. We know that, although "God cannot be tempted with evil," he may justly be said to be tempted, wherewith men, by being dissatisfied with his dealings, virtually ask that he will alter those dealings, and proceed in a way more congenial with their feelings. If you reflect a little, you can hardly fail to perceive, that in a very strict sense, this and the like may be said to be a tempting of God. Suppose a man to be discontented with the appointments of Providence; suppose him to murmur and repine at what the Almighty allots him to do or to bear: is he not to be charged with provoking God to change his purpose? and what is this if it be not "tempting" God—a striving to induce him to swerve from his plans, though every one of those plans has been settled by infinite wisdom? Or, again, if any one of us, notwithstanding multiplied proofs of the Divine lovingkindness, doubt or question whether God do indeed love him; of what is he guilty, if not of tempting the Lord, seeing that he solicits God to give additional evidence, as
though there were deficiency, and challenges him to fresh demonstrations of what he has already abundantly displayed? This would be called tempting amongst men. If a child were to show by his actions that he doubted or disbelieved the affection of his parents, he would be considered as thereby striving to extort from them fresh proofs of that affection, though they had already done as much as either in justice or in wisdom they ought to have done; this would be a clear tempting of them, and that too in the ordinary sense of the term. In short, unbelief of every kind and degree may be said to be a tempting of God; for not to believe on the evidence which he has seen fit to give, is to tempt him to give more than he has already given—offering our possible assent, if proof were increased, as an inducement to him to go beyond what his wisdom has prescribed... You cannot distrust God, and not accuse him of a want either of power or of goodness; you cannot repine—no, not even in thought—without virtually telling him that his plans are not the best, nor his dispensations the wisest, which might have been appointed in respect of yourselves. So that your fear, or your despondency, or your anxiety in circumstances of perplexity, or of peril, is nothing less than a call upon God to depart from his fixed course,—a suspicion, or rather an assertion, that he might proceed in a manner more worthy of himself, and therefore a challenge to him to alter his dealings, if he would prove that he possesses the attributes which he claims. You may not intend thus to accuse, or provoke God, whenever you murmur; but your murmuring does all this, and cannot fail to do it. You cannot be dissatisfied, without virtually saying that God might order things better; you cannot say that he might order things better, without virtually demanding that he change his course of acting, and give other proofs of his infinite perfections. And thus you tempt him, tempt him even as did the Israelites in the wilderness. 

Henry Melvill.

Verse 18. Asking meat for their lusts. God had given them meat for their hunger in the manna, wholesome, pleasant food, and in abundance; he had given them meat for their faith, out of the heads of Leviathan which he brake in pieces, Ps 74:14. But all this would not serve, they must have meat for their lust; dainties and varieties to gratify a luxurious appetite. Nothing is more provoking to God, than our quarrelling with our allotment, and indulging the desires of the flesh. Matthew Henry.

Verse 19. It is particularly to be observed, that the sin of which the children of Israel were on this occasion guilty, was not in wishing for bread and water, but in thinking for one moment, that after the Lord had brought them out of Egypt, he would suffer them, for the lack of any needful thing, to come short of Canaan. It was no sin to be hungry and thirsty; it was a necessity of their
nature. There is nothing living that does not desire and require food: when we do not we are dead, and that they did so was no sin. Their sin was to doubt either that God could or would support them in the wilderness, or allow those who followed his leading to lack any good thing. This was their sin. It is just the same with the Christian now. These Israelites did not more literally require a supply of daily food for their bodies, than does the Christian for his soul. Not to do so is a sign of death, and the living soul would soon die without it. And so far from its being a sin, our Lord has pronounced that man blessed who hungers and thirsts after righteousness, adding the most precious promise, that all such shall be satisfied. But it is a sin, and a very great sin, should this food not be perceptibly, and to the evidence of our senses, immediately supplied, to murmur and be fearful. It was for the trial of their faith that these things happened to the Israelites, as do the trials of all Christians in all ages: and it is "after we have suffered a while" that we may expect to be established, strengthened, settled. Brownlow North, in "Ourselves. A Picture sketched from the History of the Children of Israel." (1865.)

**Verses 19-20.** After all their experience, they doubted the divine omnipotence, as if it were to be regarded as nothing, when it refused to gratify their lusts. Unbelief is so deeply rooted in the human heart, that when God performs miracles on earth, unbelief doubts whether he can perform them in heaven, and when he does them in heaven, whether he can do them on earth? Augustus F. Tholuck.

**Verse 20.** *Can he give bread also?* They should have said, "Will he serve our lusts?" but that they were ashamed to say. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 20.** Who will say that a man is thankful to his friend for a past kindness, if he nourishes an ill opinion of him for the future? This was all that ungrateful Israel returned to God, for his miraculous broaching of the rock to quench their thirst: *Behold, he smote the rock,—Can he give bread also?* This, indeed, was their trade all the time they were in the wilderness. Wherefore, God gives them their character, not by what they seemed to be while his mercies were before them; then they could say, "God was their rock, and the High God their Redeemer; "but by their temper and carriage in straits; when the cloth was drawn, and the feast taken out of their sight, what opinion then had they of God? Could they satisfy his name so far as to trust him for their dinner tomorrow who had feasted them yesterday? Truly no, as soon as they feel their hunger return, like froward children, they are crying, as if God meant to starve them. Wherefore God rejects their praises, and owns not their hypocritical acknowledgments, but sets their ingratitude upon record; they forgot his works, and waited not for his counsel. O how sad is this, that after God had entertained
a soul at his table with choice mercies and deliverances, these should be so ill husbanded, that not a bit of them should be left to give faith a meal, to keep the heart from fainting, when God comes not so fast to deliver as desired. He is the most thankful man that treasures up the mercies of God in his memory, and can feed his faith with what God hath done for him, so as to walk in the strength thereof in present straits. *William Gurnall.*

**Verse 23.** *Opened the doors of heaven.* There is an allusion here to the flood, as in Ps 78:15. *A. R. Fausset.*

**Verse 23.** *Opened the doors of heaven.* God, who has the key of the clouds, opened the doors of heaven, that is more than opening the windows, which yet is spoken of as a great blessing, Mal 3:19. *Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 23.** *Opened the doors of heaven.* This is a metaphor taken from a granary, from which corn is brought; and by opening the doors is signified, that the manna fell very plentifully. Compare Ge 7:11. *Thomas Fenton.*

**Verse 24-25.** Manna. The prophet celebrates this miracle, first, because of the unusual place whence the manna was sent. For he did not produce fruits from the earth wherewith to feed them, but rained down this food from the clouds, and from the depths of the skies. Secondly, because of the facility of the distribution. By the command of God alone, without any labour of men, yea, while they slept, this food was prepared. Therefore is it said, He gave, etc. Thirdly, he celebrates its great abundance which sufficed to supply so great a multitude. Fourthly, the excellence of the food. He calls it the food of the excellent or the strong, such as was not pleasant merely to the common multitude, but to the princes also, and to the heroes, for it was the food of the mighty ones. *Mollerus.*

**Verse 25.** *Man.* Rather, as Ex 16:6, *every man.* Not one of them was left without it. *A. R. Fausset.*

**Verse 25.** *Man did eat angel's food.* It is called angel's food, not because the angels do daily feed upon it, but because it was both made and ministered by the ministry of angels, and that phrase sets forth the excellency of it. *Christopher Ness (1621-1705), in "The Sacred History and Mystery of the Old Testament."*

**Verse 25.** *Angels food.* Mann is called the bread of angels because it was brought down by their ministry; and it was so pleasant in taste, that if the angels had eaten bread, it might have served them. *John Weemse.*
Verse 25. Angel's food. So their manna was called, either,

1. Because it was provided and sent by the ministry of angels; or,

2. Because it seemed to come down from heaven, the dwelling place of the angels; or,

3. To set forth the excellency of this bread, that it was meat, as one would say, fit for angels, if angels needed meat.

And so, indeed, the exceeding glory of Stephen's countenance is set forth by this, that they "saw his face as it had been the face of an angel, "Ac 6:15; and Paul calls an excellent tongue, "the tongue of angels, "1Co 13:1. Arthur Jackson.

Verse 25. The more excellent the benefit is which God giveth, the greater is the ingratitude of him who doth not esteem of it and make use of it as becometh; as we see in Israel's sin, who did not esteem of manna as they should have done. Had the Lord fed them with dust of earth, or roots of grass, or any other mean thing, they should have had no reason to complain: but when he giveth them a new food, created every morning for their sakes, sent down from heaven as fresh furniture every day, of such excellent colour, taste, smell and wholesomeness; what a provocation of God was it, not to be content now; in special, when he gave them abundantly of it? He sent them meat to the full. David Dickson.

Verse 26. He caused an east wind to blow in the heaven: and by his power he brought in the south wind. Here, on examining the geographical position of the Israelites, we see exactly how the south east wind would bring the quails. The Israelites had just passed by the Red Sea, and had began to experience a foretaste of the privations which they were to expect in the desert, through which they had to pass. Passing northwards in their usual migrations, the birds would come to the coast of the Red Sea, and there would wait until a favourable wind enabled them to cross the water. The south east wind afforded them just the very assistance which they needed, and they would naturally take advantage of it. J. G. Wood, in "Bible Animals." 1869.

Verse 27. As dust. The amazing clouds of fine dust or sand, which a violent wind raises in the deserts of the East, constitute the point of comparison. William Keatinge Clay.
Verse 27. Feathered fowls. Hebrew, "fowl of wing; "i.e., flying fowls, in distinction from domestic poultry. Williams, in Notes to Calvin in loc.

Verse 27, 31. If the cemetery on Sarbut el Khadem be, what all the antecedent evidences combine to indicate, the workmanship of the Israelites, (a chief burial ground of their fatal encampment at Kibroth Hattaayah), it may most reasonably be expected that its monuments shall contain symbolic representations of the miracle of the "feathered fowls, "and of the awful plague which followed it. Now Niebuhr happily enables us to meet this just expectation, by his copies of the hieroglyphics on three of those tombstones, published in the 45th and 46th plates of his first volume, and prefaced plate 44, by a plan of the cemetery itself, which is of more value than any or all subsequent descriptions. It was discovered by the present writer (as stated in a former work), ("The Voice of Israel") on the evidence of no less than four Sinaitic inscriptions, that the birds of the miracle, named by Moses, generically, wlv, salu, and by the psalmist, still more generally, Pgk Pwe, winged fowls, or more correctly, "long winged fowls, "were not (as rendered by all our versions, ancient and modern) quails, but a crane like red bird resembling a goose, named in the Arabic nuham. The discovery received subsequently a singular and signal corroboration from the further discovery, by Dean Stanley, and previously by Schubert, of immense flocks of these very nuhams on the reputed scene of the miracle at Kibroth Hattaayah. With these antecedents in his mind, the reader will now turn to the three monuments copied by Niebuhr in the cemetery of Sarbut el Khadem. He will at once see that a crane like bird resembling a goose, with slender body and long legs, is the leading hieroglyphic symbol in all three tablets. No fewer than twenty-five of these symbolic birds occur in the first, ten in the second, and fifteen in the third tablet. The goose appears occasionally, but the principal specimens have the air of the goose, but the form of the crane. In a word, they are the very species of birds seen by Dean Stanley, both at this point of Sinai, and at the first cataract of the Nile; and which constantly occur also in Egyptian monuments: as though the very food of Egypt, after which the Israelites lusted, was sent to be at once their prey and their plague. "And the children of Israel said unto them, Would to God we had died by the hand of the Lord in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the flesh pots." Ex 16:3. The reader has here before him the irrefragable fact that the very birds which by every kind of evidence stand identified with the salus, or long legged and long winged fowls of the miracle, are the very birds depicted on the tombstones of Sarbut el Khadem, both standing, flying, and apparently even trussed and cooked... The inevitable inference is... that these tombstones record the miracle of the "feathered fowls, "and stand over the graves of the gluttons who consumed them. Charles Forster, in "Israel in the
Wilderness." 1865. Mr. Forster thus deciphers by his alphabet some of the mixed legends and devices:—

"From the sea the cranes congregate to one spot; The archers shoot at the cranes passing over the plain. Evil stomached they rush after the prey— The sepulchre their doom—their marrow corrupted by God, The sleepy owl, emblem of death, God sends destruction among them."

"The mother of sepulchres—the black and white geese, A sudden death, greedily lusting after flesh, die the gluttons. The mountain top ascend the Hebrews, They eat, devour, consume, till nothing is left, exceeding all bounds, Their bodies corrupted, by gluttony they die."

Verse 29. Note: The prophet in this Psalm institutes, as it were, a conflict between God and man. God contends with blessings, man with sins. God exerts his power for the benefit of undeserving man, Ps 78:12, Marvellous things did he in the sight of their fathers: man repays the divine power with infidelity, Ps 78:17, And they sinned yet more against him. And farther on, in Ps 78:19, Can God furnish a table in the wilderness? Secondly, God showers down his bounty to overwhelm ungrateful sinners with his gifts, Ps 78:23, He commanded the clouds from above, &c., and rained down manna upon them. These less than men (homunciones) oppose their gluttony to the liberality of God, and abuse the gifts conferred, Ps 78:29, They did eat, and were well filled. Thirdly, divine justice renews the conflict to scourge at once stupidity out of them, Ps 78:30-31, While their meat was yet in their mouths, the wrath of God came upon them. Still obdurate they kick against the goad, Ps 78:33, For all this they sinned still. Fourthly, mercy flies down from heaven, to invite them to peace, Ps 78:38, But he being full of compassion. Men are but emboldened by his compassion, and the more easily relapse into sin, Ps 78:40, How oft did they provoke him in the wilderness? Fifthly, and lastly, when all seems lost, love draws nigh, and performs unheard of wonders, to touch their hardness, and to deliver them from the dangers by which they were pressed, Ps 78:43, How he set his signs in Egypt. To these shafts of his love sinners oppose a forgetfulness of all his benefits, Ps 78:42, They remembered not his hand nor the day when he delivered them from the enemy. And all this took place before they entered the land of promise. The conflict that happened between the Hebrews and God in the land of promise is related in the next section of the Psalm. Thomas Le Blanc.
Verse 29-31. Dangerous prayers. When lust dictates, wrath may answer. Let grace dictate, and mercy will answer. C. D.

Verse 30. They were not estranged from their lust. This implies, that they were still burning with their lust. If it is objected that this does not agree with the preceding sentence, where it is said, that "they did eat, and were thoroughly filled," I would answer, that if, as is well known, the minds of men are not kept within the bounds of reason and temperance, they become insatiable; and, therefore, a great abundance will not extinguish the fire of a depraved appetite. John Calvin.

Verse 30. They were not estranged from their lust. Satiated they were, but not satisfied. It is as easy to quench the fire of Etna, as the thoughts set on fire by lust. John Trapp.

Verse 30. They were not estranged from their lust. Consider that there is more real satisfaction in mortifying lusts than in making provision for them or in fulfilling them: there's more true pleasure in crossing and pinching our flesh than in gratifying it; were there any true pleasure in sin, hell would not be hell, for the more sin, the more joy. You cannot satisfy one lust if you would do your utmost, and make yourself never so absolute a slave to it; you think if you had your heart's desire you would be at rest: you much mistake; they had it. Alexander Carmichael.

Verse 31. The wrath of God came upon them, and slew the fattest of them. Two things are here worthy of notice. 1. One, Why he gave them abundance and sufficiency of quails, and afterward punished the murmuring and unbelieving. If he had punished them before, he would have appeared to have had greater ability to destroy them, than to give them flesh. Therefore, that he might first declare his power, and so make the unbelief of the people the more plain, and show how deserving they were of punishment, he first showed he could give, because they believed he could not, and then punished them for their unbelief... 2. The other, that he destroyed the fat and the chosen men among the people, although they all are said to have murmured. Without a doubt, they were first in the crime, and therefore they are specially mentioned in the punishment. Musculus.

Verse 31. Slew the fattest of them. They were fed as sheep for the slaughter. The butcher takes the fattest first. We may suppose there were some pious and contented Israelites that did eat moderately of the quails, and were never the worse; for it was not the meat that poisoned them, but their own lust, Let
epicures and sensualists here read their doom; they who make "a god of their belly, their end is destruction," Php 3:19. Matthew Henry.

Verses 31-34. The Christian has more true pleasure from the creature than the wicked, as it comes more refined to him than to the other. The unholy wretch sucks dregs and all, dregs of sin and dregs of wrath, whereas the Christian's cup is not thus spiced. First, dregs of sin; the more he hath of the creature's delights given him, the more he sins with them. Oh, it is sad to think what work they make in his naughty heart! they are but fuel for his lust to kindle upon; away they run with their enjoyments, as the prodigal with his bags, or like hogs in shaking time; no sight is to be had of them, or thought of their return as long as they can get anything abroad, among the delights of the world. None so prodigiously wicked as those who are fed high with carnal pleasures. They are to the ungodly as the dung and ordure is to the swine which grows fat by lying in it; so their hearts grow gross and fat; their consciences more stupid and senseless in sin by them; whereas the comforts and delights that God gives unto a holy soul by the creature, turn to spiritual nourishment to his graces, and draw these forth into exercise, as they do others' lusts. Secondly, dregs of wrath. The Israelites had little pleasure from their dainties, when the wrath of God fell upon them, before they could get them down their throats. The sinner's feast is no sooner served in but divine justice is preparing to send up a reckoning after it, and the fearful expectation of this cannot but spoil the taste of the other. William Gurnall.

Verse 33. *Their days did he consume in vanity.* He says with great significance, In vanity their days were consumed, because they were plainly deprived of their hope, and endured all their sufferings in vain. They did not attain what they had hoped for, but only their children entered the land. Mollerus.

Verse 33. *Days* are put in the first place, and then *years*; by which it is intimated, that the duration of their life was cut short by the curse of God, and that it was quite apparent that they failed in the midst of their course. John Calvin.

Verses 34-36. There are some if they come under afflictions, or if they fall in sickness, or a fever, and God shake death over their head; or if they be at some solemn ordinances, they will be at resolving and purposing, and readily bringing vows upon themselves, of personal covenanting with God; but as they are easily gotten, so they easily vanish: *When he slew them, they sought him: and they returned and inquired early after God.* Several times our afflictions are like a gutter; when there is a great shower we will be running over with purposes after God. *Nevertheless they did flatter him with their mouth, and they*
lied unto him with their tongues. For their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast in his covenant: and yet when he slew them, they sought after him, and they early enquired after him: so that in deliberate actions and covenanting with God, as they are hastily begotten, they no less suddenly vanish; the action ought then to be deliberate when we indenture with the Cautioner, and oblige ourselves to more watchfulness, and more tenderness, or else it will soon vanish. *Alexander Wedderburn, in "David's Testament, opened up in Forty Sermons."* 1701.

**Verses 34-37.** In these words you see plainly that these people are very early and earnest in seeking God to take off his hand, to remove judgments that were upon them, but not that God would cure them of those sins that provoked him to draw his sword, and to make it drunk with their blood; for, notwithstanding the sad slaughters that divine justice had made among them, they did but flatter and lie, and play the hypocrites with God; they would fain be rid of their sufferings, but did not care to be rid of their sins. Ah! but a gracious soul cries out, Lord, do but take away my sins, and it will satisfy me and cheer me, though thou shouldest never take off thy heavy hand. A true Nathanael sighs it out under his greatest affliction, as that good man did, *A me, me salva, Domine,* (Augustine) deliver me, O Lord, from that evil man myself. No burden to the burden of sin. Lord! says the believing soul; deliver me from my inward burden, and lay upon me what outward burden you please. *Thomas Brooks.*

**Verses 34-37.** There are a sort of men that lie in the enmity of their natures, and in an unreconciled state, living in the visible church, who are not only much restrained, and bite their enmity in, but who, by means of an inferior work of the word and Spirit of God upon their hearts, are brought to seek unto God for friendship, yea, and do much for him in outward actions, and side and take part with his friends; and yet their hearts being unchanged, the cursed enmity of their nature remaining alive and not taken away, they lie still in the gall of bitterness. For instance, look to these in *Ps 78:34-37.* It is said that they `sought the Lord early as their Redeemer, 'whilst he was slaying of them; yet they did but flatter him with their mouths, etc. A flatterer, you know, differs from a friend, in that he pretends much kindness, yet wants inward good will, doing it for his own ends. And so do many seek God, that yet he accounts as enemies; for they seek him whilst they are themselves in his lurch. Now, it is hard to discover these, because they pretend much friendship, and externally (it may be) do as many outward kindnesses as the true friends; as flatterers will abound in outward kindnesses as much as true friends, nay, often exceed them, because they may not be discovered. Now, if none of the former signs reach to them, nor touch them, then there is no better way left than to search unto the grounds...
of all they do, and to examine whether it proceeds from true, inward, pure, and constant good will, yea or no, or self respects? As now, when we see an ape do many things that a man doth, how do we therefore distinguish those actions in the one and in the other? Why, by the inward principles from whence they spring, by saying that they proceed from reason in the one, but not so in the other. If, therefore, it can be evinced, that all that any man seems to do for God, comes not from good will to him, it is enough to convince them to be persons unreconciled; for whereas all outward kindnesses and expressions of friendship proceed not from friend like dispositions and pure good will, but altogether from self respects, it is but feigned flattery, even among men; and when discovered once, it breeds double hatred. And there is much more reason it should do so with God, because he being a God that knows the heart, to flatter him is the greatest mockery; for that is it which chiefly provoketh men to hate such as dissemble friendship, because there is mockery joined with it. Now, that God accounts every one that doth not turn to him out of pure goodwill a flatterer is plain by these words in Ps 78:36-37: Notwithstanding, they did but flatter him, and dealt falsely in his covenant. If men's hearts be not inwardly for God, and with him, as a friend would be to a friend, in their actions he esteems them against him. "Thy heart, "says Peter to Simon Magus, "is not right before the Lord, "Ac 8:22, and therefore he tells him he was "still in the gall of bitterness." Thomas Goodwin.

Verse 36. Flattery of God.

1. A common sin.
2. A hateful sin.
3. A dangerous sin. B. D.

Verses 36-38. There is no disputing the fact which gives accuracy to the text, that God was moved by a repentance which had not in it even the elements of godly sorrow for sin; which could not even, by a casual observer, much less by him who searches the heart, have been mistaken for that penitence which supposes an inward and radical change, and, nevertheless, even such a repentance as this sufficed to procure a recompense at the hands of God. Though the sackcloth was on the body and not on the soul; though it was the punishment of the sin and not the sin itself which led to this outward humiliation, God did not turn away from the forced supplication, but vouchsafed the deliverance which was sought at his hands. Yes, God, who never expresses greater abhorrence of any character than that of the hypocrite; God, who rejects nothing more indignantly than outward homage when it is not the index of inward prostration—God may be said to have removed the humiliation of the people as though he could not read their hearts, or as though,
having read them, and noted their unsubdued rebellion, he still thought the apparent contrition deserving of some recompense...

If God would not leave the show and semblance of contrition without a recompense, will he be unmindful of real penitence? If *many a time turned he his anger away* from those who *did but flatter him with their mouths, and lied unto him with their tongues,* has he nothing in store for those who are humble in spirit, and who come to him with the sacrifice of a broken heart? Oh! the turning away of temporal wrath because idols were outwardly abandoned, this is a mighty pledge that eternal wrath will be averted if we are inwardly stricken, and flee for refuge to the Saviour. God must have eternal good in store for his friends, if even his enemies are recompensed with temporal good. Yes, as I mark the Philistines and the Ammonites oppressing the idolatrous Israelites, and then see the oppressors driven back in return even for heartless service, Oh! I learn that true penitence for sin and true faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ will cause all enemies to be scattered; I return from the contemplation of the backsliding people, emancipated notwithstanding the known hollowness of their vows, I return assured that a kingdom which neither Philistine nor Ammonite can invade, shall be the portion of all who seek deliverance through Christ. *Henry Melvill.*

**Verse 37.** Their heart was not right with him. God pleases them when he replenishes themselves with food, not their heart with his graces; therefore they repay him with the mouth, and not with the heart. They are altogether mouth and tongue: but God is all heart and breast. They give words; God gives milk and perfect love. Love does not reach the inner nature of many men, it sticks in the entrance. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

**Verse 37.** Their heart was not right with him, neither were they steadfast, etc. This is the ever repeated complain, see Ps 78:8,22. There is no permanence, no stability in the reformation which has been produced. Compare Ho 6:4. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

**Verse 38.** According to *B. Kiddushin 30a,* this verse is the middle one of the 5896 Nyqymk, sticoi, of the Psalter. According to *B. Maccoth 22b,* Ps 78:38, and previously De 28:58-59 29:9, were recited when the forty strokes of the lash save one, which, according to 2Co 11:24, Paul received five times, were being counted out to the culprit. *Franz Delitzsch.*

**Verse 38.** He, being full of compassion, etc. When his hand was up, and he giving the blow, he called it back again, as one that could not find it in his heart to do it; and when he did it, *he did not stir up all his wrath,* he let fall some
drops of it, but would not shed the whole shower of it; and he giveth the reason of both, for they are but flesh; and, indeed, his primary scope is to show mercy; and that he afflicteth is but upon occasions; and therefore he is provoked, and provoked much before he doth it. As it is natural for the bee to give honey, but it stings; but it stings but by occasion when it is provoked; and this we see to be true in God by experience, who suffereth men, and suffereth them long; they continue in their sins, and yet he continues in his mercies, and withholdeth his judgments. John Preston (1587-1628), in "The Golden Sceptre held forth to the Humble."

Verse 38. Forgive is a very inadequate translation of the Hebrew word, which necessarily suggests the idea of expiation as the ground of pardon. Joseph Addison Alexander.

Verse 38. Many a time turned he his anger away. God is provoked every day, yet is he slow to anger. Yea, sometimes when he has determined to bring evil upon a people, and has put himself into a posture of judgment, drawn out the sword, and smitten them; though they cease not to provoke him, he ceaseth to punish them; as a tender father in correcting a rebellious and graceless child, holds his hand sometimes, before the child begs for mercy, and of mere grace forbears: so God did with Israel. Notwithstanding their dissembling with their flattering tongues, and covenant breaking hearts, He forgave their iniquity, and destroyed them not: yea, many a time turned he his anger away, and did not stir up his wrath. The words are, He multiplied to turn away his anger: as they multiplied to provoke it, he multiplied to turn it away; and so at length outnumbered their sins with his mercies, that they were not destroyed. John Strickland, in "A Sermon preached before the House of Commons, " entitled "Mercy rejoicing against Judgment." 1645.

Verse 38. He did not stir up all his wrath. His patience is manifest in moderating his judgments when he sends them. Doth he empty his quiver of his arrows, or exhaust his magazine of thunder? No; he could roll one thunderbolt successively upon all mankind; it is as easy with him to create a perpetual motion of lightning and thunder, as of the sun and stars, and make the world as terrible by the one as it is delightful by the other. He opens not all his store; he sends out a light party to skirmish with men, and puts not in array his whole army. He stirs not up all his wrath; he doth but pinch, where he might have torn asunder; when he takes away much, he leaves enough to support us. If he had stirred up all his anger, he had taken away all, and our lives to boot. He rakes up but a few sparks, takes but one firebrand to fling upon men, when he might discharge the whole furnace upon them; he sends but a few drops out of the cloud, which he might make to break in the gross, and fall down upon our
heads to overwhelm us; he abates much of what he might do. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 39. A wind that passeth away.**

"The secret wheels of hurrying time do give
So short a warning, and so fast they drive,
That I am dead before I seem to live.

And what's a life? a weary pilgrimage,
Whose glory in one day doth fill thy stage
With childhood, manhood, and decrepid age.

And what's a life? the flourishing army
Of the proud summer meadow, which today
Wears her green plush, and is tomorrow hay.

And what's a life? a blast sustained with clothing,
Maintained with food, retained with vile self loathing,
Then weary of itself, again to nothing." *Francis Quarles.*

**Verse 40. How oft did they provoke,** etc. They provoked God at least ten times (Nu 14:22) during the first two years of their journey through the wilderness:

(1) at the Red Sea (Ex 14:11-12): (2) at the waters of Marah (Ex 15:24): (3) in the wilderness of Sin (Ex 16:2): (4) when they kept the manna until the following day (Ex 16:10): (5) when the manna was collected on the Sabbath (Ex 16:27): (6) in Rephidim, where there was no water (Nu 20:2,13): (7) at Horeb when a molten calf was made (Ex 22:1 &c.): (8) at Taberah (Nu 11:1-3): (9) when they lusted for flesh (Nu 11:4): (10) when they murmured at the news brought by the men, who had been sent to search the land (Nu 14:1, &c.)

*Daniel Cresswell.*

**Verse 40. How oft.** God kept an account how oft they provoked him, though they did not, Nu 14:22: "They have tempted me these ten times." *Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 41. They turned back.** As for that expression, wbwvyw, which we translate, *and they turned back;* that is, say some, to go back again into Egypt, or as others, returned back to their *old wont* of rebellion; I say, it hath no such meaning here; it is a Hebraism, and should be rendered, *they returned and tempted,* that is, *saepius tentaverunt,* they oftentimes tempted him, or they

**Verse 41. Tempted God.** This only expresses the fact that men act towards him as if he could be tempted, or in a way fitted to put him to the proof, to provoke his righteous displeasure, and make him proceed against them, as it were just for him actually to do because of their offences. It is not in the least degree opposed to the statement of James—"God cannot be tempted with evil, "which is the the effect that he cannot be influenced by evil, so as to be drawn into it, turned toward it—so as to feel its power or experience its contamination. He is infinitely far removed from it, raised above it, under all its forms. He is so because of the absolute perfection of his being and blessedness. John Adam, in "Exposition of the Epistle of James." 1867.

**Verse 41. Limited the Holy One of Israel.** They limited either

1. God's power, as above, Ps 78:19-20. Or,

2. God's will, directing and prescribing to him what to do, and when, and in what manner; and murmuring at him if he did not always grant their particular and various desires. Matthew Poole.

**Verse 41. They limited the Holy One of Israel.** Here, then, is an awful charge, and mysterious it seems to us as awful. How dreadful that man, the worm, should arrogate to himself that, to say to him that made him, "Thus far shalt thou go and no farther." Amazing, I say, the charge! to contract the dimensions and operations of the Deity. Amazing insolence, to draw a boundary line, beyond which the Creator himself must not pass, to define and prescribe to the Lawgiver of nature himself the pathway of his providence! The turpitude is immense. But we know, my friends, that the crime is not uncommon; and one of the natural results of sin seem to be this,—that the sinful spirit, whether of man or of the lost archangel, unable to shake the firm foundations of the Eternal Throne, amuses its malignity, and seeks a temporary cessation from its withering cares, in putting up barriers on the outskirts and frontiers of the Almighty empire, vainly hoping to annoy the Possessor of the throne they cannot disturb. Affecting words! Do they affect you as they affect me? They turned back and tempted God, and limited the Holy One of Israel. Somehow, it seems no combination of words could have been so affecting. They limited God. They limited the Almighty. They limited the Infinite. No! These words have an awful and affecting surge of meaning in them; for wile they describe Him, awful and self contained Being whose essence is eternity and power; whose self existence is declared by the amazing marvels of nature; whose life
Psalm 78

Verse 41. They limited the Holy One of Israel. God cannot bear it with patience, that we should limit him, either to the time, or manner, or means of help. He complains of the Jews for this presumption, they limited the Holy One of Israel. It is insufferable to circumscribe an infinite wisdom and power. He will work, but when he pleases, and how he pleases, and by what instruments he pleases, and if he please, without instruments, and if he please by weak and improbable, by despised and exploded instruments. Joseph Caryl, in a "Sermon before the House of Commons," entitled, "The Works of Ephesus."

Verse 41. (last clause). This was Israel's sin, and has it not often been ours? Our God is the "Holy One," and will do what is most for His glory; he is the Holy One of Israel, and will therefore consult his people's welfare. We must not limit his wisdom, for it is infinite; we must not limit his power, for it is omnipotent; we must not limit him to time, for he will display his sovereignty: he will not be tied to walk by our rules, or be bound to keep our time; but he will perform his word, honour our faith, and reward them that diligently seek him. James Smith.

Verse 41. Limited. In the only other place where the Hebrew word occurs (Ezr 9:4), it means to set a mark upon a person, which some apply here, in the figurative sense of stigmatising or insulting. Joseph Addison Alexander.
Verse 41. *Limited the Holy One of Israel,* or *signed* him; signed him with a sign, so the Targum; they tempted him by asking a sign of him, as Jarchi interprets it; insisting that a miracle be wrought, by which it might be known whether the Lord was among them or not, *Ex 17:7,* with which compare *Mt 15:1:* or they set bounds, so Kimchi, to his power and goodness, saying, this he could do, and the other he could not; see *Ps 78:19-20,* and so men limit the Lord when they fix on a blessing they would have, even that, and not another; and the measure of it, to what degree it should be bestowed on them, as well as the set time when they would have it; whereas the blessing itself, and the degree of it, and the time of giving it, should be all left with the Lord who knows which and what of it is most convenient for us, and when is the best time to bestow it on us. *John Gill.*

Verse 41. *Limited the Holy One of Israel*—mistrust of God's power to effectuate all his graces, to do what is needed in any case for his people, and carry out his purposes for them. The moment I suppose anything cannot be for blessing, I limit God. This is a great sin—doubly, when we think of all he has done for us. The Holy Ghost ever reasons from God's revealed, infinite love to all its consequences. He reconciled; surely he will save to the end. He did not spare his Son; how shall he not give all things? *J. N. Darby.*

Verse 42. *They remembered not his hand,* etc. God hates forgetfulness of his blessings. First, because he has commanded that we should not forget them, *De 4:9 8:14.* Secondly, because forgetfulness is a sign of contempt. Thirdly, it is the peculiarity of singular carelessness. Fourthly, it springs from unbelief. Fifthly, it is the greatest mark of ingratitude. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 42. *They remembered not his hand,* etc. The rallying point of faith in time of trial is *the primary manifestation of grace.* To an Israelite a remembrance of the deliverance from Egypt is the test of active faith. In like manner, to the tried believer now it is the CROSS that furnishes the outlet of deliverance from the misty darkness with which Satan sometimes is permitted to envelope our conscience, when the Lord had not been kept watchfully before our face. Because Israel forgot that first deliverance, they went on frowardly in the way of evil. Because a Christian sometimes stops short of the Cross in his spiritual conflicts, he fails to defeat the enemy and remains unfruitful and unhappy, until by some special intervention of the great Restorer, he is again brought, in spirit, to that place where God first met him, and welcomed him in Jesus in the fulness of forgiveness and of peace. No intermediate experience, how truthful soever in its character, will meet his case. It is at the cross alone that we regain a thorough right mindedness about ourselves as well as about
God. If we would glorify him, we must "hold fast the beginning of our confidence stedfast unto the end, "Heb 3:14. Arthur Pridham.

Verse 42. They remembered not his hand, etc. Eaten bread is soon forgotten. _Nihil citius senescit quam gratia._ Nothing so soon grows stale as a favour. John Trapp.

Verse 43. Zoan, or San, seems to have been one of the principal capitals, or royal abodes, of the Pharaohs (Isa 19:11,13 Isa 30:4): and accordingly _the field of Zoan_, or the fine alluvial plain around the city, is described as the scene of the marvellous works which God wrought in the time of Moses. John Kitto.

Verses 43-51. Moses wrought wonders destructive, Christ wonders preservative: he turned water into blood, Christ water into wine; he brought flies and frogs and locusts and caterpillars, destroying the fruits of the earth, and annoying it; Christ increased a little of these fruits, five loaves and a few fishes, by blessing them, so that he herewith fed five thousand men: Moses smote both men and cattle with hail, and thunder and lightning, that they died, Christ made some alive that were dead, and saved from death the diseased and sick; Moses was an instrument to bring all manner of wrath and evil angels amongst them, Christ cast out devils and did all manner of good, giving sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, speech to the dumb, limbs to the lame, and cleansing to the leper, and when the sea was tempestuous appeasing it; Moses slew their firstborn, thus causing an horrible cry in all the land of Egypt; Christ saveth all the firstborn, or by saving makes them so; for thus they are called, _Heb 12:23_. John Mayer.

Verse 46. _Caterpillar._ (>lyox), _chasil_, is rendered broucos by the LXX, in 2Ch 6:28, and by Aquila here, and also by the Vulgate in Chronicles and in Isa 33:4, and is rendered by Jerome here, _bruchas_, "the chaffer," "which everyone knows to be a great devourer of the leaves of trees. The Syriac in _Joe 1:4 2:25_, renders it (arwuru) _tzartzooro_, which Michaelis, from the Arabic (ruru) _tzartzar_, a cricket, interprets the _mole cricket_, which in its grub state, is also very destructive to corn, grass, and other vegetables, by cankering the roots on which it feeds. _Editorial note to Calvin in loc._

Verse 46. _Caterpillar_, In former times, any destructive, crawling creature occurring in cultivated places was thus called; now, by general consent, we restrict the term to the second stage of insects of the Lepidopterous order, namely, butterflies and moths. These caterpillars, by the voracity with which they attack the leaves, the fruit, and sometimes the solid wood of plants and
trees, are made conspicuous even to those who are little acquainted with natural history. "Biblical Treasury."

**Verse 46.** *Locust.* Their quantity is incredible to all who have not themselves witnessed their astonishing numbers; the whole earth is covered with them for the space of several leagues. The noise they make in browsing on the trees and herbage may be heard at a great distance, and resembles that of an army plundering in secret. The Tartars themselves are a less destructive enemy than these little animals. One would imagine that fire had followed their progress. Wherever their myriads spread, the verdure of the country disappears; trees and plants stripped of their leaves and reduced to their naked boughs and stems, cause the dreary image of winter to succeed in an instant to the rich scenery of spring. When these clouds of locusts take their flight, to surmount any obstacles, or to traverse more rapidly a desert soil, the heavens may literally be said to be obscured with them. F. C., Comte de Volney.

**Verse 47.** *He destroyed their vines with hail, and their sycomore trees with frost.* The grape vine for the rich, and the sycomore fig for the poor, were cut off by the just judgment of God upon the nation. W. Wilson.

**Verse 47.** The sycomore (not sycamore, for this is altogether different, though, in consequence of a typographical error, often confounded with it in our Bibles) was the name of a tree, common in Egypt, *Am 7:14 Lu 19:4.* This tree resembled the mulberry in its leaves, and the fig in its fruit; and on its produce the inferior ranks of people, for the most part, lived. The psalmist refers to but one sort, still he clearly means every kind, of valuable tree. *William Keatinge Clay.*

**Verse 49.** *By sending evil angels.* Evils come uncalled, but not unsent. Are they nor here called angels? they are sent; the word angel means a messenger. Not things only without life, but not living creatures neither, brute, nor men, nor Satan's self can hurt unless God bid. The three days' darkness in Egypt, how came it? "He sent darkness," saith David. *Ps 105:28.* So the hail, thunder, and lightning, the Lord sent them, saith Moses. The frogs, flies, lice, grasshoppers, and caterpillars, that infected Egypt, and the lions that slew the idolaters in Samaria (*2Ki 17:1-41*), the text saith of them all, Dominus immisit, the Lord sent them. And for men—"Am I come" (saith Rabshakeh) "without the Lord?" He bade me go. Yea, the devil, the arch evil angel, who seeks to devour, yet must be sent ere he can do ought. The lying spirit in the mouths of the false prophets longed to seduce Ahab; God must first bid; Egredere, go forth, and do so. The use of this is easy without my help: not to fear, doing well; not man, fiend, any creature, can hurt you, God not sending them. But sinning, to fear
everything. The weakest creature can quell the mightiest man, if God bid, go. A mouse (saith the poet) will bite a wicked man. Be it proud Herod, great Antiochus; if God but ask the creatures, Quem mittam, which of you shall I send? the worm will answer, Ecce me, send me; I will devour him. And such poor, silly, despicable creatures are some of these evil angels in my text. He sent: what sent he? evil angels, the next thing in this Scripture.

Evil angels? Par dispar, a pair of words which seem not well matched. The latter may say to the former, Quid mihi et tibi, what have I to do with thee? Angels were the best and holiest of God's creatures. They all were good, very good, Moses saith; but angels kat exochn, excellently good. Then is evil here an evil epithet for angels. And is never read but here, and here (some think) not well translated. But the phrase of evil angels hath other meaning here: evil angels, i.e., the angels, i.e., the messengers of evil. It is in the Hebrew, not (Mykalm), but (ykalm); insomuch that some expositors think the psalmist means the words of Moses and Aaron; that they were sent from God to be the messengers of evil, i.e., all of the plagues that God would bring on Egypt. That sense I censure not, but follow not. The Greek Fathers have another—that by the evil angels, are meant the evil spirits. Christ calls them angels too, thee devil's angels. Augustine likes not that sense. The most current exposition is as a Jewish writer speaks: the "evil angels" are the ten several plagues. Richard Clerke. (—1634.)

Verse 49. By sending evil angels among them. That the devil and his angels are so very evil, that for them everlasting fire is prepared, no believer is ignorant: but that there should be sent by means of them an infliction from the Lord God upon certain whom he judgeth to be deserving of this punishment, seemeth to be a hard thing to those who are little prone to consider how the perfect justice of God doth use well even evil things. For these indeed, as far as regardeth their substance, what other person but himself hath made? But evil he hath not made them; yet he doth use them, inasmuch as he is good, conveniently and justly; just as on the other hand unrighteous men do use his good creatures in evil manner: God therefore doth use evil angels not only to punish evil men, as in the case of all those concerning whom the Psalm doth speak, as in the case of king Ahab, whom a spirit of lying by the will of God did beguile, in order that he might fall in war; but also to prove and make manifest good men, as he did in the case of Job. Augustine.

Verse 50. He made a way to his anger. Literally—"weighed a way:" implying that God, in punishing the Egyptians so severely, did nothing but what was just and equitable, when weighed in the balance of right. Pr 4:26. A. R. Fausset.
Verse 50. *He made a way to his anger.* As if the psalmist had said, If there were not *a way* for his anger, that is, for the execution of his anger, *he forced* his way; though he did not find a way, yet he *made* one, and fought himself through all difficulties which seemed to oppose the destruction of his enemies. We put in the margin, *he weighed a path,* he made the path as exact as if he had put it into a balance; the way was fitted to the largeness of his own anger, and it was fitted to the dimensions of their wickedness. Thus *he made a way to his anger,* both by suiting the way to his anger and by removing all impediments out of the way of his anger. If God will work to save, who shall let it? and if God will work to destroy, who will or what shall let it? *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 51. *The chief of their strength in the tabernacles of Ham.* The sun of the last day of the sojourn of Israel in Egypt had set. It was the fourth day after the interview with Moses. Pharaoh, his princes, and the priests of his idols would doubtless take courage from this unwonted delay. Jehovah and his ministers are beaten at length, for now the gods of Egypt prevail against them. The triumph would be celebrated in poms and sacrifices, in feasts and dances. Nothing is more likely than that the banquet halls of Pharaoh at Rameses were blazing with lamps, and that he and his princes were pouring forth libations of wine to their gods, and concerting schemes amid their revelry, for the perpetuation of the thraldom of Israel... Pharaoh Sethos started from his couch that night yelling in fierce and bitter agony, and gnawing at the sharp arrow that was rankling in his vitals, like a wounded lion. His son, his firstborn, his only son, just arrived at man's estate, just crowned king of Egypt, and associated with his father in the care of sovereignty, writhed before him in mortal throes, and died. His transports of grief were reechoed, and with no feigned voice, by the princes, the councillors, and the priest that partook of his revelry. Each one rends his garments and claps to his bosom the quivering corpse of his firstborn son. On that fearful night "there was a great cry throughout the land of Egypt, "but if we have rightly read its history, the loudest, wildest wail of remorseful anguish would arise from Pharaoh's banquet hall! *William Osburn, in "Israel in Egypt."* 1856.

Verse 52. *But made his own people to go forth like sheep.* It is not said that they went forth like sheep; but that he made them go forth like sheep. It is not a description of the character of the people, but a commendation of the providence and goodness of God, by which, after the manner of a good shepherd, he led forth from Egypt his own people with all security, like sheep snatched from the midst of wolves. *Musculus.*

Verse 53. *They feared not.* First, they had no cause for fear, *in their departure from Egypt.* Though they saw the Egyptians slain, yet against them not even a
dog moved its tongue. 2. They were all in sound health. 3. They were enriched with the spoils of the Egyptians. 4. They went forth a great multitude. 5. They supplied themselves with arms. Secondly, they feared not to enter the Red Sea, for the fear started by the approach of Pharaoh was swiftly suppressed. Thirdly, they feared not to wander in the desert for forty years, God going before his pillar. Fourthly, they feared not, though enemies attacked them. Thomas Le Blanc.

Verse 54. He brought them to the border of his sanctuary, or holiness; that is, to the holy land; so called in diverse respects, but especially because of his sanctuary, the place of his residence; to which he makes all the land to be but as bounds and limits, because of the eminency of that place, the holiness whereof did, as it were, spread to all other parts of the land, as if the whole had been a sanctuary, and consecrated ground. It is therefore to the honour of the whole land, as well as of the sanctuary, that he calleth it, the holy border, a border of his sanctuary. Westminster Assembly's Annotations.

Verse 57. They were turned aside like a deceitful bow. The eastern bow, which when at rest is in the form of a (1), must be recurved, or turned the contrary way, in order to be what is called bent and strung. If a person who is unskilful or weak attempt to recurve and string one of these bows, if he take not great heed it will spring back and regain its quiescent position, and perhaps break his arm. And sometimes I have known it, when bent, to start aside, and regain its quiescent position, to my no small danger, and in one or two cases to my injury. This image is frequently used in the sacred writings; but no person has understood it, not being acquainted with the eastern bow, which must be recurved or bent the contrary way (1), in order to be proper for use. If not well made, they will fly back in discharging the arrow. It is said of the bow of Jonathan, "it turned not back, "2Sa 1:22, (rwxa gwsn al), lo nasog achor, "did not twist itself backward." It was a good bow, one on which he could depend. Hosea, Ho 7:16, compares the unfaithful Israelites to a deceitful bow; in that, when bent, would suddenly start aside and recover its former position. We may find the same passage in Jer 9:3. And this is precisely the kind of bow mentioned by Homer, Odyss. 21, which none of Penelope's suitors could bend, called toxon palintonon, the recurved bow, when prepared for use. And of his trial of strength and skill in the bending of the bow of Ulysses, none of the critics and commentators have been able to make anything, because they knew not the instrument in question. On the toxon yhsiv of Homer I have written a dissertation elsewhere. The image is very correct; these Israelites, when
brought out of their natural bent, soon recoiled, and relapsed into their former state. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 57. Starting aside like a broken bow** (English Prayer Book): but if a bow breaks, it will not start aside, for the elasticity which should make it start aside would be destroyed. *Stephen Street.*

**Verse 57. They were turned aside like a deceitful bow.** When the bow is unbent the rift it hath may be undiscerned, but go to use it by drawing the arrow to the head, and it flies in pieces; thus doth a false heart when put to the trial. As the ape in the fable, dressed like a man, when nuts are thrown before her, cannot then dissemble her nature any longer, but shows herself as ape indeed; a false heart betrays itself before it is aware, when a fair occasion is presented for its lust; whereas sincerity keeps the soul pure in the face of temptation. *William Gurnall.*

**Verses 57.** The fourth thing is *the deceitful bow,* (hymr tvq), a slack or warping bow *arcus doli vel dolosus seu fallax* (Hebrew) will be sure to deceive the archer that shoots in it; it will turn back into belly, as the archer's phrase is; and though he level both his eye and his arrow never so directly to the mark and think confidently with himself to hit it; yet, in the event, the arrow, through the warping of the bow, flies a quite contrary way, yea, and sometimes reflects upon the archer himself. *Non semper feriet, quodcumque minabitur arcus,* the bow smites not all it threatens, and the ill fashioned or casting bow will turn in the shooter's hand, and send the arrow sometimes one way and sometimes another way; yea, and sometimes it rebounds into his own sides; or if it be a rotten bow (though otherwise fair to look upon), when an arrow is drawn to the head it breaks in the hand, and deceives the archer. The same thing happeneth when the string of the bow is naughty, and breaks when the arrow is drawn. This is no less than a divine Scripture allegory. Behold, such a fallacious, warping, and rotten bow is man's deceitful heart; his purposes and promises are the arrows that he puts upon the string, the mark he aims at is repentance, to the which (in affliction especially) he looketh with an accurate and intent eye, as though he would repent indeed; but, alas! his heart deceives him, as being unsound in God's statutes, *Ps 119:80*; and hence it is that his promises and pretences do fall at his foot, or vanish in the air as smoke. Thus a *deceiving,* as well as a *deceived,* heart, turns him aside, *Isa 64:20,* as it did those false Israelites: oh, then, look to the secret warping of your own heart, and seeing you are God's bow, you must be bent by him, and stand bent for him, *Zec 9:13*; thereby you shall be like Jonathan's bow that "never returned empty," *2Sa 1:22.* *Christopher Ness, in "A Crystal Mirror."* 1679.
Verses 57-59. Not to be settled in the faith, is provoking to God. To espouse the truth, and then to fall away, brings an ill report upon the gospel, which will not go unpunished. They turned back, and dealt unfaithfully. When God heard this, he was wroth, and greatly abhorred Israel. The apostate drops as a windfall into the devil's mouth. Thomas Watson.

Verse 58. High places. Or, altars, chapels, and such like places, to celebrate divine service in, out of the only place which was by him consecrated, and was alone acceptable unto him; or peradventure also dedicated to idols; and were so called, because that they chose out the choicest hills and hillocks for those purposes. John Diodati.

Verse 59. When God heard this. The psalmist represents the noise of the ill deeds of the people ascending to the ears of the Eternal. Armand de Mestral, in "Commentaire sur le Livre de Psaumes." 1856.

Verse 60. It is a heathenish delusion and false confidence to suppose that God is bound to any place or spot, as the Trojans thought because they had the temple of Pallas in their city it could not be taken, and in the present day the manner of the Papists is to bind Christ to Rome and the chair of Peter, and then defiantly maintain "I shall never be moved" Ps 10:6. For, they say, the ship of Peter may sink a little, but not altogether. Then the only point that is deficient is this, that they are not the ship of Peter, but rather an East Indiaman with a cargo of Italian apes and such like foreign merchandise, pearls, purple, silk, brass, iron, silver, gold, incense, lead, that they may carry on simony and make merchandise of religion, and deceive the whole world Re 18:11-24. Johann Andreas Cramer. 1723-1788.

Verse 61. And delivered his strength into captivity, etc. He calls the ark the strength of God, not because the virtue of God was shut up therein, or was so bound to it that he could not, unless through it, be powerful and strong: but because his presence, whose symbol the ark was, had always revealed its virtue and might to Israel, in the perpetual defence and various deliverances of that people. After the same manner he calls it the beauty or glory of God, because God by his own presence declared his glory among the people, and desired that it should be conspicuous by this external symbol. Mollerus.

Verse 63. The fire consumed their young men. Fire here may be regarded as an image of destructive war, as in Nu 21:28. "For there is a fire gone out of Heshbon, a flame from the city of Sihon: it hath consumed Ar of Moab," etc. Albert Barnes.
Verse 63 (first clause). When religion is overthrown among God's people, let not the commonwealth think to stand: when God gave his glory unto the enemies' hand, "He gave his people over also unto the sword, and the fire consumed their young men." David Dickson.

Verse 63. Not given in marriage. Not praised: viz. they had not been honoured with nuptial songs according to the custom of those times; see Jer 7:34 16:9 25:10. The meaning is, they had not been honourably married, because men were grown scarce by reason of the wars, Isa 4:1 Jer 21:22. Or, they had been married without any solemnity like poor bondwomen; or privately, as in the time of public calamities. John Diodati.

Verse 64. Their widows made no lamentation. This implies the extent of the destruction, and is full of meaning to one who has been in an Oriental city, during a plague or other devastating calamity. At first the cry of wailing, which always follows a death in ordinary circumstances, is loud and frequent: but such cries do not increase, but subside, with the increase of the calamity and desolation. Death becomes a familiar object in every house; and every one, absorbed in his own losses, has little sympathy to spare for others. Hence the loudest lamentations cease to be noticed, or to draw consoling friends to the house of mourning; and therefore, as well as from the stupefaction of feeling which scenes of continual horror never fail to produce, a new death is received in silence, or only with sighs and tears. In fact, all the usual observances are suspended. The dead are carried out and buried without mourning ceremonies, and without the presence of surviving friends, by men who make it an employment to take away the dead on the backs of mules or asses, from the homes they leave desolate. We have seen this. Kitto's "Pictorial Bible." 1856.

Verse 64. Their widows made no lamentation. The meaning is, either 1. That being overwhelmed with sorrow they could not weep; or, 2. That being in captivity amongst the Philistines they were not suffered to lament the death of their husbands; or, 3. That dying with grief they lived not to make any lamentations for them at their funerals; or, 4. That they were so taken up and oppressed with their own miseries, and especially with the miseries of the church and people of God in general, that they had not leisure to bewail their husbands; of both which last we have a clear instance in the wife of Phinehas in particular, 1Sa 4:19-20, who dying, made no mention of her husband. Arthus Jackson.

Verse 64. The daughter-in-law of Eli, when she was at once travailing, and in that travail dying, to make up the full sum of God's judgment upon that wicked house, as one insensible of the death of her father, of her husband, of herself, in
comparison of this loss, calls her (then unseasonable) son Ichabod, and with her last breath says, "The glory is departed from Israel, the ark is taken." *Joseph Hall.*

**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Verses 59-72.**


2. A baleful might, *Ps 78:60-64.*


**Verse 65.** *Then the Lord awaked.* Know how to understand this and similar passages in Scripture, as to the Lord's sleeping and forgetting his people, *Ps 13:1 44:33 77:9.* These are not to be understood as to an universal and absolute forgetting and sleep of providence; for God hath not his vacation time: he still holds the reins of government in his hand, all the world over. Neither do they infer an absolute cessation of providence in reference to that object matter which the Lord to our apprehension seems to forget, and lies dormant; for there is a promoting work of providence, which we see not, and are not so sensible of for the present, as hath been shewed. Besides, such forgetting and sleep of providence, as it is such, bespeaks the beauty of providence in the way of bringing things to pass. It is so far from inferring an *interrgnum,* or letting fall the sceptre of government, as that it is a glorious demonstration that God orders matters, and that wisely, whilst he seems to forget, and be as one asleep. As the night, as night, falls under the providence of God, as well as the day, for there are the ordinances of heaven for the night season, *Jer 31:35:* so the dark night, when as to matters the Lord seems to sleep, is part and parcel of his all wise model of government. The seventy years captivity was a long night for the church's distress; and yet thus it must be according to the ordinance of providence. *Jer 29:10.* *Thomas Crane.*

**Verse 65.** *Like a mighty man that shouteth by reason of wine:* whose spirit and courage is revived and inflamed by a liberal draught of generous wine; which comparison is no more injurious to the Divine Majesty than that of a thief's coming in the night, to which Christ's second coming is compared. *1Th 5:2.* *Matthew Poole.*

**Verse 66.** *He smote his enemies in the hinder parts.* This has reference to the Philistines being smitten with haemorrhoids, or piles, whilst the ark was
Psalm 78

retained a captive by them, *Isa 5:6,12* ...The Greek version, as quoted by Suidas, is, *he smote his enemies on the back parts of the seat;* signifying, he says, a disease modestly expressed. *John Gill.*

**Verse 67.** The moving of the ark is not the removing of it; Shiloh has lost it, but Israel has not. God will have a church in the world, and a kingdom among men, though this or that place may have its candlestick removed; nay, the rejection of Shiloh is the election of Sion. *Matthew Henry.*

**Verses 67-68.** Refused. Chose not. Chose. As God's love is set out to us, as not independently pitched, but as having all the persons in his eye and having them all in view; so by this also, that he hath not pitched it upon everybody. This is distinct from the former; for an indefinite is not knowing whom he pitched it upon. Now, as he knew whom he pitched upon, so he hath pitched but upon some, not on every one...If God would love, it was fit he should be free. It is a strange thing that you will not allow God that which kings and princes have the prerogative of, and you will allow it them. They will have favourites whom they will love, and will not love others; and yet men will not allow God that liberty, but he must either love all mankind, or he must be cruel and unjust. The specialness of his love, increases it, endears it to us. You shall find almost all along the Bible, that when God would express his love, he doth it with a speciality to his own elect, which he illustrates by the contrary done to others...And you shall find frequently in the Scripture, when he mentions his choice of some persons, he holdeth up likewise on purpose his refusing of others...When he speaks of an election out of the tribes, he contents not himself to say he chose Judah, but he puts in the rejection, the preterition at least, of Joseph. *He refused the tabernacle of Joseph, and chose not the tribe of Ephraim: But chose the tribe of Judah, the mount Zion which he loved. *...He speaks of the times of the judges. The rejection of the ten tribes began to show itself soon; he says, he refused the tabernacle of Ephraim, but he chose Judah. After Solomon's time, they fell to worshipping of calves (let me tell you, it is the declining of election that undoes a nation, when election grows low, and ceases in an age), till at last the ten tribes were cast off, as they are at this day; but the tribe of Judah had election among them...

Though at the first, and for a long time, both were alike his people, yet at last election began to pass a discontinuation. Ephraim, or the ten tribes, had at first the advantage of Judah in spirituals; for the ark, the token of God's presence, was committed unto their keeping at Shiloh; the seal of God's worship and ordinances was entrusted to them, and Judah must come up thither, if they would seek the Lord. But Ephraim, for their sinning against that worship, forfeited and lost it, and should therefore have the keeping of it no longer, no,
not for ever any more; but Judah had it at Bethlehem, till at last it was fixedly seated in Sion, as "the earth is established" Ps 78:69; and this for no other reason than that he had loved them, and out of love had chosen them Ps 78:67-69. For otherwise Judah was, as well as Ephraim, alike involved in the same guilt of sin which had forfeited it, as Ps 78:56-60 of the Psalm plainly show. "Yet they tempted and provoked the most high God, and kept not his testimonies," etc. He speaks it of the whole in those verses, and yet takes the occasion against Ephraim to remove it for ever. Thus, the first are last, and the last first; and those whom God's presence is with for a while, upon some eminent sin God begins to withdraw from them, and by degrees as he did by that people of the ten tribes, till at last he cast them off from being a people; but dealt not so with Judah, though these made a forfeiture of their temple, and worship, and nation, in the captivity of Babylon, yet God restored all again to greater glory at last. The ground was that in Ps 78:68, Zion which he loved.


Verse 70. He took him from the sheepfolds. The art of feeding cattle, and the art of ruling men are sisters, saith Basil. John Trapp.

Verse 71. From following the ewes great with young. A good and steady lamber is of great value to a grazier, but I would advise all graziers to attend to this operation themselves, as few servants will be found to pay that attention which is necessary, or which a master himself would do, and the slightest neglect, is, in many cases, followed with the greatest disadvantage. I have attended to the practice of lambing for several years, therefore, trust I am not a novice in it, or incompetent to give a description of it. Many lambs may be lost without its being possible to charge the lamber with neglect or ignorance, though greater attention on his part might have saved many that otherwise perish...The practice of lambing is at times very intricate, and is apt to exhaust the patience of a lamber. Sheep are obstinate, and lambing presents a scene of confusion, disorder, and trouble, which it is the lamber's business to rectify, and for which he ought always to be prepared: some of the ewes perhaps leave their lambs, or the lambs get intermixed, and the ewes which have lost their lambs run about bleating, while others want assistance. These are only a few of the various occurrences which call for the immediate attention of the lamber. Daniel Price, in "A System of Sheep grazing and Management." 1809.

Verse 71. From following the ewes great with young. It hath been reported that a learned doctor of Oxford hung up his leathern breeches in his study for a memorial to visitors of his mean original; the truth I avouch not, but history
tells us of Agathocles who arose from a potter to be king of Sicily, and would be served in no other plate at his table but earthenware, to mind him of his former drudgery. It were well if some would remember whose shoes they have cleaned, whose coals they have carried, and whose money they have borrowed, and deal gratefully with their creditors, as the good Lord Cromwell did by the Florentine merchant in the time of Henry the Eighth, when Wolsey (Foxe's Martyrology) like a butcher forgot the king his master. It was otherwise with holy David, who being in kingly dignity, graciously calls to mind his following the ewes great with young, when now feeding the sheep of Israel. His golden sceptre points at his wooden hook, and he plays the old lessons of his oaten pipe upon his Algum harp, and spreads his Bethlehem tent within his marble palace on Mount Zion. Samuel Lee.

**Verse 71.** To feed Jacob his people. (This is a curious specimen of medieval spiritualising, and is here inserted as such. It is amusing to note that a Tractarian expositor quotes the passage with evidently intense admiration. C. H. S.) Observe, a good shepherd must be humble and faithful, he ought to have bread in a wallet, a dog by a string, a staff with a rod, and a tuneful horn. The bread is the word of God, the wallet is the memory of the word; the dog is zeal, wherewith the shepherd glows for the house of God, casts out the wolves with pious barking, following preaching and unwearied prayer: the string by which the dog is held is the moderation of zeal, and discretion, whereby the zeal of the shepherd is tempered by the spirit of piety and knowledge. The staff is the consolation of pious exhortation by which the too timid are sustained and refreshed, lest they fail in the time of tribulation; but the rod is the authority and power by which the turbulent are restrained. The tuneful horn, which sounds so sweetly, signifies the sweetness of eternal blessedness, which the faithful shepherd gently and often instils into the ears of his flock. Johannes Paulus Palanterius. 1600.

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**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Verse 1.** The duty of attending to God's word. Modes of neglecting the duty; ways of fulfilment; reasons for obedience; evils of inattention.

**Verse 2.** (first clause). Preach on the "Parable of the Prodigal Nation," as given in the whole Psalm. C. A. Davies, of Chesterfield.

**Verses 2-3.**
1. Truths are none the worse for being old: sayings of old. "Old wood," says Lord Bacon, "is best to burn; old books are best to read; and old friends are best to trust."

2. Truths are none the worse for being concealed under metaphors: I will open, etc., in a parable; dark sayings.

3. Truths are none the worse for being often repeated.
   (a) They are more tested.
   (b) They are better testified. G. R.

Verse 3. The connection between what we have "heard," and what we have personally "known" in religion.

Verse 4. A good resolution, and a blessed result. C. D.

Verse 4.

1. What is to be made known? The praises of the Lord; his strength and his wonderful works.

2. To whom are they to be made known? To the generations to come.

3. By whom? Parents—one generation to another.

4. How made known?
   (a) By hiding nothing.
   (b) By declaring everything God has done. G. R.

Verse 5. Scriptural tradition, or the heirloom of the gospel.

Verses 5-8. Family religion.

1. The fathers' knowledge the children's heritage—Ps 78:5-6.
2. The fathers' fall the children's preservation—Ps 78:7-8.

Verses 5-8.

1. Truth once started can never be arrested—Ps 78:5-6.
2. Truth received binds the soul to God—Ps 78:7.
3. Truth rejected lights up beacons for others—Ps 78:8.

Verse 8. Stubbornness not steadfastness, or the difference between a natural vice and a gracious quality.

Verse 8. The false heart (*middle clause*), with its left hand, "Stubbornness in the wrong" (*first clause*), and its right hand, "Fickleness in the right" (*last clause*). *C. D.*

Verse 9. Who were they? What had they? What did they? When did they do it?

Verses 9, 67. The backsliding of prominent believers.

1. The Lord's soldiers: who they were; belonging to God's chosen people; were distinguished by grace. Ge 48:17-20. Strong by God's blessing. De 33:17. Honourable place among their brethren. Favoured with the tabernacle at Shiloh—Ps 78:60.

2. Their equipment: armour defensive and offensive; like that of others who triumphed.

3. Their behaviour in battle: to turn back was traitorous, cowardly, dangerous, disastrous, dishonourable.

4. Their punishment—Ps 78:57. Deprived of their special honour. Re 3:11. *C. D.*

Verses 10-11. The gradations of sin: neglecting, rejecting, forgetting God. *C. D.*


Verses 12-17. Obstination of unbelief. It makes head against God's majesty—Ps 78:17; his gracious providence—Ps 78:14-16; his interposing care—Ps 78:13; his avenging justice—Ps 78:12; his distinguishing grace—Ps 78:12-16. *C. D.*

Verses 12-17. Prodigies cannot convert the soul. Lu 16:31. *C. D.*


I. Their source.
2. Their variety.
3. Their abundance.
—B. Davies, of Greenwich.

Verses 12-17. Obstinacy of unbelief. It makes head against God's majesty—Ps 78:17; his gracious providence—Ps 78:14-16; his interposing care—Ps 78:13; his avenging justice—Ps 78:12; his distinguishing grace—Ps 78:12-16. C. D.

Verses 12-17. Prodigies cannot convert the soul. Lu 16:31. C. D.

Verse 17. Sin in its progress feeds upon divine mercies to aid its advance, as also every other surrounding circumstance.

Verses 17-21.

1. They tempted God's patience; Ps 78:17.
2. They tempted God's wisdom; Ps 78:18.
3. They tempted God's power; Ps 78:19-20.
4. They tempted God's wrath; Ps 78:21.
—E. G. Gange, of Bristol.


1. They are drawn away by their lust: Ps 78:18.
2. Lust having conceived bringeth forth sin: Ps 78:19-20.

"Their carcases fell." C. D.


1. The sin itself: they doubted the ultimate certainty, completeness, and reality of God's salvation from Egypt.

2. The aggravation of it: the object of it was God; they who entertained it were God's people: The aids to faith were overlooked: "though."

3. What it led them to; inward sin—Ps 78:18; outward sin—Ps 78:19, etc.

4. What it brought upon them; Ps 78:21. Fiery serpents, etc. C. D.

Verse 29-31. Dangerous prayers. When lust dictates, wrath may answer. Let grace dictate, and mercy will answer. C. D.

Verses 34-37. The hypocrite's feet, Ps 78:34. The hypocrite's memory, Ps 78:35. The hypocrite's tongue, Ps 78:36. The hypocrite's heart, Ps 78:37. Or, the hypocrite's cloak and the hypocrite's heart. C. D.

Verse 38. (last clause) and Ps 78:50 (first clause). God's anger as exercised against his people and against his foes. C. D.

Verses 39, 35. God's memory of his people and their memory of God.

Verse 42. The day of days.

1. The enemy encountered on that day.
2. The conflict endured.
3. The deliverance accomplished.
4. The joy experienced. B. D.

Verse 45. The power of little things when commissioned to plague us.

Verse 47. (last clause). Sometimes it will not shoot. Sometimes it will. And when it does, it misses the mark.

Verse 52.

1. God has a people in the world.
2. He brings them away from others.
3. He brings them into fellowship with himself.
4. He brings them into fellowship with each other.
5. He guides them to their rest.

Verse 55. Divine supplanting. He supplants the fallen angels in heaven. One nation of earth by another (see all history). The thoughts and affections of the heart in regeneration, etc.—Isa 55:13. C. D.

Verses 59-72.

1. A gloomy sunset, Ps 78:59-60.
2. A baleful might, Ps 78:60-64.
3. A blessed sunrise, Ps 78:65-72. C. D.

Verses 9, 67. The backsliding of prominent believers.

1. The Lord's soldiers: who they were; belonging to God's chosen people; were distinguished by grace. Ge 48:17-20. Strong by God's blessing. De 33:17. Honourable place among their brethren. Favoured with the tabernacle at Shiloh—Ps 78:60.

2. Their equipment: armour defensive and offensive; like that of others who triumphed.

3. Their behaviour in battle: to turn back was traitorous, cowardly, dangerous, disastrous, dishonourable.

4. Their punishment—Ps 78:57. Deprived of their special honour. Re 3:11. C. D.

Verses 70-72. Spiritual promotions.

Verses 72. In spite of his transgressions, which he always bitterly repented of and which were therefore blotted out of the Book of God, he remains to all princes and rulers of the earth as the noblest pattern. In perfect inward truth he knew and felt himself to be "King by the grace of God." The crown and sceptre he bore merely in trust from the King of all kings; and to his latest breath he endeavoured with all his earnestness to be found as a genuine theocratic king, who in everything must conduct his earthly government according to the ordinances and directions of God. Therefore the Lord made all that he took in hand prosper, and nothing was clearer to the people than that the Lord was truly with the king. Frederick William Krummacher, in "David, the King of Israel." 1867.

WORKS UPON THE SEVENTY-EIGHTH PSALM
Valuable information upon THE PLAGUES OF EGYPT will be found in the following works:—

"Observations upon the Plagues inflicted upon the Egyptians: in which is shewn the peculiarity of those Judgments, and their correspondence with the Rites and Idolatry of that People... By JACOB BRYANT. 1794."

"Israel in Egypt; or the Books of Genesis and Exodus illustrated by existing Monuments. By WILLIAM OSBURN. 1856."

UPON ISRAEL IN THE WILDERNESS

"The wanderings of the Children of Israel." By the late Rev. GEORGE WAGNER, 1862.

"The Church in the Wilderness." By WILLIAM SEATON. In two vols. 1821.
Psalm 79

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher
Other Works

TITLE AND SUBJECT. A Psalm of Asaph. A Psalm of complaint such as Jeremiah might have written amid the ruins of the beloved city. It evidently treats of times of invasion, oppression, and national overthrow. Asaph was a patriotic poet, and was never more at home than when he rehearsed the history of his nation. Would to God that we had national poets whose song should be of the Lord.

DIVISION. From Ps 79:1-4 the complaint is poured out, from Ps 79:5-12 prayer is presented, and, in the closing verse, praise is promised.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. O God, the heathen are come into thine inheritance. It is the cry of amazement at sacrilegious intrusion; as if the poet were struck with horror. The stranger pollutes thine hallowed courts with his tread. All Canaan is thy land, but thy foes have ravaged it. Thy holy temple have they defiled. Into the inmost sanctuary they have profanely forced their way, and there behaved themselves arrogantly. Thus, the holy land, the holy house, and the holy city, were all polluted by the uncircumcised. It is an awful thing when wicked men are found in the church and numbered with her ministry. Then are the tares sown with the wheat, and the poisoned gourds cast into the pot. They have laid Jerusalem on heaps. After devouring and defiling, they have come to destroying, and have done their work with a cruel completeness. Jerusalem, the beloved city, the joy of the nation, the abode of her God, was totally wrecked. Alas! alas! for Israel! It is sad to see the foe in our own house, but worse to meet him in the house of God; they strike hardest who smite at our religion. The psalmist piles up the agony; he was a suppliant, and he knew how to bring out the strong points of his case. We ought to order our case before the Lord with as much care as if our success depended on our pleading. Men in earthly courts use all their powers to obtain their ends, and so also should we state our case with earnestness, and bring forth our strong arguments.

Verse 2. "The dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls of the heaven, the flesh of thy saints unto the beasts of the earth." The enemy cared not to bury the dead, and there was not a sufficient number of Israel left alive to perform the funeral rites; therefore, the precious relics of the
departed were left to be devoured of vultures and torn by wolves. Beasts on which man could not feed fed on him. The flesh of creation's Lord became meat for carrion crows and hungry dogs. Dire are the calamities of war, yet have they happened to God's saints and servants. This might well move the heart of the poet, and he did well to appeal to the heart of God by reciting the grievous evil. Such might have been the lamentation of an early Christian as he thought of the amphitheatre and all its deeds of blood. Note in the two verses how the plea is made to turn upon God's property in the temple and the people:—we read "thine inheritance, ""thy temple, ""thy servants, "and "thy saints." Surely the Lord will defend his own, and will not suffer rampant adversaries to despoil them.

Verse 3. "Their blood have they shed like water round about Jerusalem." The invaders slew men as if their blood was of no more value than so much water; they poured it forth as lavishly as when the floods deluge the plains. The city of holy peace became a field of blood. "And there was none to bury them." The few who survived were afraid to engage in the task. This was a serious trial and grievous horror to the Jews, who evinced much care concerning their burials. Has it come to this, that there are none to bury the dead of thy family, O Lord? Can none be found to grant a shovelful of earth with which to cover up the poor bodies of thy murdered saints? What woe is here! How glad should we be that we live in so quiet an age, when the blast of the trumpet is no more heard in our streets.

Verse 4. "We are become a reproach to our neighbours." Those who have escaped the common foe make a mockery of us, they fling our disasters into our face, and ask us, "Where is your God?" Pity should be shown to the afflicted, but in too many cases it is not so, for a hard logic argues that those who suffer more than ordinary calamities must have been extraordinary sinners. Neighbours especially are often the reverse of neighbourly; the nearer they dwell the less they sympathize. It is most pitiable it should be so. "A scorn and a derision to them that are round about us." To find mirth in others' miseries, and to exult over the ills of others, is worthy only of the devil and of those whose father he is. Thus the case is stated before the Lord, and it is a very deplorable one. Asaph was an excellent advocate, for he gave a telling description of calamities which were under his own eyes, and in which he sympathized, but we have a mightier Intercessor above, who never ceases to urge our suit before the eternal throne.

Verse 5. "How long, Lord?" Will there be no end to these chastisements? They are most sharp and overwhelming; wilt thou much longer continue them? "Wilt thou be angry for ever?" Is thy mercy gone so that thou wilt for ever smite?
"Shall thy jealousy burn like fire?" There was great cause for the Lord to be jealous, since idols had been set up, and Israel had gone aside from his worship, but the psalmist begs the Lord not to consume his people utterly as with fire, but to abate their woes.

Verse 6. "Pour out thy wrath upon the heathen that have not known thee." If thou must smite look further afield; spare thy children and strike thy foes. There are lands where thou art in no measure acknowledged; be pleased to visit these first with thy judgments, and let thine erring Israel have a respite. "And upon the kingdoms that have not called upon thy name." Hear us the prayerful, and avenge thyself upon the prayerless. Sometimes providence appears to deal much more severely with the righteous than with the wicked, and this verse is a bold appeal founded upon such an appearance. It in effect says—Lord, if thou must empty out the vials of thy wrath, begin with those who have no measure of regard for thee, but are openly up in arms against thee; and be pleased to spare thy people, who are thine notwithstanding all their sins.

Verse 7. "For they have devoured Jacob." The oppressor would quite eat up the saints if he could. If these lions do not swallow us, it is because the Lord has sent his angel and shut the lions' mouths. "And laid waste his dwelling place, "or his pasture. The invader left no food for man or beast, but devoured all as the locust. The tender mercies of the wicked are cruel.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. This Psalm is, in every respect, the pendant of Psalm 74. The points of contact are not merely matters of style (Ps 79:5, "how long for ever?" with Ps 74:1,10 79:10, edwy, with Ps 74:5 79:2, the giving over to the wild beasts, with Ps 74:19,14 79:13, the conception of Israel as of a flock, in which respect Psalm 79 is judiciously appended to Ps 78:70-72, with Ps 74:1 and also with Ps 74:19.) But the mutual relationships lie still deeper. Both Psalms have the same Asaphic stamp, both stand in the same relation to Jeremiah, and both send forth their complaints out of the same circumstances of the time, concerning a destruction of the Temple and of Jerusalem, such as only the age of the Seleucidae (1 Maccabees 1:31 3:45 2 Maccabees 8:3), together with the Chaldean period can exhibit, and in conjunction with a defiling of the Temple and a massacre of the servants of God, of the Chasidim (1 Maccabees 7:13 14:6), such as the age of the Seleucidae exclusively can exhibit. The work of the destruction of the Temple which was in progress in Ps 74:1-23, appears in Ps 79:1-13 as completed, and here, as in the former Psalm, one receives the impression of the outrages, not of some war, but of some persecution: it is
straightway the religion of Israel for the sake of which the sanctuaries are destroyed and the faithful are massacred. *Franz Delitzsch.*

**Verse 1.** *Thy holy temple have they defiled.* This was not only the highest degree of the enemy's inhumanity and barbarity, ...but also a calamity to the people of God never to be sufficiently deplored. For by the overthrow of the temple the true worship of God, which had been instituted at that temple alone, appeared to be extinguished, and the knowledge of God to vanish from among mankind. No pious heart could ponder this without the greatest grief. *Mollerus.*

**Verse 1.** *They have laid Jerusalem on heaps.* They have made Jerusalem to be nothing but graves. Such multitudes were cruelly slain and murdered, that Jerusalem was, as it were, but one grave. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verses 1-4.** In the time of the Maccabees, Demetrius, the son of Seleuces, sent Bacchides to Jerusalem; who slew the scribes, who came to require justice, and the Assideans, the first of the children of Israel who sought peace of them. Bacchides "took of them threescore men, and slew them in one day, according to the words which he wrote, the flesh of thy saints have they cast out, and their blood have they shed round about Jerusalem, and there was none to bury them."

And in that last and most fearful destruction, when the eagles of Rome were gathered round the doomed city, and the temple of which God had said, "Let us depart hence; "when one stone was not to be left upon another, when the fire was to consume the sanctuary, and the foundations of Sion were to be ploughed up; when Jerusalem was to be filled with slain, and the sons of Judah were to be crucified round her walls in such thick multitudes that no more room was left for death; when insult, and shame, and scorn was the lot of the child of Israel, as he wandered an outcast, a fugitive in all lands; when all these bitter and deadly things came upon Jerusalem, it was as a punishment for many and long repeated crimes; it was the accomplishment of a warning which had been often sent in vain. Yea, fiercely did thy foes assault thee, O Jerusalem, but thy sins more fiercely still! *Plain Commentary.*

**Verses 1, 4-5.** Entering the inhabited part of the old city, and winding through some crooked, filthy lanes, I suddenly found myself on turning a sharp corner, in a spot of singular interest; the "Jews' place of Wailing." It is a small paved quadrangle; on one side are the backs of low modern houses, without door or window; on the other is the lofty wall of the Haram, of recent date above, but having below five courses of bevelled stones in a perfect state of preservation. Here the Jews are permitted to approach the sacred enclosure, and wail over the fallen temple, whose very dust is dear to them, and in whose stones they still take pleasure. Ps 102:14. It was Friday, and a crowd of miserable devotees had
assembled—men and women of all ages and all nations dressed in the quaint costumes of every country of Europe and Asia. Old men were there,—pale, haggard, careworn men tottering on pilgrim staves; and little girls with white faces, and lustrous black eyes, gazing wistfully now at their parents, now at the old wall. Some were on their knees, chanting mournfully from a book of Hebrew prayers, swaying their bodies to and fro; some were prostrate on the ground, pressing forehead and lips to the earth; some were close to the wall, burying their faces in the rents and crannies of the old stones; some were kissing them, some had their arms spread out as if they would clasp them to their bosoms, some were bathing them with tears, and all the while sobbing as if their hearts would burst. It was a sad and touching spectacle. Eighteen centuries of exile and woe have not dulled their hearts' affections, or deadened their feelings of devotion. Here we see them assembled from the ends of the earth, poor, despised, down trodden outcasts,—amid the desolations of their fatherland, beside the dishonoured ruins of their ancient sanctuary,—chanting now in accents of deep pathos, and now of wild woe, the prophetic words of their own psalmist,—*O God the heathen are come into thine inheritance; thy holy temple have they defiled...We are become a reproach to our neighbours, a scorn and derision to them that are round about us. How long, Lord? wilt thou be angry for ever?* J. L. Porter, in "The Giant Cities of Bashan." 1865.

**Verse 2.** "*The dead bodies of thy servants,* "etc. It is a true saying of S. Augustine, The care of our funeral, the manner of our burial, the exequial pomp, all these *magis sunt vivorum solatia quam subsidia mortuorum,* are rather comforts for the living than any way helps for the dead. To be interred profiteth not the party deceased; his body feels it not, his soul regards it not; and we know that many holy martyrs have been excluded from burial, who in a Christian scorn thereof bespoke their persecutors in words of those which were slain at Pharsalia: "You effect nothing by this anger; what matters it whether disease dissolve the body, or the funeral pile!" But yet there is an honesty (*i.e.* a right, a proper respect) which belongeth to the dead body of man. Jehu commanded Jezebel to be buried; David thanked the people of Jabesh Gilead for burying of Saul. Peter, who commanded Ananias and Saphira, those false abdicators of their patrimony, to die, commanded to have them buried being dead. It is an axiom of charity, *Mortuo non prohibeas gratiam,* withhold not kindness from the dead. It shows our love and regard for men in our own flesh to see them buried; it manifests our faith and hope of the resurrection; and therefore when that body which is to rise again, and to be made glorious and immortal in heaven, shall be cast to the fowls of the air or beasts of the field, it argues in God great indignation against sin (Jer 22:19, of Jehoiakim, "He shall
be buried as an ass is buried, and cast forth without the gates of Jerusalem"; in man inhuman and barbarous cruelty. *John Dunster, in "Prodromus."* 1613.

**Verses 2-3.** (The following extract is from the writings of a godly monk who applies the language of the Psalm to the persecutions of his time. He wrote at Rome during the period of the Reformation, and was evidently a favourer of the gospel.) At this day what river is there, what brook, in this our afflicted Europe, (if it is still ours) that we have not seen flowing with the blood of Christians? And that too shed by the swords and spears of Christians? Wherefore there is made a great wailing in Israel; and the princes and elders mourn; the young men and virgins are become weak, and the beauty of the women is changed. Why? The holy place itself is desolate as a wilderness. Hast thou ever seen so dire a spectacle? They have piled up in heaps the dead bodies of thy servants to be devoured by birds: the unburied remains of thy saints, I say, they have given to the beasts of the earth. What greater cruelty could ever be committed? So great was the effusion of human blood at that time, that the rivulets, yea, rather, the rivers round the entire circuit of the city, flowed with it. And thus truly is the form of our most beautiful city laid waste, and its loveliness; and so reduced is it, that not even the men who carry forth dead bodies for burial can be obtained, though pressed with the offer of large rewards; so full of fear and horror were their minds: and this was all the more bitter, because "We are become a reproach to those round about us," and are spoken of in derision by the infidels abroad and by enemies at home. Who is so bold as to endure this and live? How long therefore shall this most bitter disquietude last? *Giambattista Folengo.* 1490-1559.

**Verse 2.** "Dead bodies of thy servants have they given to be meat unto the fowls." With what unconcern are we accustomed to view, on all sides of us, multitudes, "dead in trespasses and sins," torn in pieces, and devoured by wild passions, filthy lusts, and infernal spirits, those dogs and vultures of the moral world! Yet, to a discerning eye, and a thinking mind, the latter is by far the more melancholy sight of the two. *George Horne.*

**Verse 2.** "Thy servants." "Thy saints." No temporal wrath, no calamities whatsoever can separate the Lord's children from God's love and estimation of them, nor untie the relation between God and them: for here, albeit their carcases fall, and be devoured by the fowls of heaven and beasts of the earth, yet remain they the Lord's servants and saints under these sufferings. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 4.** "We are become a reproach." If God's professing people degenerate from what themselves and their fathers were, they must expect to be told of it;
and it is well if a just reproach will help to bring us to a true repentance. But it has been the lot of the gospel Israel to be made unjustly a reproach and derision; the apostles themselves were "counted as the off-scouring of all things." Matthew Henry.

**Verse 4.** "A scorn and derision to them that are round about us." This was more grievous to them than stripes or wounds, saith Chrysostom, because these being inflicted upon the body are divided after a sort betwixt soul and body, but scorns and reproaches do wound the soul only. *Habet quendam aculeum contumelia,* they leave a sting behind them, as Cicero observeth. John Trapp.

**Verse 4.** It is the height of reproach a father casts upon his child when he commands his slave to beat him. Of all outward judgments this is the sorest, to have strangers rule over us, as being made up of shame and cruelty. If once the heathen come into God's inheritance, no wonder the church complains that she is "become a reproach to her neighbours, a shame and derision to all round about her." Abraham Wright.

**Verse 5.** "How long, Lord? Wilt thou be angry for ever?" The voice of complaint says not, How long, Lord, shall this wickedness of our enemy endure? How long shall we see this desolation? But, *How long, O Lord? Wilt thou be angry for ever?* We are admonished, therefore, in this passage, that we should recognize the anger of God against us in all our afflictions, lest as the nations are accustomed, we only accuse the malice of our enemies, and never think of our sins and the divine punishment. It cannot be that he who acknowledges the anger of God that is upon him, should not at the same time acknowledge his fault also, unless he wishes to attribute the iniquity to God of being angry and inflicting stripes upon the undeserving. Musculus.

**Verse 5.** The word "jealousy" signifies not mere revenge but revenge mingled with love, for unless he loved, says Jerome, he would not be jealous, and after the manner of a husband avenge the sin of his wife. Lorinus.

**Verse 6.** Neglect of prayer by unbelievers is threatened with punishment. The prophet's imprecation is the same in effect with a threatening, see Jer 10:25, and same imprecation, Ps 79:6. The prophets would not have used such an imprecation against those that call not upon God, but that their neglect of calling on his name makes them liable to his wrath and fury; and no neglect makes men liable to the wrath of God but the neglect of duty. Prayer, then, is a duty even to the heathen, the neglect of which provokes him to pour out his fury on them. David Clarkson.
Verse 7. "They have devoured Jacob." Like wolves who cruelly tear and devour a flock of sheep. For the word which follows signifies not only a habitation in general, but also a sheepcote. Mollerus.

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HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 4. Saints the subject of derision to sinners. When justly so. When unjustly. What do they see to excite ridicule; what shall we do under the trial; how will it end?

Verse 5.

1. The cause of anger: jealousy.

2. The moderation of it. If it continued for ever, the people would perish, the promises be unfulfilled, the covenant fail, and the Lord's honour be impeached.

3. The staying of it. By prayer; by pleading his name, his glory, and the blood of Jesus.

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WORK UPON THE SEVENTY-NINTH PSALM

"Prodromus, or the Literal Destruction of Jerusalem as it is described in the 79th Psalm...1613" (By JOHN DUNSTER.)
Psalm 80

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher
Other Works

TITLE. To the Chief Musician upon Shoshannim Eduth. For the fourth time we have a song upon Shoshannim, or the lilies; the former ones being Psalms 45, 60, and 69. Why this title is given it would be difficult to say in every case, but the delightfully poetical form of the present Psalm may well justify the charming title. Eduth signifies testimony. The Psalm is a testimony of the church as a "lily among thorns." Some interpreters understand the present title to refer to an instrument of six strings, and Schleusner translates the two words, "the hexachord of testimony." It may be that further research will open up to us these "dark sayings upon a harp." We shall be content to accept them as evidence that sacred song was not lightly esteemed in the days of old. A Psalm of Asaph. A latter Asaph we should suppose, who had the unhappiness to live, like the "last minstrel," in evil times. If by the Asaph of David's day, this Psalm was written in the spirit of prophecy, for it sings of times unknown to David.

DIVISION. The Psalm divides itself naturally at the refrain which occurs three times: "Turn us again, O God," etc. Ps 80:1-3 is an opening address to the Lord God of Israel; from Ps 80:4-7 is a lamentation over the national woe, and from Ps 80:8-19 the same complaint is repeated, the nation being represented in a beautiful allegory as a vine. It is a mournful Psalm, and its lilies are lilies of the valley.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel." Hear thou the bleatings of thy suffering flock. The name is full of tenderness, and hence is selected by the troubled psalmist: broken hearts delight in names of grace. Good old Jacob delighted to think of God as the Shepherd of Israel, and this verse may refer to his dying expression: "From thence is the Shepherd, the stone of Israel." We may be quite sure that he who deigns to be a shepherd to his people will not turn a deaf ear to their complaints. "Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock." The people are called here by the name of that renowned son who became a second father to the tribes, and kept them alive in Egypt; possibly they were known to the Egyptians under the name of "the family of Joseph," "and if so, it seems most natural to call them by that name in this place. The term may, however, refer to the ten tribes of which Manasseh was the acknowledged head. The Lord had of old in the wilderness led, guided, shepherded all the tribes; and, therefore, the appeal is made to him. The Lord's doings in the past are strong grounds for appeal and expectation as to the present and the future. "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims, shine forth." The Lord's especial presence was revealed upon the mercyseat between the cherubim, and in all our pleadings we should come to the Lord by this way: only upon the mercyseat will God reveal
his grace, and only there can we hope to commune with him. Let us ever plead the name of Jesus, who is our true mercyseat, to whom we may come boldly, and through whom we may look for a display of the glory of the Lord on our behalf. Our greatest dread is the withdrawal of the Lord's presence, and our brightest hope is the prospect of his return. In the darkest times of Israel, the light of her Shepherd's countenance is all she needs.

Verse 2. "Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh stir up thy strength, and come and save us." It is wise to mention the names of the Lord's people in prayer, for they are precious to him. Jesus bears the names of his people on his breastplate. Just as the mention of the names of his children has power with a father, so it is with the Lord. The three names were near of kin; Ephraim and Manasseh represent Joseph, and it was meet that Benjamin, the other son of the beloved Rachel, should be mentioned in the same breath: these three tribes were wont to march together in the wilderness, following immediately behind the ark. The prayer is that the God of Israel would be mighty on behalf of his people, chasing away their foes, and saving his people. O that in these days the Lord may be pleased to remember every part of his church, and make all her tribes to see his salvation. We would not mention our own denomination only, but lift up prayer for all the sections of the one church.

Verse 3. "Turn us again, O God." It is not so much said, "turn our captivity, "but "turn us." All will come right if we are right. The best turn is not that of circumstances but of character. When the Lord turns his people he will soon turn their condition. It needs the Lord himself to do this, for conversion is as divine a work as creation; and those who have been once turned unto God, if they at any time backslide, as much need the Lord to turn them again as to turn them at the first. The word may be read, "restore us; "verily, it is a choice mercy that "he restor eth my soul." "And cause thy face to shine." Be favourable to us, smile upon us. This was the high priest's blessing upon Israel: what the Lord has already given us by our High Priest and Mediator we may right confidently ask of him. "And we shall be saved." All that is wanted for salvation is the Lord's favour. One glance of his gracious eye would transform Tophet into Paradise. No matter how fierce the foe, or dire the captivity, the shining face of God ensures both victory and liberty. This verse is a very useful prayer. Since we too often turn aside, let us often with our lips and heart cry, "Turn us again, O God, and cause thy face to shine, and we shall be saved."

Verse 4. "O Lord God of Hosts, how long wilt thou be angry against the prayer of thy people?" How long shall the smoke of thy wrath drown the smoking incense of our prayers? Prayer would fain enter thy holy place, but they wrath battles with it, and prevents its entrance. That God should be angry with us
when sinning seems natural enough, but that he should be angry even with our prayers is a bitter grief. With many a pang may the pleader ask, "How long?" Commander of all the hosts of thy creatures, able to save thy saints in their extremity, shall they for ever cry to thee in vain?

Verse 5. "Thou feedest them with the bread of tears." Their meat is seasoned with brine distilled from weeping eyes. Their meals, which were once such pleasant seasons of social merriment, are now like funeral feasts to which each man contributes his bitter morsel. Thy people ate bread of wheat before, but now they receive from thine own hand no better diet than bread of tears. "And givest them tears to drink in great measure." Tears are both their food and their drink, and that without stint. They swallow tierces of tears, and swim in gulfs of grief, and all this by God's own appointment; not because their enemies have them in their power by force of arms, but because their God refuses to interpose. Tear bread is even more the fruit of the curse than to eat bread in the sweat of one's face, but it shall by divine love be turned into a greater blessing by ministering to our spiritual health.

Verse 6. "Thou makest us a strife unto our neighbours." Always jealous and malicious, Edom and Moab exulted over Israel's troubles, and then fell to disputing about their share of the spoil. A neighbour's jeer is ever most cutting, especially if a man has been superior to them, and claimed to possess more grace. None are unneighbourly as envious neighbours. "And our enemies laugh among themselves." They find mirth in our misery, comedy in our tragedy, salt for their wit in the brine of our tears, amusement in our amazement. It is devilish to sport with another's griefs; but it is the constant habit of the world which lieth in the wicked one to make merry with the saints' tribulations; the seed of the serpent follow their progenitor and rejoice in evil.

Verse 7. "Turn us again, O God of hosts." The prayer rises in the form of its address to God. He is here the God of Hosts. The more we approach the Lord in prayer and contemplation the higher will our ideas of him become.

Verse 8. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt." There it was in unfriendly soil: the waters of the Nile watered it not, but were as death to its shoots, while the inhabitants of the land despised it and trampled it down. Glorious was the right hand of the Lord when with power and great wonders he removed his pleasant plant in the teeth of those who sought its destruction. "Thou hast cast out the heathen, and planted it." Seven nations were digged out to make space for the vine of the Lord; the old trees, which long had engrossed the soil, were torn up root and branch; oaks of Bashan, and palm trees of Jericho were displaced for the chosen vine. It was securely placed in its appointed position
with divine prudence and wisdom. Small in appearance, very dependent, exceeding weak, and apt to trail on the ground, yet the vine of Israel was chosen of the Lord, because he knew that by incessant care, and abounding skill, he could make of it a goodly fruit bearing plant.

Verse 9. "Thou preparedst room before it." The weeds, brambles, and huge stones were cleared; the Amorites, and their brethren in iniquity, were made to quit the scene, their forces were routed, their kings slain, their cities captures, and Canaan became like a plot of land, made ready for a vineyard. "And didst cause it to take deep root, and it filled the land." Israel became settled and established as a vine well rooted, and then it began to flourish and to spread to every side. This analogy might be applied to the experience of every believer in Jesus. The Lord has planted us, we are growing downward, "rooting roots," and by his grace we are also advancing in manifest enlargement. The same is true of the church in a yet closer degree, for at this moment through the goodwill of the dresser of the vineyard her branches spread far and wide.

Verse 10. "The hills were covered with the shadow of it." Israel dwelt up the mountains' summits, cultivating every foot of soil. The nation multiplied and became so great that other lands felt its influence, or were shadowed by it. "And the boughs thereof were like the goodly cedars." The nation itself was so great that even its tribes were powerful and worthy to take rank among the mighty. A more correct rendering describes the cedars as covered with the vine, and we know that in many lands vines climb the trees, and cover them. What a vine must that be which ascends the cedars of God, and even overtops them! It is a noble picture of the prosperity of the Israelitish people in their best days. In Solomon's time the little land of Israel occupied a high place among the nations. There have been times when the church of God also has been eminently conspicuous, and her power has been felt far and near.

Verse 11. "She sent out her boughs unto the sea." Along the Mediterranean and, perhaps, across its waters, Israel's power was felt. "And her branches unto the river." On her Eastern side she pushed her commerce even to the Euphrates. Those were brave days for Israel, and would have continued, had not sin cut them short. When the church pleases the Lord, her influence becomes immense, far beyond the proportion which her numbers or her power would lead us to expect; but, alas! when the Lord leaves her she becomes as worthless, useless, and despised as an untended vine, which is of all plants the most valueless.

Verse 12. "Why hast thou then broken down her hedges?" Thou hast withdrawn protection from her after caring for her with all this care; wherefore is this, O Lord? A vine unprotected is exposed to every form of injury; none
regard it, all prey upon it: such was Israel when given over to her enemies; such has the church full often been. "So that all they which pass by the way do pluck her." Her cruel neighbours have a pluck at her, and marauding bands, like roaming beasts, must needs pick at her. With God no enemy can harm us, without him none are so weak as to be unable to do us damage.

Verse 13. The boar out of the wood doth waste it. Such creatures are famous for rending and devouring vines. Babylon, like a beast from the marshes of the Euphrates, came up and wasted Judah and Israel. Fierce peoples, comparable to wild swine of the forest, warred with the Jewish nation, until it was gored and torn like a vine destroyed by greedy hogs. And the wild beast of the field doth devour it. First one foe and then another wreaked vengeance on the nation, neither did God interpose to chase them away. Ruin followed ruin; the fox devoured the young shoots which had been saved from the damage wrought by the boar. Alas, poor land. How low wast thou brought! An oak or cedar might have been crushed by such ravages, but how canst thou endure it, O weak and tender vine? See what evils follow in the train of sin, and how terrible a thing it is for a people to be forsaken of their God.

Verse 14. Return, we beseech thee, O God of hosts. Turn thyself to us as well as us to thee. Thou hast gone from us because of our sins, come back to us, for we sigh and cry after thee. Or, if it be too much to ask thee to come then do at least give us some consideration and cast an eye upon our griefs. Look down from heaven, and behold, and visit this vine. Do not close thine eyes; it is thy vine, do not utterly turn away from it as though it were quite gone from thy mind. Great Husbandman, at least note the mischief which the beasts have done, for then it may be thy heart will pity, and thy hand will be outstretched to deliver.

Verse 15. And the vineyard which thy right hand hath planted. Shall all thy care be lost? Thou has done so much, wilt thou lose thy labour? With thy power and wisdom thou didst great things for thy people, wilt thou now utterly give them up, and suffer thine enemies to exult in the evil which they delight in? And the branch that thou madest strong for thyself. A prayer for the leader whom the Lord had raised up, or for the Messiah whom they expected. Though the vine had been left, yet one branch had been regarded of the Lord, as if to furnish a scion for another vine; therefore, is the prayer made in this form. Let us pray the Lord, if he will not in the first place look upon his church, to look upon the Lord Jesus, and then behold her in mercy for his sake. This is the true art of prayer, to put Christ forward and cry, "Him and then the sinner see, Look through Jesus' wounds on me."
Verse 16. *It is burned with fire.* In broken utterances the sorrowful singer utters his distress. The vineyard was like a forest which has been set on fire; the choice vines were charred and dead. It is cut down. The cruel axe had hacked after its murderous fashion, the branches were lopped, the trunk was wounded, desolation reigned supreme. They perish at the rebuke of thy countenance. God's rebuke was to Israel what fire and axe would be to a vine. His favour is life, and his wrath is as messengers of death. One angry glance from Jehovah's eye is sufficient to lay all the vineyards of Ephraim desolate. O Lord, look not thus upon our churches. Rebuke us, but not in anger.

Verse 17. *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand.* Let thy power rest on thy true Benjamin, son of thy right hand; give a commission to some chosen man by whom thou wilt deliver. Honour him, save us, and glorify thyself. There is no doubt here an outlook to the Messiah, for whom believing Jews had learned to look as the Saviour in time of trouble. Upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. Send forth thy power with him whom thou shalt strengthen to accomplish thy purposes of grace. It pleases God to work for the sons of men by sons of men. "By man came death, by man came also the resurrection from the dead." Nations rise or fall largely through the instrumentality of individuals: by a Napoleon the kingdoms are scourged, and by a Wellington nations are saved from the tyrant. It is by the man Christ Jesus that fallen Israel is yet to rise, and indeed through him, who deigns to call himself the Son of Man, the world is to be delivered from the dominion of Satan and the curse of sin. O Lord, fulfil thy promise to the man of thy right hand, who participates in thy glory, and give him to see the pleasure of the Lord prospering in his hand.

Verse 18. So will not we go back from thee. Under the leadership of one whom God had chosen the nation would be kept faithful, grace would work gratitude, and so cement them to their allegiance. It is in Christ that we abide faithful; because he lives we live also. There is no hope of our perseverance apart from him. Quicken us, and we will call upon thy name. If the Lord gives life out of death, his praise is sure to follow. The Lord Jesus is such a leader, that in him is life, and the life is the light of men. He is our life. When he visits our souls anew we shall be revived, and our praise shall ascend unto the name of the Triune God.

Verse 19. *Turn us again, O Lord God of Hosts.* Here we have another advance in the title and the incommunicable name of Jehovah, the I AM is introduced. Faith's day grows brighter as the hours roll on; and her prayers grow more full and mighty. Cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved. Even we who were so destroyed. No extremity is too great for the power of God. He is able to save
at the last point, and that too by simply turning his smiling face upon his afflicted. Men can do little with their arm, but God can do all things with a glance. Oh, to live for ever in the light of Jehovah's countenance.

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**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS**

**TITLE.** It is an Asaph prayer again, full of pleas in Israel's behalf. It is as if they had before them Isa 63:1, "Then he remembered the days of old." They call to his mind the days of Joseph, when (Ge 49:24) the Lord miraculously fed them in Egypt. And then the tabernacle days, when (first, since the days of Eden), the Lord was known to dwell between the cherubim, on the mercyseat. They call to his mind wilderness times (verse 2), when their march was gladdened by his presence, "Ephraim, Benjamin, and Manasseh" looking on the Pillar of Glory as it rose before them, the guide and partner of their way (see Nu 10:32-34) "O God, bring us back again! Cause thy face to shine! and all shall be well again!" *Andrew A. Bonar.*

**Verse 1.** The prophet does not nakedly begin his prayer, but mingles therewith certain titles, by which he most aptly addresses God, and urges his cause. He does not say, O you who sustain and govern all things which are in heaven and in earth, who hast placed thy dwelling place above the heaven of heavens; but, Thou who art the Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock, thou that dwellest between the cherubims. Those things which enhance the favour and providence of God revealed to Israel, he brings to remembrance that he might nourish and strengthen confidence in prayer...Let us learn from this example to feed and fortify our confidence in praying to God, with the marks of that divine and paternal kindness revealed to us in Christ our Shepherd and propitiation. *Musculus.*

**Verse 1.** "Give ear, O Shepherd of Israel." It is the part of the shepherd to give ear to the bleatings and cries of the sheep, to call them to mind, that he may readily run to their help. *Venema.*

**Verse 1.** "O Shepherd of Israel, thou that leadest Joseph like a flock." Yon shepherd is about to lead his flock across the river; and, as our Lord says of the good shepherd, you observe that he goes before, and the sheep follow. Not all in the same manner, however. Some enter boldly, and come straight across. These are the loved ones of the flock, who keep hard by the footsteps of the shepherd, whether sauntering through green meadows, by the still waters, feeding upon the mountains, or resting at noon beneath the shadow of great rocks. And now others enter, but in doubt and alarm. Far from their guide, they
miss the ford, and are carried down the river, some more, some less, and yet, one by one, they all struggle over and make good their landing. Notice those little lambs. They refuse to enter, and must be driven into the stream by the shepherd's dog, mentioned by Job in his "parable." Poor things! how they leap and plunge, and bleat in terror! That weak one yonder will be swept quite away, and perish in the sea. But, no; the shepherd himself leaps into the stream, lifts it into his bosom, and bears it trembling to the shore. All safely over, how happy they appear. The lambs frisk and gambol about in high spirits, while the older ones gather round their faithful guide, and look up to him in subdued but expressive thankfulness.

Now, can you watch such a scene, and not think of that Shepherd who leadeth Joseph like a flock, and of another river which all his sheep must cross? He too, goes before, and, as in the case of this flock, they who keep near him fear no evil. They hear his sweet voice saying, "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee." With eyes fastened on him, they scarcely see the stream, or feel its cold and threatening waves. The great majority, however, "linger, shivering on the brink, and fear to launch away." They lag behind, look down upon the dark river, and, like Peter on stormy Gennesaret, when faith failed, they begin to sink. Then they cry for help, and not in vain. The Good Shepherd hastens to their rescue, and none of all his flock can ever perish. Even the weakest lambkins are carries safely over. I once saw flocks crossing the Jordan "to Canaan's fair and happy land, "and there the scene was even more striking and impressive. The river was broader, the current stronger, and the flocks larger, while the shepherd's were more picturesque and Biblical. The catastrophe, too, with which many more sheep were threatened—of being swept down into that mysterious sea of death, which swallows up the Jordan itself,—was more solemn and suggestive. W. M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book."

**Verse 1.** "Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock." Thou that leadest Joseph like a flock art considered by the unbelieving to have no thoughts for our affairs; therefore stretch forth thine hand for our assistance, that the mouth of them that speak iniquities may be shut. We seek not gold and riches, or the dignities of this world, but we long for thy light, we desire more ardently to know thee, therefore "shine forth." Savonarola.

**Verse 1.** "Thou that dwellest between the cherubims." From this phrase the following ideas may be derived:

1. That God is a King, sitting on his throne, and surrounded by his "ministers." His throne is the heavens, the symbol of which is the holy of holies, his
"ministers" are "angels," and are elsewhere distinguished by that name, as Genesis 3; Ps 18:11;

2. that God is the "King" of Israel, dwelling among them by the external symbol of his presence. His most illustrious ministers are depicted by the "Cherubims," who comprehend his heavenly as well as earthly ministers;

3. that God is the covenant "King" of his people, and has fixed his dwelling place above the "ark of the covenant," an argument that he will observe the covenant and fulfill its promises, that he will guard his people, and procure for them every felicity;

4. lastly, that God is willing to reveal to the people his grace and mercy through the covering of the ark, called the "mercyseat," on which God sat. Venema.

Verse 2. "Before Ephraim and Benjamin and Manasseh." The three tribes of Ephraim, Manasseh, and Benjamin, the three sons of Rachel, went immediately behind the ark. Whenever the ark arose against the enemy, Moses used to exclaim, "Rise up, Lord, and let thine enemies be scattered; and let them that hate thee flee before thee." The Psalmist repeats this exclamation. "Cause thy face to shine upon us," was the blessing of Aaron; the psalmist prays for the renewal of that blessing. Augustus F. Tholuck.

Verse 3. "Turn us, and cause thy face to shine." To thyself convert us, from the earthly to the heavenly; convert our rebellious wills to thee, and when we are converted, show thy countenance that we may know thee; show thy power that we may fear thee; show thy wisdom that we may reverence thee; show thy goodness that we may love thee; show them once, show them a second time, show them always, that through tribulation we may pass with a happy face, and be saved. When thou dost save, we shall be saved; when thou withdrawest thy hand, we cannot be saved. Savonarola.

Verse 4. "Lord God of hosts." All creatures are mustered, and trained, and put into garrison, or brought forth into the field, by his command. Which way can we look beside his armies? If upward into heaven, there is a band of soldiers, even a multitude of the heavenly host, praising God, Lu 2:13. If to the lower heavens, there is a band of soldiers, Ge 2:1; it was universa militia caeli, to which those idolaters burnt incense. On the earth, not only men are marshalled to the service; so Israel was called the "host of the living God;" but even the brute creatures are ranged in arrays. So God did levy a band of flies against the Egyptians; and a band of frogs that marched into their bed chambers. He hath troops of locusts, Pr 30:27, and armies of caterpillars. Not only the chariots and
horsemen of heaven to defend his prophet; but even the basest, the most
indocible, and despicable creatures, wherewith to confound his enemies. If
Goliath stalk forth to defy the God of Israel, he shall be confuted with a pebble.
If Herod swells up to a god, God will set his vermin on him, and all the king's
guard cannot save him from them. You have heard of rats that could not be
beaten off till they had destroyed that covetous prelate; and of the fly that killed
Pope Adrian. God hath more ways to punish than he hath creatures. "The Lord
God of Hosts" is not properly a title of creation, but of Providence. All
creatures have their existence from God as their Maker; but so have they also
their order from him as their Governor. It refers not so much to their being as to
their marshalling; not to their natural but militant estate; not only as creatures
do they owe him for their making, but as they are soldiers for their managing.
Their order is warlike, and they serve under the colours of the Almighty. So
that here, God would be respected, not as a creator, but as a general. His anger,
therefore, seems so much the more fearful, as it is presented to us under so
great a title: "the Lord God of Hosts" is angry. They talk of Tamerlane that he
could daunt his enemies with the very look of his countenance. Oh! then what
terror dwells in the countenance of an offended God! The reprobates shall call
to the rocks to hide them from the wrath of the Lamb. Re 6:16. If ira agni doth
so affright them, how terrible is ira leonis, the wrath of the lion? It may justly
trouble us all to hear that the Lord, "the Lord God of Hosts," is angry; in the
sense whereof the prophet breaks forth here into this expostulation: "O Lord
God of hosts, how long wilt thou be angry with thy people that prayeth?"

Thomas Adams.

Verse 4. "Angry against the prayer of thy people." There may be infirmities
enough in our very prayers to make them unacceptable. As if they be Exanimes,
without life and soul; when the heart knows not what the tongue utters. Or
Perfunctoriae, for God will have none of those prayers that come out of feigned
lips. Or Tentativae, for they that will petere tentando, tempt God in prayer,
shall go without. Or Fluctuantes, of a wild and wandering discourse, ranging
up and down, which the Apostle calls "beating the air," as huntsmen beat the
bushes, and as Saul sought his father's asses. Such prayers will not stumble
upon the kingdom of heaven. Or if they be Preproperae, run over in haste, as
some use to chop up their prayers, and think long till they have done. But they
that pray in such haste shall be heard at leisure. Or sine fiducia; the faithless
man had as good hold his peace as pray; he may babble, but prays not; he prays
ineffectually, and receives not. He may lift up his hands, but he does not lift up
his heart. Only the prayer of the righteous availeth, and only the believer is
righteous. But the formal devotion of a faithless man is not worth the crust of
bread which he asks. Or sine humilitate, so the pharisee's prayer was not truly
supplicatio, but superlatio. A presumptuous prayer profanes the name of God instead of adoring it. All, or any, of these defects may mar the success of our prayers. Thomas Adams.

Verse 5. "In great measure." The Hebrew shalish is the name of a measure, so called of three, as containing a third part of the greatest measure, four times as big as the usual cup to drink in. Henry Ainsworth.

Verse 7. "Turn us again, O God of hosts." See Ps 80:3 and observe that there it was only, "Turn us again, O God, "here "O God of hosts, "and Ps 80:19, "O Lord God of hosts." As the bird by much waving gathers wind under the wing, and mounts higher, so does faith in prayer: viresque acquirit eundo. John Trapp.

Verse 7. Salvation may be certainly expected in God's order; and if we labour to be sure of our turning to God, and living in the sense of communion with him, we need not make question of salvation, for that shall follow infallibly on the former two. "Turn us again, O God of hosts, and cause thy face to shine; and we shall be saved." The last is not put up by way of prayer here, but promised to themselves, and put out of question, that it shall follow; "Turn us, so shall we be saved," say they. David Dickson.

Verse 8. "Thou hast brought a vine out of Egypt," etc. The blessings are here placed before us in figurative language, taken from the vine, and the care usually expended upon it. They are,

1. The transplanting of the vine from an unfruitful to a very rich and fertile soil.

2. Its plantation and care.


Verses 8-19. Mant's version of the passage is so exquisite that we quote it in full:

8. Thy hands from Egypt brought a goodly vine, And planted fair in fertile Palestine;

9. Cleared for its grasping roots the unpeopled land, And gave it high to rise, and firm to stand.
10. Far over the eternal hills her shadow spread, Her tendrils wreathed the cedar's towering head;

11. And, as the centre of the land she stood, Her branches reaches the sea, her boughs the eastern flood.

12. Why hast thou now her hedges rent away, And left her bare, the passing traveller's prey?

13. The field fed beast devours each tender shoot, Fierce from the wood the boar assails her root.

14. Return, O God; from heaven thine eyes incline; Behold, and visit this neglected vine:

15. Regard the plant, thou once didst love so well, And chief thy pleasant branch, the hope of Israel.

16. Burnt though she be and rent, her haughty foe The deathly terrors of thy wrath shall know.

17. But on the man, by thee with strength array'd, The Son of Man by thee for conquest made,

18. Thy hand shall rest; till we thy triumph see, Resound thy praise, and still remember thee.

19. Turn us again, thou God of heaven's high powers, Beam with thy radiance forth, and peace shall still be ours.

**Verse 14.** Look down from heaven, and behold. This prayer is fit for none but the truly contrite, and those who are in heart returning. Otherwise, with what conscience could we entreat God to look down from heaven and behold our affairs? Should we not inflame his anger all the more, if, besides living in sin, we dared to challenge the all holy eyes of God to behold from heaven our wickedness? *Musculus.*

**Verse 14.** Look down from heaven. Thou hast gone far from us, thou hast ascended to heaven. Thou hast departed from us, look down at least upon us from heaven, if thou art not willing to descend to earth, if our sins do not merit this. *Savonarola.*
Verse 14. *Visit this vine.* Still it has roots, still some branches are living. In the beginning of the world it began, and never has failed, and never will. For thou hast said, Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. It may be diminished, it can never utterly fall. This vine is the vine which thou hast planted. There is one spirit, one faith, one baptism, one God, and Lord of all, who is all in all. Visit, then, this vine, for thy visitation preserves her spirit; visit by thy grace, by thy presence, by thy Holy Spirit. Visit with thy rod, and with thy staff; for thy rod and thy staff comfort her. Visit with thy scourge that she may be chastened and purified, for the time of pruning comes. Cast out the stones, gather up the dry branches, and bind them in bundles for burning. Raise her up, cut off the superfluous shoots, make fast her supports, enrich the soil, build up the fence, and visit this vine, as now thou visitest the earth and watereth it. Savonarola.

Verse 17. *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,* etc. Neither the church, nor any member thereof needeth any more security for their stability and perpetuation, but Christ; for now when the vineyard is burnt, and the visible church defaced, the remnant are content to rest satisfied with this, which also they take for granted, and do subscribe unto it: *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,* upon the son of man whom thou madest strong for thyself. The consanguinity of Christ with the believer, and his humiliation in his human nature, are strong supporters of the faith and comfort of his people that do seek salvation through him; therefore do the faithful here fix themselves on this, that as he is God's Son, so he is a branch of their vineyard also; that as he is at the right hand of the Father as God, so he is *the man of his right hand* also; the Son of Man, or of Adam, partaker of flesh and blood with us, of the same stock that we are of, in all things like to us, except sin; for the *Son of Man* is the style whereby Christ styled himself in his humiliation. The perpetuity of the church, and the perseverance of the saints, is founded upon the sufficiency of Christ; and the unfeigned believer may assure himself, as of the continuance of the church, so of his own perseverance and constant communion with God through him. *Let thy hand be upon the man of thy right hand,* etc.; so will not we go back from thee. David Dickson.

Verse 17. *The man of thy right hand... The Son of Man.* These striking expressions apply in the fullest and most perfect sense to Christ. If *the Man of God's right hand* be the man placed there, to whom can the title apply but to him? for, *to which of the angels said God at any time, Sit thou on my right hand?* Heb 1:5; and much less has he said this of any Jewish king. As to the other appellation, *The Son of Man,* it is one of Christ's most definite titles, being given to him in Scripture no less than seventy-one times; in sixty-seven
instances by himself; once by Daniel; once by the martyr Stephen; and twice by
the Apostle John in the Revelation. He it is, too, whom the Father has made
strong for the salvation of his church, and who will yet turn away captivity
from the chosen people, and restore them to a place in the church, so that
henceforth they will not go back from God. *Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

**Verse 17.** The man of thy right hand. The man of the right hand is,

1. **Most dear,** whom one holds equally dear with his own right hand, Mt 5:29-30. Jacob called the son of his most beloved wife, Benjamin, the son of his
right hand, Ge 35:18, who was so dear to him that his life was bound up in the
lad's life, Ge 44:30.

2. **Most honoured;** a man upon whom one wishes to confer the highest honour,
is placed at the right hand as Solomon placed his mother, 1Ki 2:19, and the
spouse stands at the right hand, Ps 45:10. Sitting down at the right hand is in
Scripture a proof of the greatest honour.

3. **Allied,** because covenants and mutual agreements are ratified by giving the
right hand, 2Ki 10:15. Jehu said to Jehonadab, *Is thy heart right?* and
Jehonadab answered, *It is. If it be, give me thine hand. And he gave him his hand.* The right hand used to be given, as in Ga 2:9. **The man of God's right hand,** therefore, is one most dear to God, most honoured and joined with him in

**Verse 17.** Though the phrase, *man of thy right hand,* may have an immediate
reference to the King who ruled in Judah when this Psalm was penned, it must
ultimately and most properly intend Jesus Christ, the great antitype of all the
kings of David's line. The New Testament is the best interpreter of the Old; and
it assures us that this highly dignified man is the Son of God. Heb 1:1,3,13. But
if we would understand the genuine import of the phrase, we must attend to a
custom which obtained in Judea and other eastern countries. At meals, the
master of the feast placed the person whom he loved best on his right hand, as a
token of love and respect; and as they sat on couches, in the intervals between
the dishes, when the master leaned on his left elbow, the man at his right hand,
leaning also on his, would naturally repose his head on the master's bosom,
while at the same time the master laid his right hand on the favourite's shoulder
or side, in testimony of his favourable regards. This custom is obviously
referred to in Joh 21:20, where John is called *the disciple whom Jesus loved,*
*who also leaned on his breast at supper.* Now, since Christ is called *the man of
God's right hand,* this says that he is the object of his warmest and most
honourable regards. In him he is well pleased, and in token of this, he has set
him in the most honourable place. He is the Son of Man, whom the Father made to stand strong for himself, *i.e.*, to support the honour and dignity of the divine character amidst a perverse and crooked generation: the consideration of the Father's right hand being upon him, or of the Father's satisfaction in him as our Surety, serves to animate and embolden our addresses to his throne, and is the keenest incitement to put in practice that resolution, *Henceforth will we not go back from thee*. Alexander Pirie.

**Verse 18.** *So will not we*, etc. How are we to understand the connection between this and the preceding words? It may be understood two ways.

1. *As it would oblige them to the yielding of steadfast obedience;* it would lay them under a special engagement never to revolt any more, as they had done; if God would grant this request, it would be a most eminent tie and bond upon them to the most constant and faithful service.

2. *As it would enable them to yield such obedience.* And this I conceive to be chiefly aimed at; if God would lay such help upon Christ for them, they should receive power by that means to discharge their duty to him better than ever heretofore; though they were very feeble and wavering, false and treacherous of themselves, yet here would be a successful remedy. Timothy Cruso.

**Verse 19.** During distress God comes; and when he comes it is no more distress. *Gaelic Proverb.*

**Verse 19.** *Turn us again.* How well that we can look to God when our face is set wrong, that he may turn us, and so his face shine on us, as to bring blessing and present deliverance to his people. *J. N. Darby.*

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**Hints to the Village Preacher**

**Verse 1.** In what respects the Lord acted as a Shepherd to Israel, as illustrative of his dealings with his Church.

**Verse 2.** Salvation expected in connection with the people of God, their prayers, labours, and daily service.

**Verse 3.** The double work in salvation, (1) Turn us; (2) Turn to us.

**Verse 4.** What prayers they are which make God angry.
Verse 5. Unpalatable provender.

1. Analyze the Provision.
2. Note the hand which sends it.
3. Consider the healthfulness of the diet.
4. Remember the alleviating accompaniments.

Verse 7. Conversion, communion, confidence of salvation.

Verses 8-15. Parallel between the Church and a vine.

Verse 12.

1. The hedges of the Church.
2. Their removal.
3. The deplorable consequences.

Verse 13. What are the greatest enemies of the Church? Where do they come from? How shall we defeat them?

Verses 17-18. The power of God seen in Jesus, the cause of the perseverance of the saints.

Verse 18 (last clause). The need of quickening in order to acceptable worship.

WORKS UPON THE EIGHTIETH PSALM


A Few Words on the Eightieth Psalm. By CHARLOTTE ELIZABETH. 1835.
Psalm 81

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. To the Chief Musician upon Gittith. Very little is known of the meaning of this title. We have given the best explanation known to us in connection with Psalm 8 in Vol. 1 of this work. If it be intended to indicate a vintage song, it speaks well for the piety of the people for whom it was written; it is to be feared that in few places even in Christian countries would holy hymns be thought suitable to be sung in connection with the winepress. When the bells upon the horses shall be holiness unto the Lord, then shall the juice of the grape gush forth to the accompaniment of sacred song. A Psalm of Asaph. This poet here again dwells upon the history of his country; his great forte seems to be rehearsing the past in admonitory psalmody. He is the poet of the history and politics of Israel. A truly national songster, at once pious and patriotic.

DIVISION. Praise is called for to celebrate some memorable day, perhaps the passover; whereupon the deliverance out of Egypt is described, Ps 81:1-7. Then the Lord gently chides his people for their ingratitude, and pictures their happy estate had they but been obedient to his commands.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. Sing, in tune and measure, so that the public praise may be in harmony; sing with joyful notes, and sounds melodious. Aloud. For the heartiest praise is due to our good Lord. His acts of love to us speak more loudly than any of our words of gratitude can do. No dulness should ever stupefy our psalmody, or half heartedness cause is to limp along. Sing aloud, ye debtors to sovereign grace, your hearts are profoundly grateful: let your voices express your thankfulness. Unto God our strength. The Lord was the strength of his people in delivering them out of Egypt with a high hand, and also in sustaining them in the wilderness, placing them in Canaan, preserving them from their foes, and giving them victory. To whom do men give honour but to those upon whom they rely, therefore let us sing aloud unto our God, who is our strength and our song. Make a joyful noise unto the God of Jacob. The God of the nation, the God of their father Jacob, was extolled in happy music by the Israelitish people; let no Christian be silent, or slack in praise, for this God is our God. It is to be regretted that the niceties of modern singing frighten our congregations from joining lustily in the hymns. For our part we delight in full bursts of praise, and had rather discover the ruggedness of a want of musical training than miss the heartiness of universal congregational song. The gentility which lisps the tune in well bred whispers, or leaves the singing altogether to the choir, is very like a mockery of worship. The gods of Greece and Rome may be worshipped well enough with classical music, but Jehovah can only be
adored with the heart, and that music is the best for his service which gives the heart most play.

**Verse 2. Take a psalm.** Select a sacred song, and then raise it with your hearty voices. And bring hither the timbrel. Beat on your tambourines, ye damsels, let the sound be loud and inspiriting. "Sound the trumpets, beat the drums." God is not to be served with misery but with mirthful music, sound ye then the loud timbrel, as of old ye smote it by "Egypt's dark sea." The pleasant harp with the psaltery. The timbrel for sound, must be joined by the harp for sweetness, and this by other stringed instruments for variety. Let the full compass of music be holiness unto the Lord.

**Verse 3. Blow up the trumpet in the new moon.** Announce the sacred month, the beginning of months, when the Lord brought his people out of the house of bondage. Clear and shrill let the summons be which calls all Israel to adore the Redeeming Lord. In the time appointed, on our solemn feast day. Obedience is to direct our worship, not whim and sentiment: God's appointment gives a solemnity to rites and times which no ceremonial pomp or hierarchical ordinance could confer. The Jews not only observed the ordained month, but that part of the month which had been divinely set apart. The Lord's people in the olden time welcomed the times appointed for worship; let us feel the same exultation, and never speak of the Sabbath as though it could be other than "a delight" and "honourable." Those who plead this passage will keep such feasts as the Lord appoints, but not those which Rome or Canterbury may ordain.

**Verse 4. For this was a statute for Israel, and a law of the God of Jacob.** It was a precept binding upon all the tribes that a sacred season should be set apart to commemorate the Lord's mercy; and truly it was but the Lord's due, he had a right and a claim to such special homage. When it can be proved that the observance of Christmas, Whitsuntide, and other Popish festivals was ever instituted by a divine statute, we also will attend to them, but not till then. It is as much our duty to reject the traditions of men, as to observe the ordinances of the Lord. We ask concerning every rite and rubric, "Is this a law of the God of Jacob?" and if it be not clearly so, it is of no authority with us, who walk in Christian liberty.

**Verse 5. This he ordained in Joseph for a testimony.** The nation is called Joseph, because in Egypt it would probably be known and spoken of as Joseph's family, and indeed Joseph was the foster father of the people. The passover, which is probably here alluded to, was to be a standing memorial of the redemption from Egypt; and everything about it was intended to testify to all ages, and all peoples, the glory of the Lord in the deliverance of his chosen
nation. When he went out through the land of Egypt. Much of Egypt was traversed by the tribes in their exodus march, and in every place the feast which they had kept during the night of Egypt's visitation would be a testimony for the Lord, who had also himself in the midnight slaughter gone forth through the land of Egypt. The once afflicted Israelites marched over the land of bondage as victors who trample down the slain.

Where I heard a language that I understood not. Surely the connection requires that we accept these words as the language of the Lord. It would be doing great violence to language if the "I" here should be referred to one person, and the "I" in the next verse to another. But how can it be imagined that the Lord should speak of a language which he understood not, seeing he knows all things, and no form of speech is incomprehensible to him? The reply is, that the Lord here speaks as the God of Israel identifying himself with his own chosen nation, and calling that an unknown tongue to himself which was unknown to them. He had never been adored by psalm or prayer in the tongue of Egypt; the Hebrew was the speech known in his sacred house, and the Egyptian was outlandish and foreign there. In strictest truth, and not merely in figure, might the Lord thus speak, since the wicked customs and idolatrous rites of Egypt were disapproved of by him, and in that sense were unknown. Of the wicked, Jesus shall say, "I never knew you; "and probably in the same sense this expression should be understood, for it may be correctly rendered, "a speech I knew not I am hearing." It was among the griefs of Israel that their taskmasters spake an unknown tongue, and they were thus continually reminded that they were strangers in a strange land. The Lord had pity upon them, and emancipated them, and hence it was their bounden duty to maintain inviolate the memorial of the divine goodness. It is no small mercy to be brought out from an ungodly world and separated unto the Lord.

Verse 6. I removed his shoulder from the burden. Israel was the drudge and slave of Egypt, but God gave him liberty. It was by God alone that the nation was set free. Other peoples owe their liberties to their own efforts and courage, but Israel received its Magna Charta as a free gift of divine power. Truly may the Lord say of everyone of his freed men, I removed his shoulder from the burden. His hands were delivered from the pots. He was no longer compelled to carry earth, and mould it, and bake it; the earth basket was no more imposed upon the people, nor the tale of bricks exacted, for they came out into the open country where none could exact upon them. How typical all this is of the believer's deliverance from legal bondage, when, through faith, the burden of sin glides into the Saviour's sepulchre, and the servile labours of self-righteousness come to an end for ever.
Verse 7. Thou calledst in trouble, and I delivered thee. God heard his people's cries in Egypt, and at the Red Sea: this ought to have bound them to him. Since God does not forsake us in our need, we ought never to forsake him at any time. When our hearts wander from God, our answered prayers cry "shame" upon us. I answered thee in the secret place of thunder. Out of the cloud the Lord sent forth tempest upon the foes of his chosen. That cloud was his secret pavilion, within it he hung up his weapons of war, his javelins of lightning his trumpet of thunder; forth from that pavilion he came and overthrew the foe that his own elect might be secure. I proved thee at the waters of Meribah. They had proved him and found him faithful, he afterwards proved them in return. Precious things are tested, therefore Israel's loyalty to her King was put to trial, and, alas, it failed lamentably. The God who was adored one day for his goodness was reviled the next, when the people for a moment felt the pangs of hunger and thirst. The story of Israel is only our own history in another shape. God has heard us, delivered us, liberated us, and too often our unbelief makes the wretched return of mistrust, murmuring, and rebellion. Great is our sin; great is the mercy of our God: let us reflect upon both, and pause a while. Selah. Hurried reading is of little benefit; to sit down a while and meditate is very profitable.

Verse 8. Hear, O my people, and I will testify unto thee. What? Are the people so insensible as to be deaf to their God? So it would seem, for he earnestly asks a hearing. Are we not also at times quite as careless and immovable? O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me. There is much in this "if." How low have they fallen who will not hearken unto God himself! The deaf adder is not more grovelling. We are not fond of being upbraided, we had rather avoid sharp and cutting truths; and, though the Lord himself rebuke us, we fly from his gentle reproofs.

Verse 9. There shall no strange god be in thee. No alien god is to be tolerated in Israel's tents. Neither shalt thou worship any strange god. Where false gods are, their worship is sure to follow. Man is so desperate an idolater that the image is always a strong temptation: while the nests are there the birds will be eager to return. No other god had done anything for the Jews, and therefore they had no reason for paying homage to any other. To us the same argument will apply. We owe all to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ: the world, the flesh, the devil, none of these have been of any service to us; they are aliens, foreigners, enemies, and it is not for us to bow down before them. "Little children keep yourselves from idols, "is our Lord's voice to us, and by the power of his Spirit we would cast out every false god from our hearts.
Verse 10. I am the Lord thy God, which brought thee out of the land of Egypt. Thus did Jehovah usually introduce himself to his people. The great deliverance out of Egypt was that claim upon his people's allegiance which he most usually pleaded. If ever people were morally bound to their God, certainly Israel was a thousand times pledged unto Jehovah, by his marvellous deeds on their behalf in connection with the Exodus. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. Because he had brought them out of Egypt he could do great things for them. He had proved his power and his good will; it remained only for his people to believe in him and ask large things of him. If their expectations were enlarged to the utmost degree, they could not exceed the bounty of the Lord. Little birds in the nest open their mouths widely enough, and perhaps the parent birds fail to fill them, but it will never be so with our God. His treasures of grace are inexhaustible,

"Deep as our helpless miseries are, 
And boundless as our sins."

The Lord began with his chosen nation upon a great scale, doing great wonders for them, and offering them vast returns for their faith and love, if they would but be faithful to him. Sad, indeed, was the result of this grand experiment.

Verse 11. But my people would not hearken to my voice. His warnings were rejected, his promises forgotten, his precepts disregarded. Though the divine voice proposed nothing but good to them, and that upon an unparalleled scale of liberality, yet they turned aside. And Israel would none of me. They would not consent to his proposals, they walked in direct opposition to his commands, they hankered after the ox god of Egypt, and their hearts were bewitched by the idols of the nations round about. The same spirit of apostacy is in all our hearts, and if we have not altogether turned aside from the Lord, it is only grace which has prevented us.

Verse 12. So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust. No punishment is more just or more severe than this. If men will not be checked, but madly take the bit between their teeth and refuse obedience, who shall wonder if the reins are thrown upon their necks, and they are let alone to work out their own destruction. It were better to be given up to lions than to our hearts' lusts. And they walked in their own counsels. There was no doubt as to what course they would take, for man is everywhere wilful and loves his own way,—that way being at all times in direct opposition to God's way. Men deserted of restraining grace, sin with deliberation; they consult, and debate, and consider, and then elect evil rather than good, with malice aforethought and in cool blood. It is a
remarkable obduracy of rebellion when men not only run into sin through passion, but calmly "walk in their own counsels" of iniquity.

**Verse 13.** *O that my people had hearkened unto me, and Israel had walked in my ways!* The condescending love of God expresses itself in painful regrets for Israel's sin and punishment. Such were the laments of Jesus over Jerusalem. Certain doctrinalists find a stumbling stone in such passages, and set themselves to explain them away, but to men in sympathy with the divine nature the words and the emotions are plain enough. A God of mercy cannot see men heaping up sorrow for themselves through their sins without feeling his compassion excited toward them.

**Verse 14.** *I should soon have subdued their enemies.* As he did in Egypt overthrow Pharaoh, so would he have baffled every enemy. And turned my hand against their adversaries. He would have smitten them once, and then have dealt them a return blow with the back of his hand. See what we lose by sin. Our enemies find the sharpest weapons against us in the armoury of our transgressions. They could never overthrow us if we did not first overthrow ourselves. Sin strips a man of his armour, and leaves him naked to his enemies. Our doubts and fears would long ago have been slain if we had been more faithful to our God. Ten thousand evils which afflict us now would have been driven far from us if we had been more jealous of holiness in our walk and conversation. We ought to consider not only what sin takes from our present stock, but what it prevents our gaining: reflections will soon show us that sin always costs us dear. If we depart from God, our inward corruptions are sure to make a rebellion. Satan will assail us, the world will worry us, doubts will annoy us, and all through our own fault. Solomon's departure from God raised up enemies against him, and it will be so with us, but if our ways please the Lord he will make even our enemies to be at peace with us.

**Verse 15.** *The haters of the Lord should have submitted themselves unto him.* Though the submission would have been false and flattering, yet the enemies of Israel would have been so humiliated that they would have hastened to make terms with the favoured tribes. Our enemies become abashed and cowardly when we, with resolution, walk carefully with the Lord. It is in God's power to keep the fiercest in check, and he will do so if we have a filial fear, a pious awe of him. But their time should have endured for ever. The people would have been firmly established, and their prosperity would have been stable. Nothing confirms a state or a church like holiness. If we be firm in obedience we shall be firm in happiness. Righteousness establishes, sin ruins.
**Verse 16.** *He should have fed them also with the finest of the wheat.* Famine would have been an unknown word, they would have been fed on the best of the best food, and have had abundance of it as their every day diet. And with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee. Luxuries as well as necessaries would be forthcoming, the very rocks of the land would yield abundant and sweet supplies; the bees would store the clefts of the rocks with luscious honey, and so turn the most sterile part of the land to good account. The Lord can do great things for an obedient people. When his people walk in the light of his countenance, and maintain unsullied holiness, the joy and consolation which he yields them are beyond conception. To them the joys of heaven have begun even upon earth. They can sing in the ways of the Lord. The spring of the eternal summer has commenced with them; they are already blest, and they look for brighter things. This shows us by contrast how sad a thing it is for a child of God to sell himself into captivity to sin, and bring his soul into a state of famine by following after another god. O Lord, for ever bind us to thyself alone, and keep us faithful unto the end.

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**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS**

**TITLE.** It is remarkable that as Psalm 80 treats of the church of God under the figure of a vine, so the present is entitled, "upon Gittith," literally upon the winepress. Whether the expression was meant to refer to a musical instrument, or to some direction as to the tune, is uncertain. In our Saviour's adoption of the figure of a vineyard to represent his church, he speaks of a winepress dug in it, Mt 21:33. The idea refers itself to the final result in some sense, in a way of salvation of souls, as the same figure of a winepress is used in Revelation 16 of the final destruction of the ungodly. W. Wilson.

**Verse 2.** *Timbrel.* The toph, English version tabret, timbrel, LXX., tumpanon, once qalthrion. It was what would now be called a tambourine, being played by the hand; and was specially used by women. It is thrice mentioned in the Ps 81:2 Ps 149:3 150:4. Joseph Francis Thrupp.

**Verse 2.** *The Psalter.** It is probably impossible to be sure as to what is intended by a psaltery. The Genevan version translates it viol, and the ancient viol was a six stringed guitar. In the Prayer book version, the Hebrew word is rendered lute, which instrument resembled the guitar, but was superior in tone. The Greek word "psalterion" denotes a stringed instrument played with the fingers. Cassidorus says that the psaltery was triangular in shape, and that it was played with a bow. Aben Ezra evidently considered it to be a kind of pipe, but the mass of authorities make it a stringed instrument. It was long in use, for
we read of it in David's time as made of fir wood (2Sa 6:55), and in Solomon's reign, of algum trees (2Ch 9:11), and it was still in use in the days of Nebuchadnezzar.

Verse 3. *Blow up the trumpet*, etc. The Jews say this blowing of trumpets was in commemoration of Isaac's deliverance, a ram being sacrificed for him, and therefore they sounded with trumpets made of ram's horns: or in remembrance of the trumpet blown at the giving of the law; though it rather was an emblem of the gospel and ministry of it, by which sinners are aroused, awakened and quickened, and souls are charmed and allured, and filled with spiritual joy and gladness. *John Gill.*

Verse 3. The trumpet. The sound of the trumpet is very commonly employed in Scripture as an image of the voice or word of God. The voice of God, and the voice of the trumpet on Mount Sinai, were heard together (Ex 19:5,18-19), first the trumpet sound as the symbol, then the reality. So also John heard the voice of the Lord as that of a trumpet (Re 1:10 4:1), and the sound of the trumpet is once and again spoken of as the harbinger of the Son of Man, when coming in power and great glory, to utter the almighty word which shall quicken the dead to life, and make all things new (Mt 24:31 1Co 15:52; 1Th 4:16). The sound of the trumpet, then, was a symbol of the majestic, omnipotent voice or word of God; but of course only in those things in which it was employed in respect to what God had to say to men. It might be used also as from man to God, or by the people, as from one to another. In this case, it would be a call to a greater than usual degree of alacrity and excitement in regard to the work and service of God. And such probably was the more peculiar design of the blowing of trumpets at the festivals generally, and especially at the festival of trumpets on the first day of the second month. *Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

Verse 3. *"In the new moon, "*etc. The feast of the *new moon* was always proclaimed by sound of trumpet. For want of astronomical knowledge, the poor Jews were put to sad shifts to know the real time of the new moon. They generally sent persons to the top of some hill or mountain about the time which, according to their supputations, the new moon should appear. The first who saw it was to give immediate notice to the Sanhedrin; they closely examined the reporter as to his credibility, and whether his information agreed with their calculations. If all was found satisfactory, the president proclaimed the new moon by shouting out, *wdqm mikkodesh!* "It is consecrated." This word was repeated twice aloud by the people; and was then proclaimed everywhere by *blowing of horns*, or what is called the sound of *trumpets*. Among the Hindus some feasts are announced by the sound of the *conch*, or *sacred shell*. *Adam Clarke.*
Verse 3. In the time appointed. The word rendered the time appointed, signifies the hidden or covered period; that is, the time when the moon is concealed or covered with darkness. This day was a joyful festival, returning every month; but the first day of the seventh moon was most solemn of the whole; being not only the first of the moon, but of the civil year. This was called the feast of trumpets, as it was celebrated by the blowing of trumpets from sunrising to sunsetting; according to the command, "It shall be a day of the blowing of trumpets to you." This joy was a memorial of the joy of creation, and the joy of giving the law; it also preindicated the blowing of the gospel trumpet, after the dark, the covered period of the death of Christ, when the form of the church changed, and the year of the "redeemed" began; and finally, it prefigured the last day, when the trumpet of God shall sound, and the dead shall be raised. Alexander Pirie.

Verse 5. I heard a language that I understood not. The language that he then heard—the religious worship of idolaters,—vows offered up "to birds and fourfooted beasts, and creeping things," Ro 1:23, and strength and mercy sought from every object in nature, except himself,—was a language unknown to him—"he knew it not." William Hill Tucker.

Verse 6. Pots, or burden baskets. Compare Ex 6:6-7. Rosellini gives a drawing of these baskets from a picture discovered in a tomb at Thebes. "Of the labourers," says he, "some are employed in transporting the clay in vessels, some in intermingling it with straw; others are taking the bricks out of the form, and placing them in rows; still others with a piece of wood upon their backs, and ropes on each side, carry away the bricks already burned or dried. Their dissimilarity to the Egyptians appears at the first view: their complexion, physiognomy and beard permit us not to be mistaken in supposing them to be Hebrews." Frederic Fysh.

Verse 6. Pots. The bricklayer's baskets; hanging one at each end of a yoke laid across the shoulders. William Kay.

Verse 7. To answer in the secret place of thunder, refers us to the pillar of cloud and fire, the habitation of the awful Majesty of God, whence God glanced with angry eyes upon the Egyptians, filled them with consternation and overthrew them. Venema.

Verse 10. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. Surely this teaches us, that the greater and more valuable the blessings are which we implore from the divine beneficence, the more sure shall we be to receive them in answer to prayer...But, though men are to be blamed, that they so seldom acknowledge
God in any thing, yet they are still more to be blamed, that they seek not from him the chief good. Men may, however, possibly cry to God for inferior things, and apply in vain. Even good men may ask for temporal blessings, and not receive them; because the things we suppose good, may not be good, or not good for us, or not good for us at present. But none shall seek God for the best of blessings in vain. If we ask enough, we shall have it. While the worldling drinks in happiness, if it will bear the name, with the mouth of an insect, the Christian imbibes bliss with the mouth of an angel. His pleasures are the same in kind, with the pleasure of the infinitely happy God. John Ryland.

Verse 10. Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. You may easily over expect the creature, but you cannot over expect God: "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it; "widen and dilate the desires and expectations of your souls, and God is able to fill every chink to the vastest capacity. This honours God, when we greaten our expectations upon him, it is a sanctifying of God in our hearts. Thomas Case (1598-1682), in "Morning Exercises."

Verse 10. Open thy mouth wide. This implies,

1. Warmth and fervency in prayer. To open the mouth is in effect to open the heart, that it may be both engaged and enlarged... We may be said to open our mouths wide when our affections are quick and lively, and there is a correspondence between the feelings of the heart and the request of the lips; or when we really pray, and not merely seem to do so. This is strongly and beautifully expressed in Ps 119:131: I opened my mouth, and panted: for I longed for thy commandments.

2. It implies a holy fluency and copiousness of expression, so as to order our cause before him, and fill our mouths with arguments. When the good man gets near to God, he has much business to transact with him, many complaints to make, and many blessings to implore; and, as such seasons do not frequently occur, he's the more careful to improve them. He then pours out his whole soul, and is at no loss for words; for when the heart is full, the tongue overflows. Sorrow and distress will even make those eloquent who are naturally slow of speech.

3. Enlarged hope and expectation. We may be too irreverent in our approaches to God, and too peremptory in our application; but if the matter and manner of our prayer be right, we cannot be too confident in our expectations from him... Open thy mouth wide then, O Christian; stretch out thy desires to the uttermost, grasp heaven and earth in thy boundless wishes, and believe there is enough in God to afford the full satisfaction. Not only come, but come with boldness to
the throne of grace: it is erected for sinners, even the chief of sinners. Come to it then, and wait at it, till you obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need. Those who expect most from God are likely to receive the most. The desire of the righteous, let it be ever so extensive, shall be granted. Benjamin Beddome.

Verse 10. I will fill it. Consider the import of the promise: Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it. "Ask, and ye shall receive; seek, and ye shall find."

Particularly,

1. If we open our mouths to God in prayer, he will fill them more and more with suitable petitions and arguments. When we attempt to open the mouth, God will open it still wider. Thus he dealt with Abraham when he interceded for Sodom; the longer he prayed, the more submissive and yet the more importunate he became. By praying we increase our ability to pray, and find a greater facility in the duty. "To him that hath shall be given, and he shall have more abundantly."

2. God will fill the mouth with abundant thanksgivings. Many of David's psalms begin with prayer, and end with the most animated praises. No mercies so dispose to thankfulness as those which are received in answer to prayer; for according to the degree of desire will be the sweetness of fruition...

3. We shall be filled with those blessings we pray for, if they are calculated to promote our real good and the glory of God. Do we desire fresh communications of grace, and manifestations of divine love; a renewed sense of pardoning mercy, and an application of the blood of Christ? Do we want holiness, peace, and assurance? Do we want to hear from God, to see him, and be like him? The promise is, My God shall supply all your need according to his riches in glory by Christ Jesus, Php 4:19. You shall have what you desire, and be satisfied: it shall be enough, and you shall think it so. "The Lord will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from them that walk uprightly." Benjamin Beddome.

Verse 10. The custom is said still to exist in Persia that when the king wishes to do a visitor, an ambassador for instance, especial honour, he desires him to open his mouth wide; and the king then crams it as full of sweetmeats as it will hold; and sometimes even with jewels. Curious as this custom is, it is doubtless referred to in Ps 81:10: Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it; not with baubles of jewels, but with far richer treasure. John Gadsby.
Verse 11. *My people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.* Know, sinner, that if at last thou missest heaven, which, God forbid! the Lord can wash his hands over your head, and clear himself of your blood: thy damnation will be laid at thine own door: it will then appear there was no cheat in the promise, no sophistry in the gospel, but thou didst voluntarily put eternal life from thee, whatever thy lying lips uttered to the contrary: *My people would have none of me.* So that, when the jury shall sit on thy murdered soul, to inquire how thou camest to thy miserable end, thou wilt be found guilty of thy own damnation. No one loseth God, but he that is willing to part with him. William Gurnall.

Verse 11. *And Israel would none of me.* It is added, *and Israel would none of me,* more closely, was not borne to me by a natural bent. For this is the original force of the word hka, as it still survives in Job 9, where it is used of the ships borne outward by a favourable wind and tide. Venema.

Verse 11. *Israel would none of me.* That is, would not be content alone with me, would not take quiet contentment in me (as the Hebrew word signifies); the Lord was not good enough for them, but their hearts went out from him to other things. Thomas Sheppard, 1605-1649.

Verse 12. *So I gave them up.* The word give up suggests the idea of a divorce, whereby a husband sends away a capricious wife, and commands her to live by herself...Transferred to God, it teaches us nothing else than that God withdraws his protecting and guiding hand from the people, and leaves them to themselves; so that he ceases to chasten and defend them, but, on the other hand, suffers them to become hardened and to perish. Venema.

Verse 12. *So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts,* etc. A man may be given up to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the soul may be saved, but to be given up to sin is a thousand times worse, because that is the fruit of divine anger, in order to the damnation of the soul; here God wounds like an enemy and like a cruel one, and we may boldly say, God never punished any man or woman with this spiritual judgment in kindness and love. John Shower (1657-1715), in "The Day of Grace."

Verse 12. *I gave them up unto their own hearts' lusts.* O dreadful word! The same will the Spirit do upon our rejecting or resisting of his leading. He may long strive, but he will "not always strive," Ge 6:3. If the person led shall once begin to struggle with him that leads him, and shall refuse to follow his guidance, what is then to be done, but to leave him to himself? Continued, rooted, allowed resistance to the Spirit, makes him so to cast off a person as to
lead him no more... Let it be your great and constant care and endeavour to get the Spirit's leading continued to you. You have it; pray keep it. Can it be well with a Christian, when this is suspended or withdrawn from him? How does he wander and bewilder himself, when the Spirit does not guide him! How backward is he to good, when the Spirit does not bend and incline him thereunto! How unable to go, when the Spirit does not uphold him! What vile lusts and passions rule him, when the Spirit does not put forth his holy and gracious government over him! O, it is of infinite concern to all that belong to God, to preserve and secure to themselves the Spirit's leading! Take a good man without this, and he is like a ship without a pilot, a blind man without a guide, a poor child that has none to sustain it, the rude multitude that have none to keep them in any order. What a sad difference is there in the same person, as to what he is when the Spirit leads him, and as to what he is when the Spirit leaves him!

OBJECTION.—"But does the Spirit at any time do this to God's people? Does he ever suspend and withdraw his guidance from persons who once lived under it?"

ANSWER.—Yes; too often. It is what he usually does, when his leadings are not followed. This is a thing that grieves him; and when he is grieved he departs, withholds, and recalls his former gracious influences, though not totally and finally; yet for a time and in such a degree. As a guide, that is to conduct the traveller; if this traveller shall refuse to follow him, or shall give unkind usage to him, what does the guide then do? Why, he receded, and leaves him to shift for himself. It is thus in the case in hand: if we comply with the Spirit, in his motions, and use him tenderly, he will hold on in his leading of us; but if otherwise, he will concern himself no more about us. O, take heed how you carry yourself towards him: not only upon ingenuousness, it is base to be unkind to our Guide, (Hast thou not procured this unto thyself, in that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, when he led thee by the way? Jer 2:17,)but also upon the account of self love: for "as we behave ourselves to him, so he will behave himself to us:" "Ita nos tractat, ut a nobis tractatur." Thomas Jacombe (1622-1687), in "Morning Exercises."

Verse 12. I gave them up...and they walked in their own counsels. That was to give them up to a spirit of division, to a spirit of discontent, to a spirit of envy, and jealousy, to a spirit of ambition, of self seeking and emulation, and so to a spirit of distraction and confusion, and so to ruin and destruction. Such, and no better, is the issue, when God gives a people up to their own counsels; then they soon become a very chaos, and run themselves into a ruinous heap. As good have no counsel from man, as none but man's. Joseph Caryl.
Verse 12. God calls upon Israel to hear and obey him, they will not: *But my people would not hearken to my voice; and Israel would none of me.* What was the result of their refusal? *So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.* God doth not testify his anger for their contempt of him be sending plague, or flames, or wild beasts among them. He doth not say, Well, since they thus slight my authority, I will be avenged on them to purpose; I will give them up to the sword, or famine, or racking diseases, or greedy devouring lions, which would have been sad and grievous; but he executes on them a far more sad and grievous judgment, when he saith, *So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels.* God's leaving one soul to one lust, (One's soul to one's lust?) is far worse than leaving him to all the lions in the world. Alas! it will tear the soul worse than a lion can do the body, and rend it in pieces, when there is none to deliver it. God's giving them up to their own wills, that they walked in their own counsels, is in effect a giving them up to eternal wrath and woe. *George Swinnock.*

Verse 12. God moves everything on his ordinary providence according to their particular natures, God moves everything ordinarily according to the nature he finds it in. Had we stood in innocency, we had been moved according to that originally righteous nature; but since our fall we are moved according to that nature introduced into us with the expulsion of the other. Our first corruption was our own act, not God's work; we owe our creation to God, our corruption to ourselves. Now since God will govern his creature, I do not see how it can be otherwise, than according to the present nature of the creature, unless God be pleased to alter that nature. God forces no man against his nature; he doth not force the will in conversion, but graciously and powerfully inclines it. He doth never force nor incline the will to sin, but leaves it to the corrupt habits it hath settled in itself: *So I gave them up unto their own hearts' lust: and they walked in their own counsels;* counsels of their own framing, not of God's. He moves the will, which is *sponte mala*, according to its own nature and counsels. As a man flings several things out of his hand, which are of several figures, some spherical, tetragons, cylinders, conics, some round and some square, though the motion be from the agent, yet the variety of their motions is from their own figure and frame; and if any will hold his hand upon a ball in its motion, regularly it will move according to its nature and figure; and a man by casting a bowl out of his hand, is the cause of the motion, but the bad bias is the cause of its irregular motion. The power of action is from God, but the viciousness of that action from our own nature. As when a clock or watch hath some fault in any of the wheels, the man that winds it up, or putting his hand upon the wheels moves them, he is the cause of the motion, but it is the flaw in it, a deficiency
of something, is the cause of its erroneous motion; that error was not from the person that made it, or the person that winds it up, and sets it on going, but from some other cause; yet till it be mended it will not go otherwise, so long as it is set upon motion. Our motion is from God,—Ac 17:28, In him we move,—but not the disorder of that motion. It is the fulness of a man's stomach at sea is the cause of his sickness, and not the pilot's government of the ship. God doth not infuse the lust, to excite it, though he doth present the object about which the lust is exercised. God delivered up Christ to the Jews, he presented him to them, but never commanded them to crucify him, nor infused that malice into them, nor quickened it; but he, seeing such a frame, withdrew his restraining grace, and left them to the conduct of their own vitiated wills. All the corruption in the world ariseth from lust in us, not from the objects which God in his providence presents to us: 2Pe 1:4, The corruption that is in the world through lust. Stephen Charnock.

**Verse 13.** Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, etc. God sometimes doth not mind his children when they cry, that they may hereby take occasion to remember how oft he hath cried and they have not minded him. Doth not the Lord cry out to his people of duty and they do not hear him? Doth he not complain here of this neglect, not only as a dishonour, but as a grief unto him? No marvel then if God let his people cry out of misery, and doth not hear them. The Lord shuts his ear that we might consider how we have shut our ears; yea, he shuts his ears that he may open ours. We are moved to hear and answer the call and command of God, though we find that he doth not hear nor answer our call and cry. If the Lord should always be swift to hear us, how slow should we be in hearing him, and while we have our desires, forget most of our duties. Abraham Wright.

**Verse 13.** Oh that my people had hearkened, etc. God speaks as if he were comforted when he is but heard, or as if we comforted him when we hear him. God beseecheth us, and speaks entreaties to us, that his counsels and commands may be heard: Oh that my people had hearkened unto me. The Lord tells them indeed it would have proved their consolation (Ps 81:14): I should soon have subdued their enemies, and turned my hand against their adversaries. Yet while he speaks so pathetically, he seems to include his own consolation in it as well as theirs. Oh that my people had hearkened unto me: it would have been good for them, and it would have given high content to myself. Joseph Caryl.

**Verse 13.** Oh that my people had hearkened unto me, etc. There is to us a deep mysteriousness in all this; but the desire of God for our salvation and right moral state, is here most obviously manifested: and let us proceed on that which is obvious, not on that which is obscure. Thomas Chalmers.
Verse 13. *Walked in my ways.* None are found in the ways of God, but those who have hearkened to his words. *W. Wilson.*

Verse 14. *Turned my hand.* God expresseth the utter overthrow of the enemies of his people, but by the turning of a hand: if God do but turn his hand, they are all gone presently, soon subdued. If he do but touch the might, the pomp, the greatness, the riches and the power of all those in the world that are opposers of his church, presently they fall to the ground: a touch from the hand of God will end our wars. *Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 16. *Honey out of the rock.* The rock spiritually and mystically designs Christ, the Rock of salvation, 1Co 10:4; the honey out of the rock, the fulness of grace in him, and the blessings of it, the sure mercies of David, and the precious promises of the everlasting covenant; and the gospel, which is sweeter than the honey or the honeycomb, and with these such are filled and satisfied who hearken to Christ and walk in his ways; for, as the whole of what is here said shows what Israel lost by disobedience, it clearly suggests what such enjoy who hear and obey. *John Gill.*

Verse 16. *Honey out of the rock.* God extracts honey out of the rock—the sweetest springs and pleasures from the hardness of afflictions; from mount Calvary and the cross, the blessings that give greatest delight; whereas the world makes from the fountains of pleasure stones and rocks of torment. *Thomas Le Blanc.*

Verse 16. *Honey out of the rock.* Most travellers who have visited Palestine in summer have had their attention directed to the abundance of honey, which the bees of the land have stored up in the hollows of trees and in crevices of the rock. In localities where the bare rocks of the desert alone break the sameness of the scene, and all around is suggestive of desolation and death, the traveller has God's care of his chosen people vividly brought to mind, as he sees the honey which the bees had treasured up beyond his reach, trickling in shining drops down the face of the rock. *John Duns.*

Verse 16. When once a people or a person are accepted of God, he spares no cost, nor thinks anything too costly for them. *He would have fed them also with the finest of the wheat: and with honey out of the rock should I have satisfied thee.* I would not have fed thee with wheat only, that's good; but with the finest wheat, that's the best. We put in the margin, *with the fat of wheat;* they should not have had the bran, but the flour, and the finest of the flour; they should have had not only honey, but honey out of the rock, which, as naturalists observe, is the best and purest honey. Surely God cannot think anything of this world too
good for his people, who hath not thought the next world too good for them; certainly God cannot think any of these outward enjoyments too good for his people, who hath not thought his Son too good for his people; that's the apostle's argument, Ro 8:32: *He that spared not his own Son, but delivered him up for us all, how shall he not with him also freely give us all things?* even the best of outward good things, when he seeth it good for us. *Joseph Caryl.*

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**HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER**

**Verse 1.** Congregational singing should be general, hearty, joyful. The reasons for this, and the benefits of it.

**Verses 1-3.**

1. Praise should be sincere. It can come from the people of God only.

2. It should be constant: they should praise God at all times.

3. It should be special. There should be seasons of special praise.
   
   (a) Appointed by God, as Sabbaths and solemn feasts.
   
   (b) Demanded by providence on occasion of special deliverances and special mercies.

4. It should be public: "sing aloud:" "bring hither," etc. *G. R.*

**Verse 4.** The rule of ordinances and worship; pleas for going beyond it; instances in various churches; the sin and danger of such will worship.

**Verse 5.** What there is in the language of the world which is unintelligible to the sons of God.

**Verse 6.** The emancipation of believers. Law work is burdensome, servile, never completed, unrewarded, more and more irksome. Only the Lord can deliver us from this slavish toil, and he does it by grace and by power. We do well to remember the time of our liberation, exhibit gratitude for it, and live consistently with it.

**Verse 7.**
1. Answered prayers,—bonds of gratitude.

2. Former testing times,—warning memories.

3. The present a time for new answers as it is also for fresh tests.

**Verse 7.** Waters of Meribah. The various test points of the believer's life.

**Verses 8-10.**

1. A compassionate Father, calling to his child: *O my people, and I will testify unto thee: O Israel, if thou wilt hearken unto me.*

2. A jealous sovereign, laying down his law: *There shall no strange god be in thee.*

3. An all sufficient Friend, challenging confidence: *I am the Lord thy God: open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it.* Richard Cecil. 1748-1810.

**Verses 8, 11, 13.** The command, the disobedience, the regret.

**Verses 11, 12.**

1. The sin of Israel. They would not hearken. The mouth is opened in attentive hearing: *open thy mouth wide; but* my people, etc. Their sin was greatly aggravated

   1. By what God had done for them.
   2. By the gods they had preferred to him.
   2. The punishment.

   1. Its greatness: *I gave them up*, etc.
   2. Its justice: *They would none of me.* G. R.

**Verses 8, 11, 13.** The command, the disobedience, the regret.

**Verse 13.** The excellent estate of an obedient believer.

1. Enemies subdued.
2. Enjoyments perpetuated.
3. Abundance possessed.

**Verses 13-14.** The sin and loss of the backslider.

Verse 16.

1. Spiritual dainties.
2. By whom provided.
3. To whom given.
4. With what result—"satisfied."
Psalm 82

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher
Other Works

TITLE AND SUBJECT. A Psalm of Asaph. This poet of the temple here acts as a preacher to the court and to the magistracy. Men who do one thing well are generally equal to another; he who writes good verse is not unlikely to be able to preach. What preaching it would have been had Milton entered the pulpit, or had Virgil been an apostle.

Asaph's sermon before the judges is now before us. He speaks very plainly, and his song is rather characterised by strength than by sweetness. We have here a clear proof that all psalms and hymns need not be direct expressions of praise to God; we may, according to the example of this psalm, admonish one another in our songs. Asaph no doubt saw around him much bribery and corruption, and while David punished it with the sword, he resolved to scourge it with a prophetic psalm. In so doing, the sweet singer was not forsaking his profession as a musician for the Lord, but rather was practically carrying it out in another department. He was praising God when he rebuked the sin which dishonoured him, and if he was not making music, he was hushing discord when he bade rulers dispense justice with impartiality.

DIVISION. The Psalm is a whole and needs no formal division.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. God standeth in the congregation of the mighty. He is the overlooker, who, from his own point of view, sees all that is done by the great ones of the earth. When they sit in state he stands over them, ready to deal with them if they pervert judgment. Judges shall be judged, and to justices justice shall be meted out. Our village squires and country magistrates would do well to remember this. Some of them had need go to school to Asaph till they have mastered this psalm. Their harsh decisions and strange judgments are made in the presence of him who will surely visit them for every unseemly act, for he has no respect unto the person of any, and is the champion of the poor and needy. A higher authority will criticise the decision of petty sessions, and even the judgments of our most impartial judges will be revised by the High Court of heaven. He judgeth among the gods. They are gods to other men, but he is GOD to them. He lends them his name, and this is their authority for acting as judges, but they must take care that they do not misuse the power entrusted to them, for the Judge of judges is in session among them. Our puisne judges are but puny judges, and their brethren who administer common law will one day be tried by the common law. This great truth is, upon the whole, well regarded among us in these times, but it was not so in the earlier days of English history,
when Jeffries, and such as he, were an insult to the name of justice. Oriental judges, even now, are frequently, if not generally, amenable to bribes, and in past ages it was very hard to find a ruler who had any notion of justice apart from his own arbitrary will. Such plain teaching as this psalm contains was needful indeed, and he was a bold good man who, in such courtly phrases, delivered his own soul.

Verse 2. *How long will ye judge unjustly and accept the persons of the wicked?* It is indirectly stated that the magistrates had been unjust and corrupt. They not only excused the wicked, but even decided in their favour against the righteous. A little of this is too much, a short time too long. Some suitors could get their claims settled at once, and in their own favour, while others were wearing out their lives by waiting for an audience, or were robbed by legal process because their opponents had the judge's ear: how long were such things to be perpetuated? Would they never remember the Great Judge, and renounce their wickedness? This verse is so grandly stern that one is tempted to say, "Surely an Elijah is here." Selah. This gives the offenders pause for consideration and confession.

Verse 3. *Defend the poor and fatherless.* Cease to do evil, learn to do well. Look not to the interests of the wealthy whose hands proffer you bribes, but protect the rights of the needy, and especially uphold the claims of orphans whose property too often becomes a prey. Do not hunt down the peasant for gathering a few sticks, and allow the gentlemanly swindler to break through the meshes of the law. Do justice to the afflicted and needy. Even they can claim from you as judge no more than justice; your pity for their circumstances must not make you hold the scales unfairly: but if you give them no more than justice, at least be sure that you give them that to the full. Suffer not the afflicted to be further afflicted by enduring injustice, and let not the needy long stand in need of an equitable hearing.

Verse 4. *Deliver the poor and needy: rid them out of the hand of the wicked.* Break the nets of the man catchers, the legal toils, the bonds, the securities, with which cunning men capture and continue to hold in bondage the poor and the embarrassed. It is a brave thing when a judge can liberate a victim like a fly from the spider's web, and a horrible case when magistrate and plunderer are in league. Law has too often been an instrument for vengeance in the hand of unscrupulous men, an instrument as deadly as poison or the dagger. It is for the judge to prevent such villainy.

Verse 5. *They know not, neither will they understand.* A wretched plight for a nation to be in when its justices know no justice, and its judges are devoid of
judgment. Neither to know his duty nor to wish to know it is rather the mark of an incorrigible criminal than of a magistrate, yet such a stigma was justly set upon the rulers of Israel. They walk on in darkness. They are as reckless as they are ignorant. Being both ignorant and wicked they yet dare to pursue a path in which knowledge and righteousness are essential: they go on without hesitation, forgetful of the responsibilities in which they are involved, and the punishment which they are incurring. All the foundations of the earth are out of course. When the dispensers of law have dispensed with justice, settlements are unsettled, society is unhinged, the whole fabric of the nation is shaken. When injustice is committed in due course of law the world is indeed out of course. When "Justices' justice" becomes a byword it is time that justice dealt with justices. Surely it would be well that certain of "the great unpaid" should be paid off, when day after day their judgments show that they have no judgment. When peasants may be horsewhipped by farmers with impunity, and a pretty bird is thought more precious than poor men, the foundations of the earth are indeed sinking like rotten piles unable to bear up the structures built upon them. Thank God we have, as an almost invariable rule, incorruptible judges; may it always be so. Even our lesser magistrates are, in general, most worthy men; for which we ought to be grateful to God evermore.

Verse 6. *I have said, ye are gods.* The greatest honour was thus put upon them; they were delegated gods, clothed for a while with a little of that authority by which the Lord judges among the sons of men. And all of you are children of the Most High. This was their *ex-officio* character, not their moral or spiritual relationship. There must be some government among men, and as angels are not sent to dispense it, God allows men to rule over men, and endorses their office, so far at least that the prostitution of it becomes an insult to his own prerogatives. Magistrates would have no right to condemn the guilty if God had not sanctioned the establishment of government, the administration of law, and the execution of sentences. Here the Spirit speaks most honourably of these offices, even when it censures the officers; and thereby teaches us to render honour to whom honour is due, honour to the office even if we award censure to the officer bearer.

Verse 7. *But ye shall die like men.* What sarcasm it seems! Great as the office made the men, they were still but men, and must die. To every judge this verse is a *memento mori!* He must leave the bench to stand at the bar, and on the way must put off the ermine to put on the shroud. And fall like one of the princes. Who were usually the first to die: for battle, sedition, and luxury, made greater havoc among the great than among any others. Even as princes have often been cut off by sudden and violent deaths, so should the judges be who forget to do
justice. Men usually respect the office of a judge, and do not conspire to slay
him, as they do to kill princes and kings; but injustice withdraws this
protection, and puts the unjust magistrate in personal danger. How quickly
death unrobes the great. What a leveller he is. He is no advocate for liberty, but
in promoting equality and fraternity he is a masterly democrat. Great men die
as common men do. As their blood is the same, so the stroke which lets out
their life produces the same pains and throes. No places are too high for death's
arrows: he brings down his birds from the tallest trees. It is time that all men
considered this.

Verse 8. Arise, O God, and judge the earth. Come thou Judge of all mankind,
put the bad judges to thy bar and end their corruption and baseness. Here is the
world's true hope of rescue from the fangs of tyranny. For thou shalt inherit all
nations. The time will come when all races of men shall own their God, and
accept him as their king. There is one who is "King by right divine,"and he is
even now on his way. The last days shall see him enthroned, and all
unrighteous potentates broken like potter's vessels by his potent sceptre. The
second advent is still earth's brightest hope. Come quickly, even so, come, Lord
Jesus.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Asaph, who has written so much in the previous Psalms of the
coming of Christ in the flesh, now speaks of his second coming to judgment.
Josephus Maria Thomasius. 1649-1713.

Verse 1. God standeth. He is said to stand, because of his immutability, his
power, his abiding presence, and also because of his promptness in act, to
decide for the right, and to help the poor, as he did S. Stephen. But one
commentator draws a yet deeper lesson from the word stand. He reminds us
that it is for the judge to sit, and for the litigants or accused to stand; as it is
written, Moses sat to judge the people: and the people stood by Moses from the
morning until the evening. Ex 18:13. It is then a solemn warning for judges to
remember, that whatever cause is before them is God's cause, since right and
wrong are at stake in it, and that by acquitting the guilty, or condemning the
innocent, they pass sentence against God himself. Albertus Magnus, Le Blanc,
and Agellius, quoted by Neale and Littledale.

Verse 1. God standeth in the congregation of the mighty, or, of God. These
words are exegetical, and help to illustrate what he had said before: God
standeth in the congregation of God. What is that? Why he judgeth as supreme
amongst the judges of the world. He stands not as a cipher, or a bare spectator, but he himself makes one amongst them.

1. He judgeth actively amongst them. We look upon men, and think the judgment is theirs, but it is God that exerciseth judgment amongst them.

2. Passively, he is so in the midst of these earthly gods, that if they do unjustly he will execute justice on them, and judge the judges of the world; for though they be great, yet there is a greater than they, to whom they must shortly give an account. *Thomas Hall.* 1659-60.

**Verse 1.** *In the congregation.* Rulers must understand that they are not placed over stocks and stones, nor over swine and dogs, but over the congregation of God: they must therefore be afraid of acting against God himself when they act unjustly. *Martin Luther.*

**Verse 2.** *And accept the persons of the wicked.* The last clause exemplifies one of the most peculiar Hebrew idioms. The combination usually rendered *respect persons* in the English Bible, and applied to judicial partiality, means literally to *take* (or *take up*) *faces.* Some suppose this to mean the raising of the countenance, or causing to look up from dejection. But the highest philological authorities are now agreed, that the primary idea is that of accepting one man's face or person rather than another's, the precise form of expression, though obscure, being probably derived from the practice of admitting suitors to confer with governors or rulers, face to face, a privilege which can sometimes only be obtained by bribes, especially, though not exclusively, in oriental courts. *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

**Verse 3.** It is said of Francis the First, of France, that when a woman kneeled to him to beg justice, he bade her stand up; for, said he, Woman, it is justice that I owe thee, and justice thou shalt have; if thou beg anything of me, let it be mercy. A happy place and people surely, where justice (as it seemeth), was not extorted, but dropt as kindly as honey from the comb; where there was no sale of offices, no exchanging of fees, no subtleties of delay, no trucking for expedition, no making snares of petty and penal statutes: where Justice had scales in her hand, not to weigh gold, but equity: where judges and magistrates were as Noah's ark, to take in weary doves, and as the horns of the altar, for oppressed innocency to betake himself unto; where lawyers, advocates, pleaders, did not call evil good, or good evil, bitter sweet, etc., where plaintiffs and accusers did not inform or persecute through malice, envy, or for advantage; where subordinate officers durst not help potent delinquents out of the briars, nor suffer poor men, tempest tossed in law, to languish in their
business within ken of harbour for want of giving a sop to Cerberus, or sacrificing to the great Diana of expedition; where those setting dogs, such as base, promoting informers, were not countenanced, and severely punished upon any false, unjust, or malicious information. To close up all, where the magistrate owed justice to the people, and paid it; where the people begged for mercy and had it. William Price. 1642.

Verses 3-4. The touchstone of magistrates' justice is in the causes and cases of the poor, fatherless, afflicted, and needy, who are not able to attend long their suits of law, have no friends nor money to deal for them; to whom, therefore, the mighty should be eyes to direct them, and a staff to their weakness, to support and help them in their right. David Dickson.

Verse 5. They know not, neither will they understand, etc. Every judge must have in him (as Baldus actually said) two kinds of salt; the first is sal scientiae, that he may know his duty; the second is sal conscientiae, that he may do his duty. Such as fail in the first, are censured here with a nescierunt, and non intellexerunt; such as fall in the second, are branded here with an ambulant in tenebris. The dangers upon this neglect of these duties are two: the one concerning the whole commonwealth, All the foundations of the earth are out of course; the other especially touching the private persons of the judges, at the seventh verse, Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes, and after death comes judgment, Ps 82:8: Arise, O God, judge the earth. Almighty God "standeth in the congregation of princes, and is a judge among gods; "he sits Chief Justice in every session and assize, to mark what matters pass, and how they pass, ready to judge those righteously, who judge others unjustly, "giving wrong judgment, and accepting the persons of the wicked." Ps 67:4 pros to krithrion tou yeou. Thus I have made the way plain before you; God infinitely rich in mercy grant, that both I in speaking, and you in hearing, may walk therein (as the blessed Apostle phraseth it, Ga 2:14) "with a right foot." They know not, neither will they understand. That is, they neither know God, who made them gods; nor yet understand his law, which is a lantern to their feet, and a light to their paths. Or, as Placidus Parmensis upon the place,—They neither consider how they that be called gods, as commissioners and ministers of God, ought to judge others; nor yet remember how they shall be judged themselves at the last day, when "all the foundations of the world shall be moved, "and God himself shall "arise to judge the earth." Or, they be so corrupt and abominable, that they will neither learn what is their office from others, nor yet understand it by themselves. Or briefly, to give that gloss (which fits best I think the text, I am sure the time), Nescierunt quid facti, non intellexerunt quid juris; they were both ignorant in the matter of fact, as not searching out the
cause; and ignorant in the matter of law, sitting (as Paul said of Ananias) to give judgment according to the law, and yet commanding that which is contrary to the law. The first concerns a good deal the jury, the second a great deal the judges; in both are condemned, as the nurses of all confusions in a commonwealth, ignorantia simplex, and affectata; simple ignorance, when as they be so shallow that they cannot; affected ignorance, when as they be so deep, that they will not understand what is right and reason. John Boys, in "The Judge's Charge," 1618.

Verse 6. Ye are gods, etc. It is, of course, to civil governors, especially those entrusted with the administration of justice, that the prophet addresses this stern admonition. He calls them "the gods, "and "the sons of the Most High." To the people of Israel this kind of appellation would not seem over bold: for it was applied to judges in well known texts of the Law of Moses. Thus, in the code of civil statutes delivered at Sinai, it is said. Thou shalt not revile the gods, nor curse the ruler of thy people. Ex 22:28. Nor is that the only instance of the kind. In two other passages of the same code (Ex 21:6 22:8-9), the word which our translators have rendered "the judges" is in the Hebrew, "the gods, "or "God." Since the ordinary Hebrew word for God (Elohim) is almost always used in the plural form, it is hard to say whether it ought to be rendered in these passages in the singular or plural. The meaning is the same either way. It is a matter of indifference, for example, whether the law in Ex 21:6, be rendered thus, His (the bondman's) master shall bring him to the gods; or with the Septuagint, his master shall bring him to the judgment seat of God. (prosto krithrion tou Teou). In either case the terms used are plainly meant to imply that the Majesty of God is present in the place of judgment. As it is said of Solomon that he sat on the throne of the LORD as King, 1Ch 29:23, so it may be said of every magistrate that he sits in God's seat. God has put upon him a portion of his own dominion and authority; and has ordained that he is to be obeyed, not for wrath's sake only, but for conscience sake. The civil magistrate, in discharging his high function, may justly claim to govern with a divine right. No one needs to be told that this old doctrine of the divine right of rulers has been woefully abused. Sycophantic divines have often made of it a flatteringunction for the care of princes; teaching them that they owed no obedience to the laws; that they were responsible to none but God for their administration; that any attempt on the part of the people to curb their tyranny, or to depose them from their seats when milder measures failed, was rebellion against God whose Viceregents they were. Even now, the same doctrine occasionally makes itself heard from the pulpit and the press; and thus men attempt to subject the consciences of the people to the caprices of tyrants. Let it be carefully observed that the harp of Asaph lends no sanction to this "right divine of kings to govern
wrong." If the prophet testifies that princes are gods, he includes in the honour the humblest magistrate. The elders administering justice in the gate of Bethlehem, though their town be little among the thousands of Judah, sit in God's seat as truly as King Solomon on his ivory throne in the porch of judgment at Jerusalem. The common saying that "the divine right of kings is the divine right of constables," is a rough way of expressing a Bible truth. Let this be borne in mind, and no one will allege Scripture in defence of royal claims to indefeasible and irresponsible authority, or claim for such authority the sanction of divine right. But while care ought to be taken to guard the divine right of civil government from abuse, the right itself is not to be forgotten. The state is an ordinance of God, having, like the family, its foundations in the very constitution of human nature. The officers of the state, whether supreme or subordinate, have a divine right to administer justice in the community over which Providence has placed them. They who resort to the civil magistrate for judgment, resort to the judgment seat of God; just as they who resort to the Ministry of the Word resort to the Great Prophet of the Church. Unless the magistrate had received a commission from God, he could not lawfully bear the sword. To take the life of an unarmed fellow man, without a commission from the Most High warranting the act, would be to commit murder. William Binnie.

Verse 6. In his Lex Rex, Rutherford argues from this psalm that judges are not the creatures of kings, to execute their pleasure, and do not derive their power from the monarch, but are authorized by God himself as much as the king, and are therefore bound to execute justice whether the monarch desires it or no.

Verse 6. I have said, ye are gods. Princes and judges are gods (Elohim), on the ground that unto them the word of God came (Joh 10:35), constituting them such. Even here, where God is about to pass sentence on them, he begins with recognizing their divinely appointed dignity on which they presumed, as if giving them absolute power to do as they pleased, right or wrong; forgetting that high office has its duties as well as its dignities. Sonship is closely allied to kingship and judgeship. These combined dignities, which by all others have been abused, shall be realized in all their grandest ideal by the coming King, Judge, and Son of the Most High (Ps 2:6-7,10-12.) A. R. Fausset.

Verse 6. I have said, ye are gods. As parasites in base flattery and compliance with their pride, have vainly called some of them so, and as some princes have most wickedly and blasphemously affected to be called, yea to be adored, as gods, (God will take highest vengeance upon all those who take his name upon them, or submit to it when given them), so God himself hath put his own name upon magistrates, to mind them of their duty, or for a twofold end: First, that
being called gods, they should judge and rule as God doth, or with a mind like God, free from the mixture of a private or passionate spirit, and filled with a love to, and a delight in, impartial judgment and righteousness. Secondly, that being called gods, all men might learn their duty, freely to submit to them and duly to honour them; seeing any dishonour done to them reflects upon God whose name they bear. Joseph Caryl.

Verse 6. Gods. It is not Jah or Jehovah, a name of essence, but Eloah or Elohim, a name of office that is given them. Thomas Gataker.

Verses 6-7. Ye are gods; there he considered their pomp and dignity: But ye shall die like men; there he minds their end, that with the change of his note they might also change countenance. He tells them their honour, but withal their lot. In power, wealth, train, titles, friends, they differ from others; in death they differ not from others. They are cold when winter comes, withered with age, weak with sickness, and melt away with death, as the meanest: all to ashes. All flesh is as grass, and all the glory of man as the flower, 1Pe 1:24: the glory, that is, the best of it, but a flower. No great difference, the flower shows fairer, the grass stands longer, one scythe cuts down both. Beasts fat and lean, fed in one pasture, killed in one slaughter. The prince in his lofty palace, the beggar in his lowly cottage, have double difference, local and ceremonial height and lowness; yet meet at the grave, and are mingled in ashes. We walk in this world as a man in a field of snow; all the way appears smooth, yet cannot we be sure of any step. All are like actors on a stage, some have one part and some another, death is still busy amongst us; here drops one of the players, we bury him with sorrow, and to our scene again: then falls another, yea all, one after another, till death be left upon the stage. Death is that damp which puts out all the dim lights of vanity. Yet man is easier to believe that all the world shall die, than to suspect himself. Thomas Adams.

Verse 7. Ye shall die like men, etc. Even you which glisten like angels, whom all the world admires, and sues and bows to, which are called honourable, mighty and gracious lords, I will tell you to what your honour shall come: first, ye shall wax old like others, then ye shall fall sick, like others, then ye shall die like others, then ye shall be buried like others, then ye shall be consumed like others, then ye shall be judged like others, even like the beggars which cry at your gates: one sickens, the other sickens; one dies, the other dies; one rots, the other rots: look in the grave, and shew me which was Dives and which was Lazarus. This is some comfort to the poor, that once he shall be like the rich; one day he shall be as wealthy, and as glorious as a king: one hour of death will make all alike; they which crowed over others, and looked down upon them
like oaks, others shall walk upon them like worms, and they shall be gone as if they had never been. *Henry Smith.*

**Verse 7.** *Ye shall die like men, and fall like one of the princes.* The meditation of death would pull down the plumes of pride; thou art but dust animated; shall dust and ashes be proud? Thou hast a grassy body, and shall shortly be mowed down: *I have said, ye are gods;* but lest they should grow proud, he adds a corrective: *ye shall die like men;* ye are dying gods. *Thomas Watson.*

**Verse 7.** *And fall like one of the princes.* Tyrants seldom go to their graves in peace. Most of the Caesars fell by the hands of the people, *q.d.* If you be like tyrants in sin, expect to be like them in punishment; as I cast them out of their thrones for their insolence and violence, so will I cast you out, and you shall fall like one of these tyrannical princes. *Thomas Hall.*

**Verse 7.**

1. Ye shall fall from the highest pinnacle of honour and reputation. The place of magistracy, which knoweth you now, will know you no more. One of the ancients, standing by Caesars tomb, crieth out, *Ubi nunc pulchritudo Caesaris? quo abiit magnificentia ejus?* Where is now the beauty; what is become of the magnificence; where are the armies now; where the honours, the triumphs, the trophies of Caesar? All was gone when Caesar was gone. You honours and your worships, your power, and your places, all die with you, if not before you.

2. Ye fall from your greatest treasures and possessions. As ye brought nothing into the world, so it is certain ye shall carry nothing out of the world. 1Ti 6:7. Saladin, the mighty monarch of the east, is gone, and hath carried no more along with him than ye see—*i.e.,* a shirt hung up for that purpose—said the priest that went before the bier.

3. Ye fall from all your friends and relations; when ye die, they that were near and dear to you will leave you. *George Swinnock.*

**Verse 7.** *Impressiveness* is a leading characteristic of the "death" or "fall" of "princes:" such incidents, from a variety of causes, are most striking. But can the same remark be commonly made respecting the decease of the children of poverty? Regard being had to the startling effect which the demise of the potentate is calculated to produce,—has the departure of the peasant, for example, in itself, the same tendency to beget solemnity and awe, so that, even under this point of view, the peasant might be justly affirmed to *fall like one of the princes* Indeed, if you think of the outward circumstances attending *his* last
moments; and then, immediately afterwards, of those which belong to the close of the life of the dweller in regal or stately halls, there would seem to be hardly any ground here for instituting the slightest comparison: but I would have you to associate the man, as he lies on the eve of dissolution, not with others, his superiors in rank, in a similar case, but with himself, when, in the full vigour of existence, he walked to and fro, and performed his own humble but laborious share of this world's business; and, as you subsequently mark how the great Destroyer has crushed all his energies, and left but a corpse behind, you will surely admit that there is as wide a difference between the individual as he was and as he is, as there can possibly be between the scenes at the death beds, respectively, of princes and of the poor. Yes, and as impressive a difference too; so that you have only to allow the exhibition of the striking change to have its legitimate effect upon the mind, and then, so far as that effect will be concerned, you may declare of the rural labourer, that "he has fallen like one of the princes;" "seeing that he has given a lesson every whit as awakening and as emphatic in its admonitions as could the other. Hugh B. Moffatt, 1861.

Verses 7-8. Your day is coming! The saints are raising the loud cry of Ps 82:8, inviting Messiah, the true God, the Son of the Most High (Joh 10:34), the Mighty One, the Judge and Ruler, to arise and take his inheritance, for he is the heir of all things, and to be the true Othniel, Ehud, Shamgar, Barak, Gideon, Tola, Jair, Jephthah, Samson, and Samuel, who will judge, or govern and rule, a mismanaged earth. We sing this song of Zion in his ears, urging him to come quickly; and we sing it to one another in joyful hope, while the foundations of earth seem out of course, because here we find Messiah the true Judge of a misgoverned world. Andrew A. Bonar.

Verse 8. Arise, O God. A metaphor taken from the common gesture of judges, whose usual manner is to sit while they are hearing of cases; to arise and stand up when they come to give sentence. Thomas Gataker.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The sovereignty of God over the most powerful and exalted. How that sovereignty reveals itself, and what we may expect from it.

Verse 1. The Lord's presence in cabinets and senates.

Verse 2. A common sin. Regard for the persons of men often influences our judgment of their opinions, virtues, vices, and general bearing; this involves injustice to others, as well as deep injury to the flattered.
Verse 3. A plea for orphans.

Verse 5.

1. The characters of wicked princes.

(a) Ignorance: They know not.
(b) Wilful blindness: Neither will they, etc.
(c) Unrestrained perverseness: They walk on, etc.

2. The consequences to others: All the foundations, etc.

(a) Of personal security.
(b) Of social comfort.
(c) Of commercial prosperity.
(d) Of national tranquillity.
(e) Of religious liberty; all are out of course. G. R.


Verse 6. Ye are gods. The passage in the Old Testament which involves the doctrine of the divinity of Christ. J. P. Lange.

Verse 8.

1. The invocation: Arise, etc.
2. The prediction: For thou shalt, etc.—G. R.
Psalm 83

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher
Other Works

TITLE. A Psalm or Song of Asaph. This is the last occasion upon which we shall meet with this eloquent writer. The patriotic poet sings again of wars and dangers imminent, but it is no godless song of a thoughtless nation entering upon war with a light heart. Asaph the seer is well aware of the serious dangers arising from the powerful confederate nations, but his soul in faith stays itself upon Jehovah, while as a poet preacher he excites his countrymen to prayer by means of this sacred lyric. The Asaph who penned this song was in all probability the person referred to in 2Ch 20:14, for the internal evidence referring the subject of the Psalm to the times of Jehoshaphat is overwhelming. The division in the camp of the confederate peoples in the wilderness of Tekoa not only broke up their league, but led to a mutual slaughter, which crippled the power of some of the nations for many years after. They thought to destroy Israel and destroyed each other.

DIVISION. An appeal to God in a general manner fills Ps 83:1-4; and then the psalmist enters into details of the league, Ps 83:5-8. This leads to an earnest entreaty for the overthrow of the enemy, Ps 83:9-15, with an expression of desire that God's glory may be promoted thereby.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. Keep not thou silence, O God. Man is clamorous, be not thou speechless. He rails and reviles, wilt not thou reply? On word of thine can deliver thy people; therefore, O Lord, break thy quiet and let thy voice be heard. Hold not thy peace, and be not still, O God. Here the appeal is to EL., the Mighty One. He is entreated to act and speak, because his nation suffers and is in great jeopardy. How entirely the psalmist looks to God; he asks not for "a leader bold and brave," or for any form of human force, but casts his burden upon the Lord, being well assured that his eternal power and Godhead could meet every difficulty of the case.

Verse 2. For, lo, thine enemies make a tumult. They are by no means sparing of their words, they are like a hungry pack of dogs, all giving tongue at once. So sure are they of devouring thy people that they already shout over the feast. And they that hate thee have lifted up the head. Confident of conquest, they carry themselves proudly and exalt themselves as if their anticipated victories were already obtained. These enemies of Israel were also God's enemies, and are here described as such by way of adding intensity to the argument of the intercession. The adversaries of the church are usually a noisy and a boastful
crew. Their pride is a brass which always sounds, a cymbal which is ever tinkling.

Verse 3. They have taken crafty counsel against thy people. Whatever we may do, our enemies use their wits and lay their heads together; in united conclave they discourse upon the demands and plans of the campaign, using much treachery and serpentine cunning in arranging their schemes. Malice is cold blooded enough to plot with deliberation; and pride, though it be never wise, is often allied with craft. And consulted against thy hidden ones. Hidden away from all harm are the Lord's chosen; their enemies think not so, but hope to smite them; they might as well attempt to destroy the angels before the throne of God.

Verse 4. They have said, Come, and let us cut them off from being a nation. Easier said than done. Yet it shows how thorough going are the foes of the church. Theirs was the policy of extermination. They laid the axe at the root of the matter. Rome has always loved this method of warfare, and hence she has gloated over the massacre of Bartholomew, and the murders of the Inquisition. That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. They would blot them out of history as well as out of existence. Evil is intolerant of good. If Israel would let Edom alone yet Edom cannot be quiet, but seeks like its ancestor to kill the chosen of the Lord. Men would be glad to cast the church out of the world because it rebukes them, and is thus a standing menace to their sinful peace.

Verse 5. For they have consulted together with one consent. They are hearty and unanimous in their designs. They seem to have but one heart, and that a fierce one, against the chosen people and their God. They are confederate against thee. At the Lord himself they aim through the sides of his saints. They make a covenant, and ratify it with blood, resolutely banding themselves together to war with the Mighty God.

Verse 6. The tabernacles of Edom. Nearest of kin, yet first in enmity. Their sire despised the birthright, and they despise the possessors of it. Leaving their rock built mansions for the tents of war, the Edomites invaded the land of Israel. And the Ishmaelites. A persecuting spirit ran in their blood, they perpetuated the old grudge between the child of the bondwoman and the son of the freewoman. Of Moab. Born of incest, but yet a near kinsman, the feud of Moab against Israel was very bitter. Little could righteous Lot have dreamed that his unhallowed seed would be such unrelenting enemies of his uncle Abraham's posterity. And the Hagarenes—perhaps descendants of Hagar by a second husband. Whoever they may have been, they cast their power into the wrong scale, and with all
their might sought the ruin of Israel. Children of Hagar, and all others who dwell around Mount Sinai, which is in Arabia, are of the seed which gendereth to bondage, and hence they hate the seed according to promise.

Verse 7. Gebal was probably a near neighbour of Edom, though there was a Gebal in the region of Tyre and Sidon. And Ammon, and Amalek. Two other hereditary foes of Israel, fierce and remorseless as ravening wolves. In the roll of infamy let these names remain detestably immortalised. How thick they stand. Their name is legion, for they are many. Alas, poor Israel, how art thou to stand against such a Bloody League? Nor is this all. Here comes another tribe of ancient foemen, the Philistines; who once blinded Samson, and captured the ark of the Lord; and here are old allies become new enemies; the builders of the temple conspiring to pull it down, even the inhabitants of Tyre. These last were mercenaries who cared not at whose bidding they drew sword, so long as they carved something for their own advantage. True religion has had its quarrel with merchants and craftsmen, and because it has interfered with their gains, they have conspired against it.

Verse 8. Assur is also joined with them. It was then a rising power, anxious for growth, and it thus early distinguished itself for evil. What a motley group they were; a league against Israel is always attractive, and gathers whole nations within its bonds. Herod and Pilate are friends, if Jesus is to be crucified. Romanism and Ritualism make common cause against the gospel. They have holpen the children of Lot. All these have come to the aid of Moab and Ammon, which two nations were among the fiercest in the conspiracy. There were ten to one against Israel, and yet she overcame all her enemies. Her name is not blotted out; but many, nay, most of her adversaries are now a name only, their power and their excellence are alike gone. Selah. There was good reason for a pause when the nation was in such jeopardy: and yet it needs faith to make a pause, for unbelief is always in a hurry.

Verse 9. Do unto them as unto the Midianites. Faith delights to light upon precedents, and quote them before the Lord; in the present instance, Asaph found a very appropriate one, for the nations in both cases were very much the same, and the plight of the Israelites very similar. Yet Midian perished, and the psalmist trusted that Israel's present foes would meet with the like overthrow from the hand of the Lord. As to Sisera, as to Jabin, at the brook of Kison. The hosts were swept away by the suddenly swollen torrent, and utterly perished; which was a second instance of divine vengeance upon confederated enemies of Israel. When God wills it, a brook can be as deadly as a sea. Kishon was as terrible to Jabin as was the Red Sea to Pharaoh. How easily can the Lord smite
the enemies of his people. God of Gideon and of Barak, wilt thou not again avenge thine heritage of their bloodthirsty foes?

Verse 10. Which perished at Endor. There was the centre of the carnage, where the heaps of the slain lay thickest. They became as dung for the earth, manuring it with man; making the earth, like Saturn, feed on its own children. War is cruel, but in this case avengements were most just,—those who would not give Israel a place above ground are themselves denied a hiding place under the ground; they counted God's people to be as dung, and they became dung themselves. Asaph would have the same fate befell other enemies of Israel; and his prayer was a prophecy, for so it happened to them.

Verse 11. Make their nobles like Oreb, and like Zeeb. Smite the great ones as well as the common ruck. Suffer not the ringleaders to escape. As Oreb fell at the rock and Zeeb at the winepress, so do thou mete out vengeance to Zion's foes wherever thou mayest overtake them. They boastfully compare themselves to ravens and wolves; let them receive the fate which is due to such wild beasts. Yea, all their princes as Zebah, and as Zalmunnua. These were captured and slain by Gideon, despite their claiming to have been anointed to the kingdom. Zebah became a sacrifice, and Zalmunna was sent to those shadowy images from which his name is derived. The psalmist seeing these four culprits hanging in history upon a lofty gallows, earnestly asks that others of a like character may, for truth and righteousness' sake, share their fate.

Verse 12. Who said, Let us take to ourselves the houses of God in possession. Viewing the temple, and also the dwellings of the tribes, as all belonging to God, these greedy plunderers determined to push out the inhabitants, slay them, and become themselves landlords and tenants of the whole. These were large words and dark designs, but God could bring them all to nothing. It is in vain for men to say "Let us take," if God does not give. He who robs God's house will find that he has a property reeking with a curse; it will plague him and his seed for ever. "Will a man rob God?" Let him try it, and he will find it hot and heavy work.

Verse 13. O my God, make them like a wheel; like a rolling thing which cannot rest, but is made to move with every breath. Let them have no quiet. May their minds eternally revolve and never come to peace. Blow them away like thistle down, as the stubble before the wind. Scatter them, chase them, drive them to destruction. Every patriot prays thus against the enemies of his country, he would be no better than a traitor if he did not.
Verse 14. As the fire burneth a wood. Long years have strewn the ground with deep deposits of leaves; these being dried in the sun are very apt to take fire, and when they do so the burning in terrific. The underwood and the ferns blaze, the bushes crackle, the great trees kindle and to their very tops are wrapped in fire, while the ground is all red as a furnace. In this way, O Lord, mete out destruction to thy foes, and bring all of them to an end. The flame setteth the mountains on fire. Up the hill sides the hanging woods glow like a great sacrifice, and the forests on the mountain's crown smoke towards heaven. Even thus, O Lord, do thou conspicuously and terribly overthrow the enemies of thine Israel.

Verse 15. So persecute them with thy tempest, and make them afraid with thy storm. The Lord will follow up his enemies, alarm them, and chase them till they are put to a hopeless rout. He did this, according to the prayer of the present Psalm, for his servant Jehoshaphat; and in like manner will he come to the rescue of any or all of his chosen.

Verse 16. Fill their faces with shame; that they may seek thy name, O Lord. Shame has often weaned men from their idols, and set them upon seeking the Lord. If this was not the happy result, in the present instance, with the Lord's enemies, yet it would be so with his people who were so prone to err. They would be humbled by his mercy, and ashamed of themselves because of his grace; and then they would with sincerity return to the earnest worship of Jehovah their God, who had delivered them.

Verse 17. Where no good result followed, and the men remained as fierce and obstinate as ever, justice was invoked to carry out the capital sentence. Let them be confounded and troubled for ever; yea, let them be put to shame, and perish. What else could be done with them? It was better that they perished than that Israel should be rooted up. What a terrible doom it will be to the enemies of God to be "confounded, and troubled for ever, "to see all their schemes and hopes defeated, and their bodies and souls full of anguish without end: from such a shameful perishing may our souls be delivered.

Verse 18. That men may know that thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH, art the most high over all the earth. Hearing of the Lord's marvellous deeds in defeating such a numerous confederacy, the very heathen would be compelled to acknowledge the greatness of Jehovah. We read in 2Ch 20:30, that the fear of God was on all the neighbouring kingdoms when they heard that Jehovah fought against the enemies of Israel. Jehovah is essentially the Most High. He who is self existent is infinitely above all creatures, all the earth is but his footstool. The godless race of man disregards this, and yet at times the
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wonderful works of the Lord compel the most unwilling to adore his majesty. Thus has this soul stirring lyric risen from the words of complaint to those of adoration; let us in our worship always seek to do the same. National trouble called out the nation's poet laureate, and well did he discourse at once of her sorrows, and prayers, and hopes. Sacred literature thus owes much to sorrow and distress. How enriching is the hand of adversity! The following attempt to verify the Psalm, and tune it to gospel purposes, is submitted with great diffidence.

O God, be thou no longer still,
Thy foes are leagued against thy law;
Make bare thine arm on Zion's hill,
Great Captain of our Holy War.

As Amalek and Ishmael
Had war for ever with thy seed,
So all the hosts of Rome and hell
Against the Son their armies led.

Though they are agreed in nought beside,
Against thy truth they all unite;
They rave against the Crucified,
And hate the gospel's growing might.

By Kishon's brook all Jabin's band
At thy rebuke were swept away;
O Lord, display thy mighty hand,
A single stroke shall win the day.

Come, rushing wind, the stubble chase!
Come, sacred fire, the forests burn!
Come, Lord, with all thy conquering grace,
Rebellious hearts to Jesus turn!

That men may know at once that thou,
Jehovah, lovest truth right well;
And that thy church shall never bow
Before the boastful gates of hell.
TITLE. "A Song or Psalm." When the two words (Shir, Mizmor,) occur together, the meaning seems to be, a lyric poem appointed to be sung. John Jebb.

Title. This Psalm, according to the title, was composed by Asaph. In accordance with this, we read, in 1Ch 20:14, that the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jehasiel, of the sons of Asaph, in the midst of the assembly. This Jehasiel is probably the author of the Psalm. Our Psalm is a true picture of the state of feeling which prevailed throughout the people during the danger under Jehoshaphat. According to the history of Chronicles, they praised God at that time, in the midst of their danger, with loud voice, 2Ch 20:19; and here in the title, which is an appendage to that of Psalm 48, the Psalm is called a song of praise; and it is such in reality, although it bears the form of a prayer,—a song of triumph sung before the victory,—no contest, no doubt, the distress is simply committed to God. The mention of the Amalekites among the enemies of Israel, in Ps 83:7, renders it impossible to come down to times later than that of Jehoshaphat. The last remains of the Amalekites were, according to 1Ch 4:43, rooted out by the Simeonites, under Hezekiah. From that time they disappear altogether from history. Ewald's assertion that Amalek stands here "only as a name of infamy applied to parties well known at the time, "is to be considered as a miserable shift. The Psalm must have been composed previous to the extension of the empire of the Assyrians over Western Asia. For the Assyrians named last, in the eighth verse, appear here in the very extraordinary character of an ally of the sons of Lot. E. W. Hengstenberg.

Verse 1. Keep not thou silence, O God. In Scripture there are three reasons why the Lord keeps silence when his people are in danger, and sits still when there is most need to give help and assistance. One is, the Lord doth it to try their faith, as we clearly see, Mt 8:24, where it is said that our Lord Christ was asleep: There arose a great tempest in the sea, insomuch that the ship was covered with the waves: but he was asleep. And his disciples came to him, and awoke him, saying, Lord, save us: we perish. We read more fully in Mark 4 and Luke 8, he left them, when the ship was covered with waves, and they were rowing for their lives, their Lord was asleep the while, and he said to them, Why are ye so fearful? how is it that you have no faith? And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm. Truly, the Lord will not suffer his people to be overwhelmed, that is certain, but he will suffer them to come very near, that the waves cover them, and fear and horror shall cover their souls, and all to try their faith. . . . I find another reason in Isaiah 59, and that is, the Lord doth keep silence in the midst of the troubles of his people, to try men's uprightness of heart. For if God
should always appear for his cause, God and his cause should have many favourites and friends; but sometimes God leaves his cause, and leaves his people, and leaves his gospel, and his ordinances to the wide world, to see who will plead for it and stick to it. . . . There is a third reason: God, as it were, keeps silence in the midst of the greatest troubles, that he may, as it were, gather the wicked into one faggot, into one bundle, that they may be destroyed together. There is a great deal of ado to "gather the saints" in this world; and truly there is some ado to gather the wicked. So God withdraws himself from his people, yet he hath a hook within their hearts, he holds them up secretly by his Spirit, that they shall not leave him; yet the world shall not see but that God hath quite left them, and all their ordinances and his gospel and everything; and there the wicked come together and insult, whereby God may come upon them at once, and destroy them, as we find ten nations in the Psalm. And so in Genesis God stirs up the nations against Abraham and his posterity, and there are ten nations that God promised to cut off before Abraham at once, the Perizzites, and the Jebusites, and the Canaanites, etc. So God heaps them together, and burns them like stubble. Those that burn stubble have rakes, and they gather it to heaps, and then they fire it. This is the way of God's keeping silence among his people, and sitting still in the midst of their miseries, thus God gathers their enemies in heaps as stubble, that he may burn them together.


Verse 1. Keep not thou silence, etc. The Hebrew words have great emphasis, and express the main causes of silence—closing the mouth, deafness of the ears, and a tranquility maintained to such an extent as to reject all disquietude.

The first clause, let not thy mouth be closed, and thy tongue cleave to the roof of thy mouth, immovably, properly denotes, from the inherent force of the word jqs whose root means to fix to and compact firmly, what is fastened with lime or daubed with plaster...

The second clause, be not thou deaf, properly pertains to the ears, as Mic 7:16, Their ears shall be deaf. The third, be not still, suggests the course of the thoughts of the mind when it is brought to a state of clear tranquility, all cares and commotions being laid aside. The word (Heb.) is properly to settle, to settle down, as when the disturbed dregs of liquor settle down and seek the bottom, whence it is applied to the mind when freed from a great fermentation of cares and the sediments of anxieties and bitterness, a mind serene, clear, and refined...

Let us now see what the poet had in mind when he poured out these prayers, or what he wished to indicate. He hinted, that the people were reduced to these
earnest entreaties, because unless God should speedily bring help to them, it might seem that Jehovah, the God of Israel, is like the false gods, a sort of deity, either mute, or deaf, or at his ease. Hermann Venema.

Verse 1. Is the Lord silent? Then be not thou silent; but cry unto him till he breaks the silence. Starke, in Lange's Bibelwerk.

Verse 1. The reference to tumult in the following verse gives force to the earnest appeal in this. Amidst all the tumult of gathering foes, he earnestly calls on God to break his silence, and to speak to them in wrath. W. Wilson.

Verse 2. For, lo. The prayer begins with the particle lo, which has not only the force of arousing God, but also give the idea of something present, with the view of pointing out the opportune moment for God to gird himself for the work. Hermann Venema.

Verse 2. Thine enemies make a tumult. The whole world is but like an army, a brigade of men (as it were) under a general; and God is the Lord of Hosts, that is the Lord of his armies: now when there is a tumult in an army, they complain to the officers, to the general especially; and he must come and suppress it. Therefore, saith he, Thou Lord of hosts, thou art general of the world; lo, there is a tumult in the world, a mutiny. Walter Cradock.

Verse 3. Thy hidden ones. This representation of God's people is worthy our notice. It may be taken two ways. First, As referring to their safety. We often hide only to preserve. This is the meaning of the word in the parable, with regard to the discovery of the treasure in the field; "which, when a man hath found, he hideth it." His aim is not to conceal but to secure; and the cause is put for the effect. Thus God's people are hidden. He hid Noah in the Ark, and the waters that drowned the world could not find him. When his judgments were coming over the land, "Come, my people," saith he, "enter thou into thy chambers, and shut thy doors about thee: hide thee also for a little season, until the indignation be overpast." Hence the promise, "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues." Hence the confidence expressed by David, "In the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me upon a rock." The Saviour could say, "In the shadow of his hand hath he hid me." And, "All the saints are in his hand." They are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. For he himself is their "refuge, their "hiding place." They are his hidden ones.

Secondly. As intimating their concealment. This is not absolute. But it holds in various respects and degrees. It is true with regard to the nature of the spiritual
Our life, says the Apostle, is hid with Christ in God; and that he refers to its invisibleness, rather than to its safety, is obvious from the words following: "When he who is our life shall appear, we also shall appear with him in glory." ...The heart of the believer only knows his own bitterness; and a stranger intermeddleth not with his joy. The manna on which he feeds is hidden manna. And no one knoweth the new name in the white stone given him, but the receiver... They are sometimes hidden by persecution. For though this does not prevent their being Christians, it hinders them from appearing as such; especially by excluding them from their social and public assemblies... They are sometimes hidden by the obscurity of their stations. Not many of the wise, and mighty, and noble are called: but when they are called they are also exhibited. They are like cities set on hills, which cannot be hid. A little religion in high life goes a great way, and is much talked of, because it is so often a strange thing. But God has chosen the poor of this world; and they are often rich in faith. Yet how is their moral wealth to be known? How few opportunities have they for religious display or exertion! There may be the principle of benevolence, where there is no ability to give. And the Lord seeth the heart, but men can only judge from actions. Many who are great in the sight of the Lord are living in cottages and hovels; and are scarcely known, unless to a few neighbours equally obscure. They are sometimes hidden by their disposition. They are reserved, and shrink back from notice. They are timid and self diffident. This restrains them in religious conversation, especially as it regards their own experience. This keeps them from making a profession of religion, and joining a Christian church. Joseph of Arimathaea was a disciple of Jesus; but secretly, for fear of the Jews. And Nicodemus, from the same cause, came to Jesus by night. They had difficulties in their situations, from which others were free. They ought to have overcome them; and so they did at last, but it was a day of small things with them at first. Others are circumstanced and tried in a similar way: and we must be patient towards all men. They are sometimes hidden by their infirmities. We would not plead for sin; but grace may be found along with many imperfections. The possessors have what is essential to religion in them; but not everything that is ornamental, and lovely, and of good report. The same will also apply to errors. Here, again, we are far from undervaluing divine truth. It is a good thing that the heart be established with grace. But it is impossible for us to say how much ignorance, and how many mistakes, may be found, even in the Israelites indeed, in whom there is no guile. William Jay.

Verse 3. The less the world knows thee, the better for thee; thou mayest be satisfied with this one thing—God knows them that are his: not lost, although hidden is the symbol of a Christian. Frisch, in Lange's Bibelwerk.
Verse 4. That the name of Israel may be no more in remembrance. This desperate and dreadful scheme, and wretched design of theirs, took not effect; but, on the contrary, the several nations hereafter mentioned, who were in this conspiracy, are no more, and have not had a name in the world for many hundreds of years; whilst the Jews are still a people and are preserved, in order to be called and saved, as all Israel will be in the latter day, Ro 11:25. So Diocletian thought to have rooted the Christian name out of the world; but in vain. John Gill.

Verse 5. For they have consulted together with one consent. Margin, as in Hebrew, heart. There is no division in their counsels on this subject. They have one desire—one purpose—in regard to the matter. Pilate and Herod were made friends together against Christ (Lu 23:12); and the world divided and hostile in other matters, has been habitually united in its opposition to Christ and to a pure and spiritual religion. Albert Barnes.

Verse 5. They have consulted together with one consent, etc. To push on this unholy war, they lay their heads together, and their horns, and their hearts too. Fas est et ab hoste doceri. Do the enemies of the church act with one consent to destroy it? Are the kings of the earth of one mind to give their power and honour to the beast? And shall not the church's friends be unanimous in serving her interests? If Herod and Pilate are made friends that they may join in crucifying Christ, sure Paul and Barnabas, Paul and Peter, will soon be made friends, that they may join in preaching Christ. Matthew Henry.

Verse 5. They have consulted together, etc. Though there may fall out a private grudge betwixt such as are wicked, yet they will all agree and unite against the saints: if two greyhounds are snarling at a bone, yet put up a hare between them, and they will leave the bone, and follow after the hare; so, if wicked men have private differences amongst themselves, yet if the godly be near them, they will leave snarling at one another, and will pursue after the godly. Thomas Watson.

Verse 5. They are confederate against thee. "They have made a covenant, "vtyrkytyrk berith yachrits, "they have cut the covenant sacrifice." They have slain an animal, divided him in twain, and passed between the pieces of the victim; and have thus bound themselves to accomplish their purpose. Adam Clarke.

Verse 6. The tabernacle of Edom, etc. The prophet having entered his suit and complaint in general, he comes to particulars, and tells God who they are that had done this. God might say, Who are these that conspire against me, and
against my people, and hidden ones? Lord, saith the prophet, I will tell thee who they are... He names some ten nations that joined together against one poor Israel. It is a thing you should observe, that when the people of God are conspired against, God rests not in general complaints, but he will know who they are. As I told you, He is the Lord of Hosts, the great general. When there is mutiny the general asks, what officer, or what corporal, or what sergeant, or who did begin the mutiny? and it is a fearful thing when the poor persecuted saint shall bring thy name as a persecutor before the God of heaven. When a poor saint shall go home and say, There is a confederacy in London, a conspiracy against the saints of God; and when a poor saint shall say, such a magistrate, such a minister, such a man in such a street, such a woman set her husband against the saints, and against thine ordinances; it is a fearful thing. Therefore I remember a blessed woman, if it be true that is reported of her in the Book of Martyrs, that when the wicked abused her, and reproached her, and oppressed her, she would say no more but this, "I will go home and tell my Father" give over, or else I will bring your names before God, and tell him: there was all, and that was enough; for he would presently take it up. A man may better bear a pound of dirt on his feet, than a grain of dirt in his eye; the saints are "the apple of God's eye." Walter Cradock.

Verse 6. Hagarenes. These people dwelt on the east of Gilead; and were nearly destroyed in the days of Saul, being totally expelled from their country, 1Ch 5:10, but afterwards recovered some strength and consequence. Adam Clarke.

Verses 6-8. It may be observed that these were on all sides of the land of Israel; the Edomites, Ishmaelites, and Amalekites, were on the south; the Moabites, Ammonites, and Hagarenes, were on the east; the Assyrians on the north; and the Philistines, Gebalites, and Tyrians, on the west; so that Israel was surrounded on all sides with enemies, as the Lord's people are troubled on every side, 2Ch 4:8; and so the Gog and Magog army, of which some understand this, will encompass the camp of the saints about, and the beloved city, Re 20:9. John Gill.

Verses 6-8. The enemies of Israel, as enumerated by the psalmist, fall into four main divisions: 1st, those most nearly connected with the Israelites themselves by the ties of blood relationship, the descendants of Esau and Ishmael; 2ndly, the two branches of the descendants of Lot along with their respective Arabian auxiliaries, viz., the Moabites, who had engaged the assistance of the Hagarenes, and the Ammonites, who had gathered round their standard the Giblites and Amalekites; 3rdly, the inhabitants of the coast, the Philistines and Tyrians; 4thly, the more distant Assyrians. Of all these the bitterest in their hostility to Israel were those who were the most nearly allied to them in
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blood,—the Edomites. Their hostility was founded upon hatred. From their conduct to the Israelites through a long course of years it would seem as though in them were lastingly perpetuated that older hatred wherewith their forefather Essau had hated Jacob because of Isaac's blessing. And though they had once and again succeeded, according to the prophecy, in breaking Israel's yoke from off their neck, yet they never could wrest away from Israel the possession of the birthright, and with it of the promises, which their ancestors had profanely despised; from Israel, not from Edom, was the Redeemer of the world to spring, and in Israel were all the families of the earth to be blessed. The Edomites may accordingly be appropriately viewed as the types of those whom the Church of Christ has ever found her bitterest foes, the sceptics who have refused to acknowledge that redemption through a personal Redeemer, on which, as on a basis, the church is founded, whose intellectual pride is offended by the humbling doctrines of Christianity, and who hate those that hold them for their possession of blessings which they have wilfully neglected; whose human learning has nevertheless all along been subservient on the whole to the edification of the church, in spite of the violence with which they have striven, and for a while, as it should sometimes appear, successfully, to gain the mastery over her by opposing her, and to exercise a temporary dominion. Dwelling themselves in tabernacles, they cannot bear that others, more blessed that they, should have the houses of God in possession: "owning themselves to be astray, and unable to find the way to the truth, they are yet most importunate and imperious that others should come away from the ancient paths, and try to join them, or at least, wander as they are wandering." In conjunction with the Edomites, the psalmist makes mention of the Ishmaelites. And these, as the descendants of the bondwoman, may fitly represent those Jewish opponents of Christianity, still, perhaps, locally, if not generally, formidable, who in their rejection of Christian doctrine have been swayed by the same feelings of intellectual pride as the sceptics of Christian descent; who professing to hold fast to that covenant of Mount Sinai which gendereth to bondage, persecuted, so long as they were able, those born after the Spirit.

In the descendants of Lot and their Arabian auxiliaries, we have the types of a different class of foes. The historical origin of the former marks them as the appropriate representatives of the slaves of sinful lusts; who hate the church not for the humbling tone of her doctrines, but for the standard of holiness which she exacts and for which she is continually witnessing. And experience shews how such persons are wont, in their attacks upon the church, to enlist into their service those who are more wildly, but at the same time more ignorantly, unholy than themselves; how in order, if possible, to uproot those fences and safeguards of the law of holiness on which, having transgressed them, they hate
to look, they appeal to the unbridled passions of the lawless multitude by whom the very existence of the fences had been utterly disregarded. From the enemies of the Church who are animated by feelings of positive hatred we pass to those who act from calculation rather than passion, and whose proceeding are all directed with a view to their own earthly aggrandisement. The Philistines and Tyrians had engaged in the hostile confederacy with the hope of obtaining Israelitish captives, from whom they might reap a profit by selling them abroad as slaves. It does not appear that they regarded the Israelites in themselves with other feelings than those of mere selfish indifference. Both nations had tendered their service to Israel in the days of Israel's prosperity; for the Philistines had probably furnished the Cherethites and Pelethites of David's body guard, and the Tyrians had furnished Solomon with materials and workmen for the building of the temple: both nations were now seeking to enrich themselves at Israel's expense in the days of Israel's adversity. And these then are the fitting types of all who in their varying professions of friendliness or hostility to the Church of God are actuated by the mere mercenary desire of lucre; favouring, and even zealously favouring her interests, when they can procure a good recompense for their services; unhesitatingly combining with her bitterest enemies to vilify and despoil her, whenever the opportunity offers of increasing their worldly substance thereby. The last class of enemies are those of whom Assyria is the type; the worldly potentates, whether ecclesiastical or temporal, papal or imperial, who are unscrupulously ready to employ all means for the ultimate accomplishment of their one object, that of extending and consolidating their dominion. Such potentates seem to represent most truly that determined and resolute selfishness, which, to eyes that are not dazzled by the grandeur of its proportions or the gorgeousness in which it is arrayed, must ever appear as one of the most terrible embodiments of the enmity of the world to God. Pride of intellect and unbelief,—unholiness and lawlessness of life,—covetousness,—worldly ambition,—such are the characteristics of four important classes of those by whom God's church is threatened. *Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

**Verse 7.** Gebal.

1. It is generally supposed to indicate the mountainous tract extending from the Dead Sea southward to Petra, still named *Jebal.* But some of the best writers identify it with No. 2, as mentioned in conjunction with Tyre.

2. A place spoken of in connection with Tyre, Eze 27:9. Most probably the residence of the Giblites, and therefore to the north of Palestine, Jos 13:5. The Giblites were employed by Hiram, king of Tyre, in preparing materials for Solomon's temple, 1Ki 5:18, margin. The Greek name of this place was Byblus.
The town is called Jebeil, and has a population of about six hundred. It is about seventeen miles north of Beyroot. The ancient ruins are very extensive. Immense numbers of granite columns are strewn about in the village and over the surrounding fields. These columns are mostly small, varying from one foot to two feet in diameter. Some of the stones measure nearly twenty feet in length. The citadel is the most remarkable ruin. The port is nearly choked up with sand and ruins. George H. Whitney's "Hand Book of Bible Geography." 1872

Verse 8. Assur also, etc. This determines the date of this Psalm to the latter times of the Jewish kingdom; for the other nations here mentioned had molested them before, but the Assyrians not till towards the end. William Wall, 1645 or 1646-1727-8.

Verse 9. Do unto them as unto the Midianites. That is, dash their heads together, make their policies to cross one another. Walter Cradock.

Verse 9. The brook of Kison. The river Kishon traverses the plain (of Esdraelon) and terminates in the Bay of Acre or Akka. This is the stream regarding which it is written, after Barak and Deborah had gained their victory over Sisera, "The river of Kishon swept them away, that ancient river, the river Kishon. O my soul, thou hast trodden down strength." Although it is now no insignificant stream, yet it needs heavy rains to make it really considerable in magnitude: it is very unequal in size, and seems to be only temporary in its character. At any rate, when Robinson passed its head waters in midsummer, he found the channels all dry, and they had been so for a whole year. On the other hand, in the winter the waters are often exceedingly abundant; particularly in the northern and southern chief tributaries; so that, in 1799, at the time of the French invasion, many of the vanquished Turks perished in the floods which swept down from Deburieh, and which inundated the plain. It was a scene like that described in Judges 5 regarding the fate of Sisera's hosts. Carl Ritter (1779-1859), in "The Comparative Geography of Palestine and the Sinaitic Peninsula." Translated by William L. Gage. 1866.

Verse 10. They became as dung for the earth. The land was enriched or made fertile by their flesh, their blood, and their bones. Albert Barnes.

Verse 10. They became as dung for the earth. In the year 1830, it is estimated that more than a million bushels of "human and inhuman bones" were imported from the continent of Europe into the port of Hull. The neighbourhood of Leipsic, Austerlitz, Waterloo, etc., where the principal battles were fought some fifteen or twenty years before, were swept alike of the bones of the hero,
and the horse which he rode. Thus collected from every quarter, they were shipped to Hull, and thence forwarded to the Yorkshire bone grinders, who, by steam engines and powerful machinery, reduced them to a granulary state. In this condition they were sent chiefly to Doncaster, one of the largest agricultural markets of the country, and were there sold to the farmers to manure their lands. The oily substance gradually evolving as the bone calcines, makes better manure than almost any other substance—particularly human bones. K. Arvine.

Verse 11. The word nobles is placed in antithesis with the names Oreb and Zeeb. The word mykyrg nobles, denotes properly liberal, munificent, and beneficent men, such as princes and potentates ought to be among men, but the names Oreb and Zeeb have the very opposite signification, for the one signifies a raven, the other a wolf. When into such rapacious and truculent beasts their nobles have degenerated, as a just reward the hostile shock shall come upon them. Hermann Venema.

Verse 13. A wheel. What sort of vegetable is this whose stems our muleteers are cutting up and chewing with so much relish? It is a wild artichoke. We can amuse ourselves with it and its behaviour for a while, and may possibly extract something more valuable than the insipid juice of which our men are so fond. You observe than in growing it throws out numerous branches of equal size and length in all directions, forming a sort of sphere or globe a foot or more in diameter. When ripe and dry in autumn, these branches become rigid and light as a feather, the parent stem breaks off at the ground, and the wind carries these vegetable globes whithersoever it pleaseth. At the proper season thousands of them come scudding over the plain rolling, leaping, bounding with vast racket, to the dismay both of the horse and his rider. Once, on the plain north of Hamath, my horse became quite unmanageable among them. They charged down upon us on the wings of the wind, which broke them from their moorings, and sent them careening over the desert in countless numbers. Our excellent native itinerant, A—F—, had a similar encounter with them on the eastern desert beyond the Hauran, and his horse was so terrified that he was obliged to alight and lead him. I have long suspected that this wild artichoke is the gulgal, which, in Ps 83:13, is rendered wheel, and in Isa 17:13, a rolling thing. Evidently our translators knew not what to call it. The first passage reads thus: O my God, make them like a wheel; second, Rebuke them, and they shall flee far off, and shall be chased as the chaff of the mountains before the wind, and like a rolling thing—gulgal—before the whirlwind. Now, from the nature of the parallelism, the gulgal cannot be a wheel, but something corresponding to chaff. It must also be something that does not fly like the chaff, but in a
striking manner rolls before the wind. The signification of *gulgal* in Hebrew and its equivalent in other Semitic dialects, requires this, and this rolling artichoke meets the case most emphatically, and especially when it rolls before the whirlwind. In the encounter referred to north of Hamath, my eyes were half blinded with the stubble and chaff which filled the air; but it was the extraordinary behaviour of this *rolling thing* that riveted my attention. Hundreds of these globes, all bounding like gazelles in one direction over the desert, would suddenly wheel short round at the bidding of a counter blast, and dash away with equal speed on their new course. An Arab proverb addresses this "rolling thing" thus: "Ho! akkub, where do you put up tonight?" to which it answers as it flies, "Where the wind puts up." They also derive one of their many forms of cursing from this plant: "May you be whirled, like the akkub, before the wind, until you are caught in the thorns, or plunged into the sea." If this is not the wheel of David, and the *rolling thing* of Isaiah, from which they also borrowed their imprecations upon the wicked, I have seen nothing in the country to suggest the comparison. W. M. Thomson, in "The Land and the Book."

**Verse 13.** Make them like a wheel. That is, cause them to fall into such great calamities that they can find no counsel or remedy for their misfortunes, and that they may run hither and thither like a wheel or a ball, and yet see not where they ought to stop, or whither they ought to escape. Such are the minds of wicked men in calamities, wherever they turn they find no harbour wherein to rest, no certain consolation can they discover. They are tossed with perpetual disquietude; by running hither and thither and seeking various remedies they but weary themselves the more and plunge themselves the more deeply in their woes. This must necessarily happen to those who seek to cure evil with evil. Therefore Isaiah also says, the wicked are like the troubled sea. Mollerus.

**Verse 13.** Like a wheel. Mortals, like cylinders, are rolled hither and thither, oppressed with innumerable ills. *Aurea Carmina.—Pythagoras*  

**Verse 13.** There is no greater evidence against error, than that it is not constant to itself, no greater argument against these pretended great spirits, than that they cannot sit, know not where to fix, are always moving, as if the psalmist's curse had taken hold of them, as if God had made them *like a wheel and as stubble before the wind*, that can sit nowhere, rest at nothing, but turn about from one uncertainty to another. The Holy Spirit is a spirit that will sit still, and be at peace, continue and abide. Mark Frank.

**Verses 13-14.** In imagery both obvious and vivid to every native of the gusty hills and plains of Palestine, though to us comparatively unintelligible, the
Psalmist describes them as driven over the uplands of Gilead like the clouds of chaff blown from the threshing floors; chased away like the spherical masses of dry weeds which course over the plains of Esdraelon and Philistia—flying with the dreadful hurry and confusion of the flames, that rush and leap from tree and hill to hill when the wooded mountains of a tropical country are by chance ignited. *William Smith, in "A Dictionary of the Bible."* 1863.

**Verse 14.** Mountains on fire. Many of the mountains in this country are covered with dense forests. The leaves which fall every autumn accumulate, sometimes for years, until we have a particularly dry summer, when, somehow or other, either by accident or design, they are always set on fire, and burn sometimes for several days. The mountains in one of the States of the neighbouring Republic are on fire at this very moment while I am now writing, and have been burning for more than a week, and we can distinctly see the red glare in the sky above them, although from their great distance, even the tops of the mountains themselves from whence the flames arise are beyond the limits of our horizon. *From "Philip Musgrave: or Memoirs of a Church of England Missionary in the North American Colonies."* 1846.

**Verse 14.** *Fire* has greater force on a *mountain*, where the wind is more powerful, than upon a *wood* situated in a valley. *Honorius Augustodunensis.*

**Verse 14.** Humboldt saw forests on fire in South America and thus describes them. "Several parts of the vast forests which surround the mountain, had taken fire. Reddish flames, half enveloped in clouds of smoke, presented a very grand spectacle. The inhabitants set fire to the forests, to improve the pasturage, and to destroy the shrubs that choke the grass. Enormous conflagrations, too, are often caused by the carelessness of the Indians, who neglect, when they travel, to extinguish the fires by which they have dressed their food."

**Verse 14.** Let us pray the divine aid to break this power and enmity of the natural man; that it may yield unto the word of grace; and let the wood, hay and stubble of all false doctrine perish before the brightness of the face of God. *Edward Walter.* 1854.

**Verse 18.** That men may know that thou, whose name alone is *JEHOVAH*, etc. Early English History informs us, that some bloodthirsty persecutors were marching on a band of Christians. The Christians, seeing them approaching, marched out towards them, and at the top of their voices, shouted, "Hallelujah, hallelujah!" (Praise Jehovah). The name of the Lord being presented, the rage of the persecutors abated. Josephus says, that the Great Alexander, when on his triumphal march, being met near Jerusalem by the Jewish high priest, on whose
mitre was engraved the name of Jehovah, "approached by himself and adored that name," and was disarmed of his hostile intent. There was significance and power in the glorious old name as written by the Jews. But the name of Jesus is now far more mighty in the world than was the name Jehovah in these earlier ages. "The Dictionary of Illustrations," 1872.

Verse 18. JEHOVAH is one of the incommunicable names of God, which signifies his eternal essence. The Jews observe that in God's name Jehovah the Trinity is implied. Je signifies the present tense, ho the preterperfect tense, vah, the future. The Jews also observe that in his name Jehovah all the Hebrew letters are literae quiescentes, that denotes rest, implying that in God and from God is all our rest. Every gracious soul is like Noah's dove, he can find no rest nor satisfaction but in God. God alone is the godly man's ark of rest and safety. Jehovah is the incommunicable name of God, and is never attributed to any but God: Thou, whose name alone is JEHOVAH.

Verse 18. The most high. His being the High and lofty One, notes forth the transcendancy and super excellency of his divine being in himself, and that it is utterly of another kind from creatures, and indeed that it only is truly being. When the Psalmist says, That men may know that thou, whose name alone in JEHOVAH art the MOST HIGH over all the earth, he thereby argues his height from his name, that his name is alone Jehovah, and therefore he is most high, and in that very respect. Now Jehovah is the name of his essence, "I AM," and he is MOST HIGH in respect of such a glorious being as is proper alone unto him. Thomas Goodwin.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The long silence of God, the reasons for it, and our reasons for desiring him to end it.

Verse 3. Thy hidden ones.

1. Hidden as to their new nature, which is an enigma to men.
2. Hidden for protection, as precious things.
3. Hidden, for solace and rest.
4. Hidden, because not yet fully revealed.

Verse 4. The immortality of the church.

Verse 5. The confederacies of evils against the saints.
Verses 13-15. The instability, restlessness and impotence of the wicked; their horror when God deals with them in justice.

Verse 16. A prayer for the Pope and his priests.

Verse 17. The righteous fate of persecutors, and troubleurs.

Verse 18. The Golden Lesson: how taught, to whom, by whom, through whom?

WORK UPON THE EIGHTY-THIRD PSALM

"Expositions and Observations on Psalm LXXXIII., "in "Divine Drops distilled from the Fountain of Holy Scriptures: delivered in several Exercises before Sermons, upon Twenty and Three Texts of Scripture. By that worthy Gospel Preacher, GUALTER CRADOCK, late Preacher at All Hallows Great in London... 1650."
Psalm 84

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher
Other Works

TITLE AND SUBJECT. To the Chief Musician upon Gittith. A Psalm for the sons of Korah. This Psalm well deserved to be committed to the noblest of the sons of song. No music could be too sweet for its theme, or too exquisite in sound to match the beauty of its language. Sweeter than the joy of the wine press, (for that is said to be the meaning of the word rendered upon Gittith), is the joy of the holy assemblies of the Lord's house; not even the favoured children of grace, who are like the sons of Korah, can have a richer subject for song than Zion's sacred festivals. It matters little when this Psalm was written, or by whom; for our part it exhales to us a Davidic perfume, it smells of the mountain heather and the lone places of the wilderness, where King David must have often lodged during his many wars. This sacred ode is one of the choicest of the collection; it has a mild radiance about it, entitling it to be called The Pearl of Psalms. If the twenty-third be the most popular, the one-hundred- and-third the most joyful, the one-hundred-and-nineteenth the most deeply experimental, the fifty-first the most plaintive, this is one of the most sweet of the Psalms of peace. Pilgrimages to the tabernacle were a grand feature of Jewish life. In our country, pilgrimages to the shrine of Thomas of Canterbury, and our Lady of Walsingham, were so general as to affect the entire population, cause the formation of roads, the erection and maintenance of hostelries, and the creation of a special literature; this may help us to understand the influence of pilgrimage upon the ancient Israelites. Families journeyed together, making bands which grew at each halting place; they camped in sunny glades, sang in unison along the roads, toiled together over the hill and through the slough, and as they went along, stored up happy memories which would never be forgotten. One who was debarred the holy company of the pilgrims, and the devout worship of the congregation, would find in this Psalm fit expression for his mournful spirit.

DIVISION. We will make our pauses where the poet or the musician placed them, namely, of the Selahs.

EXPOSITION

Verse 2. My soul longeth, it pines, and faints to meet with the saints in the Lord's house. The desire was deep and insatiable—the very soul of the man was yearning for his God. Yea, even fainteth; as though it could not long hold out, but was exhausted with delay. He had a holy lovesickness upon him, and was wasted with an inward consumption because he was debarred the worship of the Lord in the appointed place. For the courts of the Lord. To stand once again in those areas which were dedicated to holy adoration was the soul longing of the psalmist. True subjects love the courts of their king. My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. It was God himself that he pined for, the only living and true God. His whole nature entered into his longing. Even the clay cold flesh grew warm through the intense action of his fervent spirit. Seldom, indeed, does the flesh incline in the right direction, but in the matter of Sabbath services our weary body sometimes comes to the assistance of our
longing heart, for it desires the physical rest as much as the soul desires the
spiritual repose. The psalmist declared that he could not remain silent in his
desires, but began to cry out for God and his house; he wept, he sighed, he
pleaded for the privilege. Some need to be whipped to church, while here is
David crying for it. He needed no clatter of bells from the belfry to ring him in,
he carried his bell in his own bosom: holy appetite is a better call to worship
than a full chime.

Verse 3. *Yea, the sparrow hath found an house.* He envied the sparrows which
lived around the house of God, and picked up the stray crumbs in the courts
thereof; he only wished that he, too, could frequent the solemn assemblies and
bear away a little of the heavenly food. And the swallow a nest for herself,
where she may lay her young. He envied also the swallows whose nests were
built under the eaves of the priest's houses, who there found a place for their
young, as well as for themselves. We rejoice not only in our personal religious
opportunities, but in the great blessing of taking our children with us to the
sanctuary. The church of God is a house for us and a nest for our little ones.
Even thine altars, O Lord of hosts. To the very altars these free birds drew near,
none could restrain them nor would have wished to do so, and David wished to
come and go as freely as they did. Mark how he repeats the blessed name of
Jehovah of Hosts; he found in it a sweetness which helped him to bear his
inward hunger. Probably David himself was with the host, and, therefore, he
dwelt with emphasis upon the title which taught him that the Lord was in the
tented field as well as within the holy curtains. My King and my God. Here he
utters his loyalty from afar. If he may not tread the courts, yet he loves the
King. If an exile, he is not a rebel. When we cannot occupy a seat in God's
house, he shall have a seat in our memories and a throne in our hearts. The
double "my" is very precious; he lays hold upon his God with both his hands,
as one resolved not to let him go till the favour requested be at length accorded.

Verse 4. *Blessed are they that dwell in thy house.* Those he esteems to be
highly favoured who are constantly engaged in divine worship—the canons
residientiary, yea, the pew openers, the menials who sweep and dust. To come
and go is refreshing, but to abide in the place of prayer must be heaven below.
To be the guests of God, enjoying the hospitalities of heaven, set apart for holy
work, screened from a noisy world, and familiar with sacred things—why this
is surely the choicest heritage a son of man can possess. They will be still
praising thee. So near to God, their very life must be adoration. Surely their
hearts and tongues never cease from magnifying the Lord. We fear David here
drew rather a picture of what should be than of what is; for those occupied
daily with the offices needful for public worship are not always among the
most devout; on the contrary, "the nearer the church the further from God." Yet in a spiritual sense this is most true, for those children of God who in spirit abide even in his house, are also ever full of the praises of God. Communion is the mother of adoration. They fail to praise the Lord who wander far from him, but those who dwell in him are always magnifying him. Selah. In such an occupation as this we might be content to remain for ever. It is worth while to pause and meditate upon the prospect of dwelling with God and praising him throughout eternity.

Verse 5. Blessed is the man whose strength is in thee. Having spoken of the blessedness of those who reside in the house of God, he now speaks of those who are favoured to visit it at appointed seasons, going upon pilgrimage with their devout brethren: he is not, however, indiscriminate in his eulogy, but speaks only of those who heartily attend to the sacred festivals. The blessedness of sacred worship belongs not to half hearted, listless worshippers, but to those who throw all their energies into it. Neither prayer, nor praise, nor the hearing of the word will be pleasant or profitable to persons who have left their hearts behind them. A company of pilgrims who had left their hearts at home would be no better than a caravan of carcasses, quite unfit to blend with living saints in adoring the living God. In whose heart are the ways of them, or far better, in whose heart are thy ways. Those who love the ways of God are blessed. When we have God's ways in our hearts, and our heart in his ways, we are what and where we should be, and hence we shall enjoy the divine approval.

Verse 6. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well. Traversing joyfully the road to the great assembly, the happy pilgrims found refreshment even in the dreariest part of the road. As around a well men meet and converse cheerfully, being refreshed after their journey, so even in the vale of tears, or any other dreary glen, the pilgrims to the skies find sweet solace in brotherly communion and in anticipation of the general assembly above, with its joys unspeakable. Probably there is here a local allusion, which will never now be deciphered, but the general meaning is clear enough. There are joys of pilgrimage which make men forget the discomforts of the road. The rain also filleth the pools. God gives to his people the supplies they need while traversing the roads which he points out for them. Where there were no natural supplies from below, the pilgrims found an abundant compensation in waters from above, and so also shall all the sacramental host of God's elect. Ways, which otherwise would have been deserted from want of accommodation, were made into highways abundantly furnished for the travellers' wants, because the great annual pilgrimages led in that direction; even so, Christian converse and
the joy of united worship makes many duties easy and delightful which else had been difficult and painful.

**Verse 7.** *They go from strength to strength.* So far from being wearied they gather strength as they proceed. Each individual becomes happier, each company becomes more numerous, each holy song more sweet and full. We grow as we advance if heaven be our goal. If we spend our strength in God's ways we shall find it increase. Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God. This was the end of the pilgrim's march, the centre where all met, the delight of all hearts. Not merely to be in the assembly, but to appear before God was the object of each devout Israelite. Would to God it were the sincere desire of all who in these days mingle in our religious gatherings. Unless we realise the presence of God we have done nothing; the mere gathering together is nothing worth.

**Verse 8.** *O Lord God of hosts, hear my prayer.* Give me to go up to thy house, or if I may not do so, yet let my cry be heard. Thou listenest to the united supplications of thy saints, but do not shut out my solitary petition, unworthy though I be. Give ear, O God of Jacob. Though Jehovah of hosts, thou art also the covenant God of solitary pleaders like Jacob; regard thou, then, my plaintive supplication. I wrestle here alone with thee, while the company of thy people have gone on before me to happier scenes, and I beseech thee bless me; for I am resolved to hold thee till thou speak the word of grace into my soul. The repetition of the request for an answer to his prayer denotes his eagerness for a blessing. What a mercy it is that if we cannot gather with the saints, we can still speak to their Master. Selah. A pause was needed after a cry so vehement, a prayer so earnest.

**Verse 9.** *Behold, O God our shield, and look upon the face of thine anointed.* Here we have the nation's prayer for David; and the believer's prayer for the Son of David. Let but the Lord look upon our Lord Jesus, and we shall be shielded from all harm; let him behold the face of his Anointed, and we shall be able to behold his face with joy. We also are anointed by the Lord's grace, and our desire is that he will look upon us with an eye of love in Christ Jesus. Our best prayers when we are in the best place are for our glorious King, and for the enjoyment of his Father's smile.

**Verse 10.** *For a day in thy courts is better than a thousand.* Of course the psalmist means a thousand days spent elsewhere. Under the most favourable circumstances in which earth's pleasures can be enjoyed, they are not comparable by so much as one in a thousand to the delights of the service of God. To feel his love, to rejoice in the person of the anointed Saviour, to survey
the promises and feel the power of the Holy Ghost in applying precious truth to
the soul, is a joy which worldlings cannot understand, but which true believers
are ravished with. Even a glimpse at the love of God is better than ages spent in
the pleasures of sense. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God,
than to dwell in the tents of wickedness. The lowest station in connection with
the Lord's house is better than the highest position among the godless. Only to
wait at his threshold and peep within, so as to see Jesus, is bliss. To bear
burdens and open doors for the Lord is more honour than to reign among the
wicked. Every man has his choice, and this is ours. God's worst is better than
the devil's best. God's doorstep is a happier rest than downy couches within the
pavilions of royal sinners, though we might lie there for a lifetime of luxury.
Note how he calls the tabernacle the house of my God; there's where the
sweetness lies: if Jehovah be our God, his house, his altars, his doorstep, all
become precious to us. We know by experience that where Jesus is within, the
outside of the house is better than the noblest chambers where the Son of God
is not to be found.

Verse 11. For the Lord God is a sun and shield. Pilgrims need both as the
weather may be, for the cold would smite them were it not for the sun, and foes
are apt to waylay the sacred caravan, and would haply destroy it if it were
without a shield. Heavenly pilgrims are not left uncomforit or unprotected.
The pilgrim nation found both sun and shield in that fiery cloudy pillar which
was the symbol of Jehovah's presence, and the Christian still finds both light
and shelter in the Lord his God. A sun for happy days and a shield for
dangerous ones. A sun above, a shield around. A light to show the way and a
shield to ward off its perils. Blessed are they who journey with such a convoy;
the sunny and shady side of life are alike happy to them. The Lord will give
grace and glory. Both in due time, both as needed, both to the full, both with
absolute certainty. The Lord has both grace and glory in infinite abundance;
Jesus is the fulness of both, and, as his chosen people, we shall receive both as
a free gift from the God of our salvation. What more can the Lord give, or we
receive, or desire. No good thing will he withhold from them that walk
uprightly. Grace makes us walk uprightly and this secures every covenant
blessing to us. What a wide promise! Some apparent good may be withheld, but
no real good, no, not one. "All things are yours, and ye are Christ's, and Christ
is God's." God has all good, there is no good apart from him, and there is no
good which he either needs to keep back or will on any account refuse us, if we
are but ready to receive it. We must be upright and neither lean to this or that
form of evil: and this uprightness must be practical,—we must walk in truth and
holiness, then shall we be heirs of all things, and as we come of age all things
shall be in our actual possession; and meanwhile, according to our capacity for
receiving shall be the measure of the divine bestowal. This is true, not of a favoured few, but of all the saints for evermore.

**Verse 12.** O Lord of hosts, blessed is the man that trusteth in thee. Here is the key of the Psalm. The worship is that of faith, and the blessedness is peculiar to believers. No formal worshipper can enter into this secret. A man must know the Lord by the life of real faith, or he can have no true rejoicing in the Lord's worship, his house, his Son, or his ways. Dear reader, how fares it with thy soul?

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**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS**

**TITLE.** Here note, that the sons, that is, the posterity of wicked and rebellious Korah, have an honourable place in God's sacred and solemn service: for to them sundry of David's psalms are commended. . . . Here see the verifying of God's word, for the comfort of all godly children, that the son shall not bear the iniquity of the father, Eze 18:14,17,20, if he see his father's sins and turn from them. *Thomas Pierson (1570-1633), in "David's Heart's Desire."

**Whole Psalm.**

O Lord of hosts, how lovely in mine eyes
The tents where thou dost dwell!
For thine abode my spirit faints and sighs;
The courts I love so well.

My longing soul is weary
Within thy house to be;
This world is waste and dreary,
A desert land to me.

The sparrow, Lord, hath found a sheltered home,
The swallow hath her nest;
She layeth there her young, and though she roam,
Returneth there to rest.

I, to thine altar flying,
Would there for ever be;
My heart and flesh are crying,
O living God, for thee!
How blest are they who in thy house abide!
Thee evermore they praise.
How strong the man whom thou alone dost guide,
Whose heart doth keep thy ways.

A pilgrim and a stranger,
He leaneth on thine arm;
And thou, in time of danger,
Dost shield him from alarm.

From strength to strength through Baca's vale of woe,
They pass along in prayer,
And gushing streams of living water flow,
Dug by their faithful care;

Thy rain is sent from heaven
To fertilise the land,
And wayside grace is given
Till they in Zion stand.

Lord God of hosts, attend unto my prayer!
O Jacob's God, give ear!
Behold, O God, our shield, we through thy care,
Within thy courts appear!

Look thou upon the glory
Of thine Anointed's face;
In him we stand before thee,
To witness of thy grace!

One day with thee excelleth over and over
A thousand days apart;
In thine abode, within thy temple door,
Would stand my watchful heart.

Men tell me of the treasure
Hid in their tents of sin;
I look not there for pleasure,
Nor choose to enter in.

Own then the Lord to be thy Sun, thy Shield—
No good will he withhold;
He giveth grace, and soon shall be revealed
His glory, yet untold.

His mighty name confessing,
Walk thou at peace and free; O Lord, how rich the blessing
Of him who trusts in thee!

—German Choral Music.

**Verse 1. How amiable are thy tabernacles.** What was there in them that appeared so amiable? Perchance, the edifice was famed for the skill and cost bestowed on it? But the temple of extraordinary beauty was not yet constructed. The tabernacle was lowly, more suited to pilgrims than to a great people, and little becoming the king himself. Therefore to the pious there is no need of vast or sumptuous temples to the end that they should love the house of God. *Musculus.*

**Verse 1. How amiable are thy tabernacles.** What made the tabernacle of Moses lovely was not the outside, which was very mean, as the Church of God outwardly is, through persecution, affliction, and poverty; but what was within, having many golden vessels in it, and those typical of things much more precious; moreover, here the priests were to be seen in their robes, doing their duty and service, and, at certain times, the high priest in his rich apparel; here were seen the sacrifices slain and offered, by which the people were taught the nature of sin, the strictness of justice, and the necessity and efficacy of the sacrifice of Christ: here the Levites were heard singing their songs, and blowing their trumpets: but much more amiable are the Church of God and its ordinances in Gospel times, where Christ, the Great High Priest, is seen in the glories of his person, and the fulness of his grace; where Zion's priests, or the ministers of the gospel, stand clothed, being full fraught with salvation, and the tidings of it; where Christ is evidently set forth, as crucified and slain, in the ministry of the word, and the administration of ordinances; here the gospel trumpet is blown, and its joyful sound echoed forth, and songs of love and grace are sung by all believers; besides, what makes these tabernacles still more lovely are, the presence of God here, so that they are no other than the house of God, the gate of heaven; the provisions that are here made, and the company that is here enjoyed. *John Gill.*

**Verse 1. Amiable.** The adjective is rendered by the English versions *amiable,* in the sense of the French *amiable,* lovely. But the usage of the Hebrew word requires it to be understood as meaning *dear,* *beloved,* which is exactly the idea here required by the context. The plural, *dwellings,* has reference to the
subdivisions and appurtenances of the sanctuary, and is applied to the tabernacle in Ps 48:3. Compare Ps 68:35. The divine titles are as usual significant. While one suggests the covenant relation between God and the petitioner, the other makes his sovereignty the ground for a prayer for his protection... *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

**Verse 1. Tabernacles.** By the name of *tabernacles* we are put in mind of the church's peregrination and wandering from one place unto another, until she come unto her own true country. For as tabernacle and tents of war be removed hither and thither, so the Church of God in this life hath no sure and quiet abode, but often is compelled to change her seat. This pilgrimage, whereby indeed every man, as Augustine doth say, is a pilgrim in this world, doth admonish us of sin, which is the cause of this peregrination. For, because of sin, we are cast with our first parents out of Paradise into the land wherein we sojourn. So that we are removed from Jerusalem, that is, from the sight and fruition of peace, into Babylon, that is, into confusion and exile, wherein we wander far and wide. *Nicholas Heminge (Hemminguis) (1513-1600), in "The Faith of the Church Militant."*

**Verses 1-2.** When we cannot express the greatness of a thing in direct terms, we are fain to fly to wonder, and so doth David here, because he cannot express sufficiently how amiable the Tabernacles of the Lord are, he therefore falls to wondering, and helps himself with a question; How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts? But is not David's wondering itself wonderful, that the tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts should be so wonderfully amiable? Is it not a wonder they should be amiable at all? For are not his tabernacles tents of war? and is there anything in war that can be amiable? If he had said: How terrible are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; his wonder had been with some congruity; for the Lord of Hosts is terrible in all his works; but to say, How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts, seems to imply a contradiction; for though they may be amiable, as they are tabernacles, yet they must needs be terrible, as they are Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts; and when this terribleness hath made an abatement in their amiableness, what place will be left for wonder, to give cause to say, How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts? But if he had said, How terrible are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; though it might have been wonderful in the degree, yet it could not be wonderful in the kind: for what wonder is it, if the Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts be terrible? But when he saith, How amiable are thy Tabernacles, O Lord of Hosts; this is not only wonderful in the degree, but in the kind much more. For what can be more wonderful, than that being Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts, they should be amiable, and so amiable as to be wondered at? But is it
Psalm 84

Verse 2. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth, etc. Every amiableness is not so great to make a longing, nor every longing so great to make a fainting; nor every fainting so great to make the soul to faint; Oh, then, consider how great this amiableness is, which makes my soul not only to long, but to faint with longing! And blame me not for fainting, as though it were my own fault for not restraining my longing; for seeing his Tabernacles are of infinite amiableness, they must need work in me an infinite delighting, and that delighting an infinite longing; and what restraint can there be of that which is infinite? No, alas, my fainting is but answerable to my longing, and my longing but answerable to the amiableness. If I had the offer made me, which was made to Christ, to enjoy all the kingdoms of the earth, but with condition to want the Courts of the Lord; this want would bring to my soul a greater grief than that enjoying would give it contentment: for seeing his Tabernacles are so amiable, where He is Lord of Hosts, how amiable must they needs be, where he is Prince of Peace? and Prince of Peace he is in his Courts, though in his camp he be Lord of Hosts. Sir Richard Baker.

Verse 2. My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth. The word hlk (fainteth) signifies to be consumed with longing, as the Latins say, deperire aliquem amore (he is dying of love), that is, he so vehemently loves, and is enflamed with so great a desire to obtain the loved object, that he wastes and pines away unless his wish is gratified. Therefore, an ardent longing is meant, which so torments and burns the mind, that flesh and marrow waste away, so long as it is not permitted to enjoy the thing desired. Mollerus.

Verse 2. soul...heart...flesh. Marking the whole man, with every faculty and affection. The verbs are also very expressive. The first longeth, means literally, "hath grown pale, "as with the intensity of the feeling; the second, fainteth, is more exactly "faileth, "or "is consumed." Job 19:27. J. J. Stewart Perowne.
Verse 2. *Crieth.* The word that is here rendered *crieth,* is from (Heb.), that signifies to shout, shrill, or cry out, as soldiers do at the beginning of a battle, when they cry out, Fall on, fall on, fall on, or when they cry out after a victory, Victory, victory, victory! The Hebrew word notes a strong cry, or to cry as a child cries when it is sadly hungry, for now very whit of the child cries, hands cry, and face cries, and feet cry. *Thomas Brooks.*

Verse 2. *Living God.* Ps 42:2, *My soul thirsteth for God, for the living God,* is the only other place in the Psalms where God is so named. This particular form of expression, *El Chay,* occurs but twice beside in the Bible, Jos 3:10 Ho 1:10. *J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3. *The sparrow hath found an house,* etc. The tender care of God, over the least of his creatures, is here most touchingly alluded to. The Psalmist, while an exile, envies them their privileges. He longs to be nestling, as it were, in the dwelling place of God. The believer finds a perfect home and rest in God's altars; or, rather, in the great truths which they represent. Still, his confidence in God is sweetened and strengthened by the knowledge of his minute, universal, providential care. It becomes his admiring delight. "God fails not, "as one has beautifully said, "to find a house for the most worthless, and a nest for the most restless of birds."" What confidence this should give us! How we should rest! What repose the soul finds that casts itself on the watchful, tender care of him who provides so fully for the need of all his creatures! We know what the expression of "nest" conveys, just as well as that of "a house." Is it not a place of security, a shelter from storm, a covert to hide oneself in, from every evil, a protection from all that can harm, "a place to rest in, to nestle in, to joy in?" But there is one thing in these highly privileged birds which strike us forcibly in our meditations—they knew not him from whom all this kindness flowed—they knew neither his heart nor his hand. They enjoyed the rich provisions of his tender care; he thought of everything for their need, but there was no fellowship between them and the Great Giver. From this, O my soul, thou mayest learn a useful lesson. Never rest satisfied with merely frequenting such places, or with having certain privileges there; but rise, in spirit, and seek and find and enjoy direct communion with the living God, through Jesus Christ our Lord. The heart of David turns to God himself. *My heart and my flesh crieth out for the living God. Things New and Old.*

Verse 3. *The swallow a nest,* etc. The confidence which these birds place in the human race is not a little extraordinary. They not only put themselves, but their offspring in the power of men. I have seen their nests in situations where they were within the reach of one's hand, and where they might have been destroyed in an instant. I have observed them under a doorway, the eaves of a low
cottage, against the wall of a tool shed, on the knocker of a door, and the rafter of a much frequented hay loft. Edward Jesse, in "Gleanings in Natural History." 1856.

Verse 3. Even thine altars. There were two altars; the "brazen altar," and the "golden altar;" to those, no doubt, the psalmist refers. Both were of shittim wood, which sets forth the holy humanity—the perfect manhood, of the Lord Jesus. Incarnation lies at the foundation of all his work for us, and all our blessing in him. The one altar was overlaid with brass, the other with pure gold. The overlaying shadows forth his Godhead, but in distinct aspects. We have the same Jesus in both, but shadowed forth in different circumstances. In the one, humiliation and suffering; in the other, exaltation and glory. Things New and Old.

Verse 3. Thine altars. There is in the original a pathetical, a vehement, a broken expressing, expressed, O thine altars. It is true (says David) thou art here in the wilderness, and I may see thee here, and serve thee here, but O thine altars, O Lord of Hosts, my King and my God. John Donne.

Verse 3. Thine altars is a poetical way of saying, Thy house. It is manifestly a special term, instead of a general. Yet it has been seriously argued, that no birds could or would ever be suffered to build their nests on the altar. Surely this sort of expression, which is hardly a figure, is common enough. A parte apotiori fit denominato. We say, "There goes a sail." What should we think of a man who should argue that a sail cannot go? The altars mean the temple. There was

"no jutty frieze,
Buttress, nor coigne of vantage, but these birds
Had made their pendant bed;"

not to mention that trees grew within the sacred enclosure, where birds might have built their nests. J. J. Stewart Perowne.

Verse 3. A custom, existing among several nations of antiquity, is deemed capable of illustrating the present passage. For birds, whose nests chanced to be built on the temples, or within the limits of them, were not allowed to be driven away, much less to be killed, but found there a secure and undisturbed abode. William Keating Clay.

Verse 4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house; etc. Alas, how happens this? There were tabernacles before, as belonging to a Lord; and courts as belonging to a king, and altars as belonging to a God; and now to be but a house as
belonging to a private man; and so all this great rising to end in a fall? No, my soul, it is no fall, it is an aggregation rather of all the other; for where his tabernacles did but serve to shew his power, his courts but to shew his majesty; his altars but to shew his deity, his house serves to shew them all; for in his house there will still be praising him, and his praise and glory is the sum of all. Or is it that to dwell in God's house is a kind of appropriating him to ourselves, seeing his tabernacles and his courts lie open to strangers, his house open to none but his servants; and seeing in the nearness to God, and conversing with him, consists all true blessedness; therefore Blessed are they that dwell in his house, but how dwell in it? Not to look in sometimes as we pass by, or to stay in it a time, as we do at an inn, but to be constant abiders in it day and night, as to which we have devoted ourselves and bowed our service. Sir Richard Baker.

Verse 4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house. What was this house more to David than another house, save that here he reckoned upon enjoying the Divine Presence? So that here was a heart so naturalized to this presence as to affect an abode in it, and that he might lead his life with God, and dwell with him all his days; he could not be content with giving a visit now and then. And why should this temper of spirit in the clearer light of the gospel be looked upon as an unattainable thing! A lazy despondency, and the mean conceit that it is modest not to aim so high, starve religion, and stifles all truly noble and generous desires. Let this then be the thing designed with you, and constantly pursue and drive the design, that you may get into the disposition of spirit toward God. John Howe.

Verse 4. Blessed are they that dwell in thy house, etc. Blessed indeed, we too may exclaim, and blessed shall they be for ever. They are dwellers, not visitors, in God's house. I will dwell in the house of the Lord for ever. This is true, blessedly true, of all who trust in Jesus now. But though God's children are all priests by birth, as were the sons of Aaron, they are not all, alas! priests by consecration. (See Exodus 29.) Comparatively few know their priestly place at the golden altar. Many of them are doubting as to whether their sins, root and branch, were all consumed outside the camp; and, consequently, such are afraid to come within the court, and as for being assured of their full justification and sanctification in the risen One, they gravely doubt and fear that such blessedness can ever be their happy lot. Hence that state of soul which answers to priestly consecration at the laver, and happy worship at the golden altar, is unknown and unenjoyed. They are not priests by consecration. Our text is plain. They will still be praising thee. Doubts, fears, unsettled questions, all are gone. Such cannot exist in the holy place. All, of course, who are in Christ, must be in God's account where he is; but all who believe in Christ, do not
know and believe that they are in him, as being one with him now. When the state of our souls answers to what is symbolized by the holy place, we can only praise: They that dwell in thy house will be still praising thee. Then we are happily near to God, and have communion with him, in the glorified Christ, through the power of the Holy Ghost. Things New and Old.

Verse 4. They will be still praising thee. How appears it to be true, that they who dwell in God's house will always be praising him, seeing it is but seldom seen that servants be so forward to praise their masters? O my soul! it is not so much the good dispositions of the servants, as the infinite worthiness of the Master that makes them to praise him, for when they see the admirable economy of his government, when they see how sweetly he disposeth all things in weight and measure, when they find him to use them more like children than servants, what heart can be so ungrateful as not to praise him? And seeing by dwelling in God's house, they see these things continually, therefore they that dwell in his house will always be praising him. Sir Richard Baker.

Verse 4. They will be still praising thee. As having hearts full of heaven, and consciences full of comfort. There cannot but be music in the temple of the Holy Ghost. John Trapp.

Verse 4. Still praising. It is not enough to praise him, it must be a praising him still, before it will make a blessedness; and though to praise God be an easy matter, yet to praise him still, will be found a busy work, indeed to flesh and blood a miserable work, for if I be still praising him, what time shall I have for any pleasures? O my soul, if thou make it not thy pleasure, thy chief, thy only pleasure to be praising him, thou art not like in haste to come to blessedness. And marvel not that David speaks thus under the law, when St. Paul under the Gospel saith as much: Whether ye eat or drink, or whatsoever ye do, let all be done to the glory and praise of God. Sir Richard Baker.

Verse 5. In whose heart are thy ways. That is, who love the ways that lead to thy house. Earnest Hawkins.

Verse 5. In whose heart are the ways of them. Literally, The steeps are on their hearts. The steep ascents on which the tabernacle stood. Horsley renders, They are bent on climbing the steep ascents. Perhaps the (Heb.) were more properly the raised causeways or stairs leading up to Mount Zion, or all through the mountain country on the road to Jerusalem. John Fry.

Verse 5. In whose heart are the ways. The natural heart is a pathless wilderness, full of cliffs and precipices. When the heart is renewed by grace, a
road is made, a highway is prepared for our God. See Isa 40:3-4. Frederick Fysh.

Verse 6. Who passing through the valley of Baca make it a well, etc. I consider the valley here mentioned to be the same as the valley of Bochim, mentioned in Jud 2:1,5, which received its name from the weeping of the Jews, when they were rebuked by an angel for their disobedience to the commands of God. This valley is called m'kkh, Habb'caim, in 2Sa 5:24, the h of hkk to weep being changed into a. Josephus mentions, that the circumstance there related occurred en toiv alsesi toiv kaloumenoi Klauqmwnsi. Antiquities Jud. lib 7 c 4. my'kkh, Habb'caim, is rendered in that verse by the LXX Klauqmwn, weepings; and in Jud 2:1 kykkh, Habbocim, is also rendered by the LXX. Klauqmwn, weepings. The valley mentioned in Ps 84:6 is called by the LXX. Klauqmwn. I am inclined therefore to think, that in this place, joining to'kkh the m of the following word, and supplying y before it, we ought to read nymy'kkh instead of ny`m'kkh... All the ancient versionists seem to have thought, that the valley in this verse received its name from hkk, bacah, to weep. I translate the verse, Passing through the valley of Bochim, they will make it a fountain even of blessings; it shall be covered with the former rain. The Psalm has been supposed to have been written by Jehoshaphat. Probably he passed through Bochim, which seems to have been an arid valley, when he marched against the Moabites and Ammonites; see 2 Chronicles 20. After the victory the army of Jehoshaphat assembled in a valley, where they blessed the Lord; and from this circumstance it received the name of Berachah: see 2Ch 20:26. Perhaps the word tvkrk in this verse has an allusion to that circumstance; and perhaps the valley of Berachah was, before that glorious occasion, called the valley of Bochim. Richard Dixon.

Verse 6. Passing through the valley of weeping make him, that is, Jehovah, a fountain. That is, they trust, and from him look for help, who having plain paths in their mind must pass through many difficulties. Similar help is sought by those, who, suffering from a scanty supply of water, press on through a dry valley, and yet do not despair or grow weary, but have God for their fountain, from which they drink and are refreshed. Venema.


Verse 6. Baca, signifieth a mulberry tree, which loves to grow in dry places that be sandy and barren, 2Sa 5:23-24, or 1Ch 14:14-15. Now they whose hearts be set upon God's house and holy worship, when they go thitherward through a sandy, dry, barren valley, do make it a well,—that is, repute and count it as a well, the word rhrtysy signifieth to put or set, as Ge 3:15; Ps
21:6,12 83:11,13. For thus will they say with themselves, thinking upon the comfort of God's favour to whom they go, that it shall be to them as the rain of blessings, a plentiful and liberal rain upon the ground. Thomas Pierson.

Verse 6. Make it a well. That which seemed an impediment turns to a furtherance; at least, no misery can be so great, no estate so barren, but a godly heart can make it a well, out of which to draw forth water of comfort; either water to cleanse, and make it a way to repentance; or water to cool, and make it a way to patience; or water to moisten, and make it a way of growing in grace; and if the well happen to be dry, and afford no water from below, yet the rain shall fill their pools, and supply them with water from above. If natural forces be not sufficient, there shall be supernatural graces added to assist them, that though troubles of the world seem rubs in the way to blessedness, yet in truth they are none, they hinder not arriving at the mark we aim at, they hinder us not from being made members of Sion, they hinder us not from approaching the presence of God. No, my soul, they are rather helps, for by this means we go from strength to strength, from strength of patience, to strength of hope; from strength of hope, to strength of faith, to strength of vision; and then will be accomplished that which David speaks here; Blessed is the man whose strength is in God, and in whose heart his ways are. Sir Richard Baker.

Verse 6. The rain. Little as there may be of water, that little suffices on their way. It is a well to them. They find only "pools (which) the early rain has (barely) covered"—but are content with the supply by the way. It is as good and sufficient to them as if showers of the heavy autumnal rains had filled the well. Pilgrims forget the scanty supply at an inn, when they have abundance in view at the end. Israelites going up to the Passover made light of deficient water, for their hearts were set on reaching Jerusalem. Andrew A. Bonar.

Verses 6-7. The most gloomy present becomes bright to them: passing through even a terrible wilderness, they turn it into a place of springs, their joyous hope and the infinite beauty of the goal, which is worth any amount of toil and trouble, afford them enlivening comfort, refreshing, strengthening in the midst of the arid steppe. Not only does their faith bring forth water out of the sand and rocks of the desert, but God also on his part lovingly anticipates their love, and rewardingly anticipates their faithfulness: a gentle rain, like that which refreshes the sown fields in the autumn, descends from above and enwraps the valley of Baca in a fulness of blessing... the arid steppe becomes resplendent with a flowery festive garment ( Isa 35:1-19), not to outward appearance, but to them spiritually, in a manner none the less true and real. And whereas under ordinary circumstances, the strength of the traveller diminishes in proportion as
he has traversed more and more of his toilsome road, with them it is the very reverse; 
\textit{they go from strength to strength}. Franz Delitzsch.

\textbf{Verse 7.} \textit{They go from strength to strength.} Junius reads it, and so it is in the Hebrew, "They go from company to company." As they went up to Jerusalem they went in troops and companies. Possibly we translate it strength because much of our safety consisteth in good society. George Swinnock.

\textbf{Verse 7.} \textit{Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God.} That is, every one of them answering to the character described. Others as well as they would appear in Zion before God; but not to enjoy his presence, and receive tokens of his favour. Blessedness was not to be enjoyed, but it could only be enjoyed by those who had been previously fitted for it by character and attainment. As certainly as these had been acquired, so certainly would the blessedness be enjoyed by each and by all of them. \textit{Every one of them in Zion appeareth before God}. No one has perished by the way—none been devoured by wild beasts—none cut off by the wandering banditti—none become faint hearted and turned back. The whole bands are assembled—young and old, weak and strong; all answer to their names, and testify to the goodness of the Lord in bearing them up, and bringing through—in affording them rest, and yielding them pleasure. So shall it ever be with true spiritual pilgrims. The grace of God will always prove sufficient to preserve them, safe and blameless, to his heavenly kingdom and glory—troubles shall not overwhelm them—temptations not wholly overcome them—spiritual enemies shall not destroy them. They are kept by the power of God, through faith unto salvation, ready to be revealed in the last time. Their names are written in the Lamb's book of life, and the Lamb himself shall see to it that each of them is found in the day of account. Then shall he be able to say, \textit{Those whom thou hast given me I have kept, and none of them is lost}. "They are all here before God." William Makelvie. 1863.

\textbf{Verse 8.} There are two distinct thoughts of great practical value to the Christian, in this short prayer. There is the sense of \textit{divine majesty}, and the consciousness of \textit{divine relationship}. As \textit{Lord of hosts}, he is almighty in power; as the \textit{God of Jacob}, he is infinite in mercy and goodness to his people. \textit{Things New and Old}.

\textbf{Verse 9.} While many, alas, are satisfied with mere formalities in religion, or with the dry discussion of doctrines, high or low, as they may be called, see thou and be occupied with Christ himself. It is the knowledge of his person that gives strength and joy to the soul. At all times, under all circumstances, we can say, \textit{Look upon the face of thine Anointed}. We cannot always say, \textit{Look on us}; but we may always say, \textit{Look on Him}. In deepest sorrow through conscious
failure, or in trials and difficulties through faithfulness to his name, we can ever plead with God what Christ is. God is ever well pleased with him—ever occupied with him as risen from the dead and exalted to his own right hand in heaven; and he would have us also to be occupied with him as the heart's exclusive object. True faith can only rest on God's estimate of Christ, not on inward thoughts and feelings. That which may be called the faith of the formalist, rests on the ability of his own mind to judge of these matters. He trusts in himself. This is the essential difference between faith in appearance and faith in reality. Things New and Old.

Verse 9. Look upon the face of thine anointed. For I shall never come to look upon thy face, if thou vouchsafe not first to look upon mine: if thou afford me not as well the benefit of thine eyes, to look upon me, as the favour of thine ears, to hear me, I shall be left only to a bare expectation, but never come to the happiness of fruition; but when thou vouchsafest to look upon my face, that look of thine hath an influence of all true blessedness, and makes me find what a happiness it is to have the God of Jacob for my shield. Sir Richard Baker.

Verse 10. A day. The least good look that a man hath from God, and the least good word that a man hears from God, and the least love letter and love token that a man receives from God is exceedingly precious to that man that hath God for his portion. One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere. He doth not say, One year in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, but One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere; nor doth he say, One quarter of a year in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, but One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere; nor doth he say, One month is better than a thousand elsewhere, but One day in thy courts is better than a thousand elsewhere, to shew that the very least of God is exceeding precious to a gracious soul that hath God for his portion. Thomas Brooks.

Verse 10. Another sign of God's children is, to delight to be much in God's presence. Children are to be in the presence of their father; where the King is, there is the court; where the presence of God is, there is heaven. God is in a special manner present in his ordinances, they are the Ark of his presence. Now, if we are his children, we love to be much in holy duties. In the use of ordinances we draw near to God, we come into our Father's presence; in prayer we have secret conference with God; the soul while it is praying, is as it were parleying with God. In the word we hear God speaking from heaven to us; and how doth every child of God delight to hear his Father's voice! In the sacrament God kisseth his children with the kisses of his lips; he gives them a smile of his face, and a privy seal of his love: oh, it is good to draw near to God. It is sweet
being in his presence: every true child of God saith, "A day in thy courts is better than a thousand!" Thomas Watson.

Verse 10. I had rather be a doorkeeper, etc. Some read it, "I would rather be fixed to a post in the house of my God, than live at liberty in the tents of the wicked; "alluding to the law concerning servants, who if they would not go out free, were to have their ear bored to the door post, Ex 21:5-6. David loved his Master, and loved his work so well, that he desired to be tied to this service for ever, to be more free to it, but never to go out free from it, preferring bonds to duty far before the greatest liberty to sin. Such a superlative delight have holy hearts in holy duties; no satisfaction in their account is comparable to that in communion with God. Matthew Henry.

Verse 10. I had rather be a doorkeeper. In the sense that Christ is a Door, David may well be content to be a Door Keeper, and though in God's house there be many mansions, yet seeing all of them are glorious, even the door keeper's place is not without its glory. But if you think the office to be mean, consider then whose officer he is, for even a door keeper is an officer in God's house, and God never displaceth his officers unless it be to advance them to a higher; whereas, in the courts of princes, the greatest officers are oftentimes displaced, turned off often with disgrace. Sir Richard Baker.

Verse 10. I had rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God, etc. Happy are those persons, whom God will use as besoms to sweep out the dust from his temple; or who shall tug at an oar in the boat where Christ and his church are embarked. William Secker, in "The Nonsuch Professor."

Verse 10. Doorkeeper. This is a Korhite psalm, and the descendants of Korah were, in fact, porters, and "keepers of the gates of the tabernacle, and keepers of the entry, "as well as being permitted to swell the chorus of the inspired singers of Israel. Bossuet, quoted by Neale and Littledale.

Verse 10. Instead of, I had rather be a doorkeeper, the margin has, according to the Hebrew, "I would choose rather to sit at the threshold." Ainsworth's translation is: "I have chosen to sit at the threshold, in the house of my God; "and Dr. Boothroyd's is: "Abide, or sit, at the threshold." See 2Ki 12:9 22:4 25:18 1Ch 9:19 2Ch 23:4; Es 2:21 6:2. In all these passages the marginal reading is threshold. I think the word door keeper does not convey the proper meaning of the words, "to sit at the threshold; " because the preference of the Psalmist was evidently given to a very humble position; whereas that of a door keeper, in Eastern estimation, is truly respectable and confidential. The marginal reading, however, "to sit at the threshold, "at once strikes on an
Eastern mind as a situation of deep humility. See the poor heathen devotee; he
goes and sits near the threshold of his temple. Look at the beggar; he sits, or
prostrates himself, at the threshold of the door or gate, till he shall have gained
his suit. *Joseph Roberts.*

**Verse 10.** *House. Tents.* Observe the force of the contrasted expressions. The
*house* is the Lord's; the *tents* are of the wicked. The pleasures of sin are for a
season only; the world passeth away, and the lusts thereof. *Arthur Pridham.*

**Verse 10.** *The tents.* It is not any tents, or tents of any ordinary kind, that are
understood, but rich, powerful, glorious, and splendid tents. *Venema.*

**Verse 11.** *The Lord God is a sun,* conveys a striking and impressive truth,
when we think of the sun only in his obvious character as a source of light and
heat. But what new energy is given to this magnificent emblem, when we learn
from astronomy that he is a grand center of attraction, and when we, in
addition, take in that sublime generalization that the sun is the ultimate source
of every form of power existing in the world! The wind wafts the commerce of
every nation over the mighty deep; but the heat of the sun has rarefied that air,
and set that wind in motion. The descending stream yields a power which
grinds your grain, turns your spindles, works your looms, drives your forges;
but it is because the sun gathered up the vapour from the ocean, which fell upon
the hills, and is finding its way back to the source whence it came. The
expansive energy of steam propels your engine; but the force with which it
operates is locked up in the coal (the remains of extinct forests stored among
your hills), or is derived from the wood that abounds in your forests, which
now crown and beautify their summits. Both these primeval and these existing
forests drew their substance from the sun: it is the chemical force resident in his
rays which disengaged their carbon from the atmosphere, and laid it up as a
source of power for future use. The animal exerts a force by muscular
contraction; he draws it from the vegetable on which he feeds; the vegetable
derives it from the sun, whose rays determine its growth. Every time you lift
your arm, every time you take a step, you are drawing on the power the sun has
given you. When you step into the railway carriage, it is the sun power that
hurries you along. When gentle breezes fan your languid cheek, and when the
restless tornado levels cities in its fury, they are the servants of the sun. What
an emblem of Him in whom we live, and move, and have our being! *Professor
Green.*

**Verse 11.** The *sun,* which among all inanimate creatures is the most excellent,
notes all manner of excellency, provision, and prosperity; and the *shield,* which
among all artificial creatures is the chiefest, notes all manner of protection
whatsoever. Under the name of grace, all spiritual good is wrapped up; and under the name of glory, all eternal good is wrapped up; and under the last clause, No good thing will he withhold, is wrapped up all temporal good: all put together speaks out God to be an all sufficient portion. Thomas Brooks.

**Verse 11. The Lord God is a shield.** He is a shield to our persons: "Touch not, said he, "mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm." "The Lord, "said Moses in his name, "the Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in. He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways, lest at any time thou shalt dash thy foot against a stone. Hast thou considered my servant Job? said God to Satan:—Yes, replied Satan, I have; thou hast set a hedge about him." Yes, brethren: the Lord God is a shield. He is a shield to our graces. The dislike and malice of Satan is principally levelled at us when we become subjects of divine influence. "Simon, Simon, "said our Saviour, "Satan hath desired to have thee, that he may sift thee as wheat, but, "he adds, "I have prayed for thee, that thy faith fail not." There was a shield to the good man's faith, or he and it too had been gone. You may remember the name of Little Faith in Bunyan's Pilgrim. It appears that Hopeful was greatly surprised that the robbers had not taken his jewels from him; but he was given to understand that they were not in his own keeping. Yes, Christian, HE shall be thy "shield" to cover thy hope when it appears to thee to be giving up the ghost... Yes, and He will be a shield to thy property. "Hast thou not set a hedge about all that he hath?" Though Job was tried a little while, his property was only put out to interest; by and by it came back cent per cent; and he gained, besides, a vast increase of knowledge and of grace. Matthew Wilks. 1746-1829.

**Verse 11.** Turn your thoughts to the combination; the Lord God is a sun and shield. As a sun he shows me more and more of my sinfulness; but then as a shield, he gives me power to oppose it and assurance that I shall conquer. As a sun, he discloses so much of the enormity of guilt, that I am forced to exclaim, "Mine iniquities are like a sore burden, too heavy for me to bear; "but then as a shield, he shows me that he has laid the load on a Surety, who bore it into a land of forgetfulness. As a sun, he makes me daily more and more sensible of the utter impossibility of my working out a righteousness of my own; but then, as a shield, he fastens constantly my thoughts on that righteousness of his Son, which is meritoriously conveyed to all who believe on his name. As a sun, in short, he brings fact to my knowledge, (inasmuch as he brings myself and mine enemies to my knowledge,) which would make the matter of deliverance seem out of reach and hopeless, if he were not at the same time a shield; but seeing that he is both a shield as well as a sun, the disclosures which he makes as a sun only prepare me for the blessings which he imparts as a shield. Who then shall
wonder, that after announcing the character of God, the psalmist should break into expressions of confidence and assurance? It may be, that as the corruption of nature is brought continually before me, deeper and wider and darker, Satan will ply me with the suggestion; "The guiltiness is too inveterate to be eradicated, and too enormous to be pardoned; "and if God were a sun, and nothing more, it might be hard to put away the suggestion as a device of the father of lies. I might then fear. I might fear God's holiness, thinking I should never be fitted for communion with Deity; I might fear God's justice, thinking I should never find acquittal at the last dread assize. But can I fear either, when besides a sun, God is also a shield? Can I fear God's justice, when as a shield he places sufferings to my account, which satisfy the law, even to the last penalty? Can I fear his holiness, when he gives me interest in an obedience which fulfils every precept? Does not the one character, that of a shield, help me to scatter those solicitudes, which may well be excited through the operation of the other character, that of a sun? And am I not warranted—nay, am I not living far below my privilege—if I fail in deriving from the combination of character a boldness and a confidence, not to be overborne by those suspicions, which have Satan for their author? As a sun, God shows me myself; as a shield, God shows me himself. The sun discloses mine own nothingness; the shield, Divine sufficiency. The one enables me to discern that I deserve nothing but wrath and can earn nothing but shame; the other, that I have a title to immortality, and may lay claim to an enduring inheritance in heaven. I learn, in short, from God as a Sun, that if I have "wages," I must have eternal death; but from God as a Shield, that if I will receive the "free gift," I may have "eternal life." Whom then shall I fear? Myself—confessedly my worst enemy? "The Sun" makes a man start from himself; the "Shield" assures him that he shall be protected against himself and builded up "for a habitation of God through the Spirit." Shall I shrink from Satan and the hosts of principalities and powers? The "Sun" shows them awful in their might and vehement in their malice; but the "Shield" exhibits them spoiled and led captive, when Christ died and rose again. Shall I dread death? Indeed the "Sun" makes death terrible, forcing me to read God's curse in the motionless limbs and mouldering features; but then the "Shield" displays the open sepulchre, the quickened dust, the marvels of a resurrection, the mountain and the ocean and the valley yielding up the sleeping generations. Is death to be dreaded? Take the catalogue of things, which, inasmuch as we are fallen creatures, God, as our "Sun," instructs us to fear; and we shall find, that inasmuch as we are redeemed creatures, God as our "Shield" enables us to triumph over all our fears. Who therefore shall hesitate to agree, that there results from this combination of character exactly that system of counterpoise, which we affirm to be discoverable in grace as well as in providence? Who can fail, if indeed he have been disciplined by that twofold tuition, which informs
man first that he has destroyed himself and then that God hath "laid help on
One that is mighty, "the former lesson humiliating, the latter encouraging, the
one making way for the other, so that the scholar is emptied of every false
confidence that he may be fitted to entertain the true—oh! who, we say, can fail
to gather from the combination of Divine character the inference drawn by the
Psalmist? to exclaim (that is), after recording that "the Lord God is a Sun and a
Shield"—He will give grace and glory: no good thing will he withhold from
them that walk uprightly? Henry Melvill.

Verse 11. The words of the text are as a voice from heaven, inviting me up
thither, and answering all the doubts and fears of such as believe and follow the
joyful sound. Am I in darkness, and fear I shall never find the way? Open thine
eye, O my soul! look up to the Father of lights: the Lord is a sun, whose steady
beams shall direct thy steps. Is there an inward veil to be removed from my
mind, as well as obscurity from my path? He is sufficient for both. God who
commanded the light to shine out of darkness, can shine into the heart, to give
the light of the knowledge of his glory, and lead on to it. (Co 4:6.) He can make
the day dawn, and the day star to arise in our hearts; (2Pe 1:19), and by both,
guide our feet into the way of peace. (Lu 1:79.) Doth the same light that
discovers my way, discover what opposition I am like to meet with? what
enemies and dangers I am to go through? Hear, O my soul, the Lord is a shield.
Light and strength are conjoined; none can miscarry under his conduct, nor
have any reason to be discouraged. With this he comforteth Abraham. Ge 15:1,
Fear not: I am thy shield. Do I groan under a sense of my unmeetness for the
heavenly kingdom? Let this support my soul, the Lord will give grace. Am I
altogether unworthy of so high a happiness? It springs from his own most free,
unbounded love; the Lord will give glory. Am I urged with a thousand wants
that need supply, what more can be added? No good thing will he withhold
from them that walk uprightly. Nothing that is evil can be desired; and nothing
that is good shall be denied. Here, O my soul, is a fountain opened; here thy
eager thirst may be fully satisfied; thy largest desires filled up; and thy mind be
ever at rest. Daniel Wilcox.

Verse 11. Why need a saint fear darkness, when he has such a sun to guide
him? Or dread dangers, when he has such a shield to guard him? William
Secker.

Verse 11. The Lord will give glory. "Man, "says a wise author, "is the glory of
this lower world; the soul is the glory of man; grace is the glory of the soul; and
heaven is the glory of grace." Heaven, or glory, is grace matured and brought to
infinite perfection; there we shall see his face, and have his name written in our
foreheads; and we shall reign with him for ever and ever. Matthew Wilks.
Verse 11. No good thing will he withhold. etc. But how is this true, when God oftentimes withholds riches and honours, and health of body from men, though they walk never so uprightly; we may therefore know that honours and riches and bodily strength, are none of God's good things; they are of the number of things indifferent which God bestows promiscuously upon the just and unjust, as the rain to fall and the sun to shine. The good things of God are chiefly peace of conscience and the joy in the Holy Ghost in this life; fruition of God's presence, and vision of his blessed face in the next, and these good things God never bestows upon the wicked, never withholds from the godly, and they are all cast up in one sum where it is said, Beati mundo corde, quoniam ipsi Deum videbunt: Blessed are the pure in heart (and such are only they that walk uprightly) for they shall see God. But is walking uprightly such a matter with God, that it should be so rewarded? Is it not more pleasing to God to see us go stooping than walking uprightly, seeing stooping is the gait of humility, than which there is nothing to God more pleasing? It is no doubt a hard matter to stoop and go upright both at once, yet both must be done, and both indeed are done, are done at once by every one that is godly; but when I say they are done both at once, I mean not of the body, I know two such postures in the body both at once are impossible; but the soul can do it, the soul can stoop and go upright both at once; for then doth the soul walk upright before God, when it stoops in humility before God and men. Sir Richard Baker.

Verse 11. This is an immense fountain; the Lord fill all the buckets of our hearts at the spring, and give us capacious souls, as he hath a liberal hand. Thomas Adams.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1.

1. Why called Tabernacles? To include

(a) the holiest of all;

(b) The holy place;

(c) The court and precincts of the Tabernacle. Amiable is predicated of these. The courts amiable—the holy place more amiable—the holiest of all most amiable.

2. Why called the Tabernacles of the Lord of Hosts? To denote
(a) Its connection with the boundless universe.

(b) Its distinction from it. Present everywhere where God is peculiarly present here.

3. Why called amiable?


(b) Because of the purpose for which he resides here. To save sinners: to comfort saints.

Verses 1-3. The Titles for God in these three verses are worth dwelling upon. Jehovah of Hosts; the living God; my King and my God. G. R.

Verse 3.

1. The Eloquence of Grief. David in his banishment envies the sparrows and the swallows that had built their nests by the house of God, more than Absalom who had usurped his palace and his throne.

2. The Ingenuity of Prayer. Why should sparrows and swallows be nearer to thy altars than I am, O Lord of hosts, my King and my God! "Fear not, ye are of more value than many sparrows." G. R.

Verse 4.

1. The Privilege suggested—dwelling in the house of God. Some birds fly over the house of God—some occasionally alight upon it—others build their nests and train up their young there. This was the privilege which the Psalmist desired.

2. The Fact asserted. Blessed are they that dwell, etc., who make it the spiritual home of themselves and their children.

3. The Reason given. They will be still, etc.

(a) They will have much for which to praise God;
(b) They will see much to praise in God. G. R.

Verse 5. Man is blessed,
1. When his strength is in God. Strength to believe, strength to obey, strength to suffer.

2. When God's ways are in him. *In whose heart*, etc. When the doctrines, precepts, and promises of God are deeply engraved upon the heart. *G. R.*

**Verse 5.** The preciousness of intensity and enthusiasm in religious belief, worship, and life.

**Verses 5-7.** The blessed people are described,

1. By their earnest desire and resolution to take this journey, though they dwelt far off from the tabernacle, Ps 84:5.

2. By their painful passage, yet some refreshments by the way, Ps 84:6.

3. By their constant progress, till they came to the place they aimed at, Ps 84:7. *T. Manton.*

**Verse 6.**

1. *The valley of Baca.* Of this valley we may observe,

   (a) It is much frequented.
   (b) Unpleasant to flesh and blood.
   (c) Very healthful.
   (d) Very safe.
   (e) Very profitable.

2. The toilsome effort: *make it a well.*

   (a) Comfort may be obtained in the deepest trouble.
   (b) Comfort must be obtained by exertion.
   (c) Comfort obtained by one is of use to others, as a well may be.

3. The heavenly supply. *The rain also filleth the pools.* All is from God; effort is of no avail without him.

**Verse 7.**
1. Trusting God in trouble brings present comfort—Who passing, etc.

2. Present comfort ensures still larger supplies—The rain also, etc. G. R.

Verse 8. There is,

1. Progression. They go;

(a) The people of God cannot remain stationary;
(b) They must not recede;
(c) They should always be advancing.

2. Invigoration. From strength to strength.

(a) From one ordinance to another;
(b) from one duty to another;
(c) from one grace to another;
(d) from one degree of grace to another. Add faith to faith, virtue to virtue, knowledge to knowledge, etc.

3. Completion. Every one of them, etc. G. R.

Verse 8.

1. Prayer is not confined to the Sanctuary. David, in his banishment, says, Hear my prayer.

2. Help is not confined to the Sanctuary. The Lord of hosts is "here, "as well as in his tabernacle. SeePs 84:1.

3. Grace is not confined to the Sanctuary. Here, too, in the wilderness is the covenanted God, the God of Jacob. G. R.

Verse 8. Pleas for answers to prayer in the titles here used.

1. He is JEHOVAH, the living, all wise, all powerful, faithful, gracious, and immutable God.
2. He is God of hosts, having abundant agencies under his control; he can send angels, restrain devils, actuate good men, overrule bad men, and govern all other agents.

3. He is the God of Jacob, of chosen Jacob, as seen in Jacob's dream; God of Jacob in his banishment, in his wrestling (and so a God overcome by prayer), God pardoning Jacob's sins, God preserving Jacob and his seed after him.

Verse 9. Observe,

1. The Faith. Our shield is thine anointed—Thine Anointed is our Shield. This is not David, because he says our Shield, but David's greater Son. A gleam of Gospel light through the thick clouds.

2. The Prayer. Behold, O God, etc. Look, etc. Look upon him as our Representative, and look upon us in him.

3. The Plea.

(a) He has engaged to be our defence from thine anger;

(b) he has been anointed to this office by thee. G. R.

Verse 9.

1. What God is to us.

2. What we would have him look at.

3. Where we would be: hidden behind the shield—seen in the person of Christ.

Verse 10. Here is,

1. A comparison of Places. A day in thy courts, etc. How much more a day in heaven! What, then, must an eternity in heaven be!

2. A comparison of Persons. I would rather be a doorkeeper, etc. Better be the least in the Church than the greatest in the world. If "better reign in hell than serve in heaven" was Satan's first thought after he fell, it was the first thought only. G.R.

Verse 10.
1. Days in God's courts. Days of hearing, of repenting, of believing, of adoration, of communion, of revival, etc.

2. Their preciousness. Better than a thousand days of victory, of pleasure, of money making, of harvest, of discussion, of travelling amid beauties of nature.

3. Reasons for this preciousness. They are more pleasurable, more profitable now, and more preparatory for the future and for heaven. The employment, the society, the enjoyment, the result, etc., are all better.

**Verse 11.**

1. What God is to his people. *A sun and shield.*
   
   (a) The source of all good;
   (b) a defence from all evil.

2. What he gives.
   
   (a) Grace here;
   (b) glory hereafter.

3. What he withholds. All that is not good. If he withholds health or wealth, or his own smiles from us, it is because they are not good for us at that particular time. *G. R.*

**Verse 12.**

1. The one thing that makes man blessed. Trust in God. Blessed, etc.
   
   (a) For all things;
   (b) at all times;
   (c) in all circumstances.

2. The Blessing contained in that one thing. God himself becomes ours;
   
   (a) his mercy for our pardon;
   (b) his power for our protection;
   (c) his wisdom for our guidance;
   (d) his faithfulness for our preservation;
   (e) his all sufficiency for our supply.

3. The certainty of the blessing.
(a) From David's own experience;

(b) from the solemn appeal to God respecting it. O Lord God of hosts, etc. G. R.

Verse 12. The blessedness of the life of faith over that of carnal enjoyment, religious feeling, self confidence, living upon marks and evidences, trusting in man, etc.

WORKS UPON THE EIGHTY-FOURTH PSALM

The Faith of the Church Militant, made moste effectualie described in this exposition of the 84. Psalm, by that reverend Pastor, and publike Professor of God's word, in the famous universitie of Haffine in Denmarke, NICHOLAS HEMMINGIVS. A treatise written as to the instruction of the ignorant in the groundes of religion, so to the confutation of the Jews, the Turkes, Atheists, Papists, Heretiks, and all other adversaries of the trueth whatsoever. Translated out of Latin into English, &c. by THOMAS ROGERS. At London, printed by H. Middleton for Andrew Maunsel. Anno. 1581.

David's Heart's Desire; or An Exposition of Psalm 84.; in Excellent Encouragments against Afflictions... by Thomas Pierson, M.A. (Reprinted in Nichol's Series of Puritan Commentaries.)

An Exposition upon some select Psalms of David... By ROBERT ROLLOCK. 1600. 16mo.

Meditations and Disquisitions upon seven Consolatorie Psalmes of David... By Sir RICHARD BAKER, Knight. 1640. (pg 119-142.)

Psalm 85

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher
Other Works

TITLE. To the Chief Musician, A Psalm for the sons of Korah. There is no need to repeat our observations
upon a title which is of so frequent occurrence; the reader is referred to notes placed in the headings of
preceding psalms. Yet it may not be out of place to quote Ne 12:46. In the days of David and Asaph of old
there were chief of the singers, and songs of praise and thanksgiving unto God.

OBJECT AND OCCASION. It is the prayer of a patriot for his afflicted country, in which he pleads the
Lord's former mercies, and by faith foresees brighter days. We believe that David wrote it, but many
question that assertion. Certain interpreters appear to grudge the psalmist David the authorship of any of the
psalms, and refer the sacred songs by wholesale to the times of Hezekiah, Josiah, the Captivity, and the
Maccabees. It is remarkable that, as a rule, the more sceptical a writer is, the more resolute is he to have
done with David; while the purely evangelic annotators are for the most part content to leave the royal poet
in the chair of authorship. The charms of a new theory also operate greatly upon writers who would have
nothing at all to say if they did not invent a novel hypothesis, and twist the language of the psalm in order
to justify it. The present psalm has of course been referred to the Captivity, the critics could not resist the
temptation to do that, though, for our part we see no need to do so: it is true a captivity is mentioned in Ps
85:1, but that does not necessitate the nation's having been carried away into exile, since Job's captivity was
turned, and yet he had never left his native land: moreover, the text speaks of the captivity of Jacob as
brought back, but had it referred to the Babylonian emigration, it would have spoken of Judah; for Jacob or
Israel, as such, did not return. The first verse in speaking of "the land" proves that the author was not an
exile. Our own belief is that David penned this national hymn when the land was oppressed by the
Philistines, and in the spirit of prophecy he foretold the peaceful years of his own reign and the repose of
the rule of Solomon, the psalm having all along an inner sense of which Jesus and his salvation are the key.
The presence of Jesus the Saviour reconciles earth and heaven, and secures to us the golden age, the balmy
days of universal peace.

DIVISION. In Ps 85:1-4 the poet sings of the Lord's former mercies and begs him to remember his people;
from Ps 85:5-7 he pleads the cause of afflicted Israel; and then, having listened to the sacred oracle in Ps
85:8, he publishes joyfully the tidings of future good, Ps 85:9-13.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. LORD, thou hast been favourable unto thy land. The self existent, all
sufficient JEHOVAH is addressed: by that name he revealed himself to Moses
when his people were in bondage, by that name he is here pleaded with. It is
wise to dwell upon that view of the divine character which arouses the sweetest
memories of his love. Sweeter still is that dear name of "Our Father, "with
which Christians have learned to commence their prayers. The psalmist speaks
of Canaan as the Lord's land, for he chose it for his people, conveyed it to them
by covenant, conquered it by his power, and dwelt in it in mercy; it was meet
therefore that he should smile upon a land so peculiarly his own. It is most wise to plead the Lord's union of interest with ourselves, to lash our little boat as it were close to his great barque, and experience a sacred community in the tossings of the storm. It is our land that is devastated, but O Jehovah, it is also thy land. The psalmist dwells upon the Lord's favour to the chosen land, which he had shewed in a thousand ways. God's past doings are prophetic of what he will do; hence the encouraging argument—"Thou hast been favourable unto thy land, "therefore deal graciously with it again. Many a time had foes been baffled, pestilence stayed, famine averted, and deliverance vouchsafed, because of the Lord's favour; that same favourable regard is therefore again invoked. With an immutable God this is powerful reasoning; it is because he changes not that we are not consumed, and know we never shall be if he has once been favourable to us. From this example of prayer let us learn how to order our cause before God. It is clear that Israel was not in exile, or the prayer before us would not have referred to the land but to the nation. Thou hast brought back the captivity of Jacob. When down trodden and oppressed through their sins, the Ever merciful One had looked upon them, changed their sad condition, chased away the invaders, and given to his people rest: this he had done not once, nor twice, but times without number. Many a time have we also been brought into soul captivity by our backslidings, but we have not been left therein; the God who brought Jacob back from Padanaram to his father's house, has restored us to the enjoyment of holy fellowship;—will he not do the like again? Let us appeal to him with Jacob like wrestlings, beseeching him to be favourable, or sovereignly gracious to us notwithstanding all our provocations of his love. Let declining churches remember their former history, and with holy confidence plead with the Lord to turn their captivity yet again.

Verse 2. Thou hast forgiven the iniquity of thy people. Often and often had he done this, pausing to pardon even when his sword was bared to punish. Who is a pardoning God like thee, O Jehovah? Who is so slow to anger, so ready for forgive? Every believer in Jesus enjoys the blessing of pardoned sin, and he should regard this priceless boon as the pledge of all other needful mercies. He should plead it with God—"Lord, hast thou pardoned me, and wilt thou let me perish for lack of grace, or fall into mine enemies' hands for want of help. Thou wilt not thus leave thy work unfinished." Thou hast covered all their sin. All of it, every spot, and wrinkle, the veil of love has covered all. Sin has been divinely put out of sight. Hiding it beneath the propitiatory, covering it with the sea of the atonement, blotting it out, making it to cease to be, the Lord has put it so completely away that even his omniscient eye sees it no more. What a miracle is this! To cover up the sun would be easy work compared with the covering up of sin. Not without a covering atonement is sin removed, but by
means of the great sacrifice of our Lord Jesus, it is most effectually put away by one act, for ever. What a covering does his blood afford!

Verse 3. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath. Having removed the sin, the anger is removed also. How often did the longsuffering of God take away from Israel the punishments which had been justly laid upon them! How often also has the Lord's chastising hand been removed from us when our waywardness called for heavier strokes! Thou hast turned thyself from the fierceness of thine anger. Even when judgments had been most severe, the Lord had in mercy stayed his hand. In mid volley he had restrained his thunder. When ready to destroy, he had averted his face from his purpose of judgment and allowed mercy to interpose. The book of Judges is full of illustrations of this, and the psalmist does well to quote them while he interceded. Is not our experience equally studded with instances in which judgment has been stayed and tenderness has ruled? What a difference between the fierce anger which is feared and deprecated here, and the speaking of peace which is foretold in verse 8. There are many changes in Christian experience, and therefore we must not despair when we are undergoing the drearier portion of the spiritual life, for soon, very soon, it may be transformed into gladness.

"The Lord can clear the darkest skies,
Can give us day for night.
Make drops of sacred sorrow rise
To rivers of delight."

Verse 4. Turn us, O God of our salvation. This was the main business. Could the erring tribes be rendered penitent all would be well. It is not that God needs turning from his anger so much as that we need turning from our sin; here is the hinge of the whole matter. Our trials frequently arise out of our sins, they will not go till the sins go. We need to be turned from our sins, but only God can turn us: God the Saviour must put his hand to the work: it is indeed a main part of our salvation. Conversion is the dawn of salvation. To turn a heart to God is as difficult as to make the world revolve upon its axis. Yet when a man learns to pray for conversion there is hope for him, he who turns to prayer is beginning to turn from sin. It is a very blessed sight to see a whole people turn unto their God; may the Lord so send forth his converting grace on our land that we may live to see the people flocking to the loving worship of God as the doves to their cotes. And cause thine anger toward us to cease. Make an end of it. Let it no longer burn. When sinners cease to rebel, the Lord ceases to be angry with them; when they return to him he returns to them; yea, he is first in the reconciliation, and turns them when otherwise they would never turn of themselves. May all those who are now enduring the hidings of Jehovah's face
seek with deep earnestness to be turned anew unto the Lord, for so shall all their despondencies come to an end. Thus the sweet singer asks for his nation priceless blessings, and quotes the best of arguments. Because the God of Israel has been so rich in favour in bygone years, therefore he is entreated to reform and restore his backsliding nation.

Verse 5. Wilt thou be angry with us for ever? See how the psalmist makes bold to plead. We are in time as yet and not in eternity, and does not time come to an end, and therefore thy wrath! Wilt thou be angry always as if it were eternity? Is there no boundary to thine indignation? Will thy wrath never have done? And if for ever angry, yet wilt thou be angry with us, thy favoured people, the seed of Abraham, thy friend? That our enemies should be always wroth is natural, but wilt thou, our God, be always incensed against us? Every word is an argument. Men is distress never waste words. Wilt thou draw out thine anger to all generations? Shall sons suffer for their father's faults, and punishment become an entailed inheritance? O merciful God, hast thou a mind to spin out thine anger, and make it as long as the ages? Cease thou, as thou hast ceased aforetime, and let grace reign as it has done in days of yore. When we are under spiritual desertion we may beg in the like manner that the days of tribulation may be shortened, lest our spirit should utterly fail beneath the trial.

Verse 6. Wilt thou not revive us again? Hope here grows almost confident. She feels sure that the Lord will return in all his power to save. We are dead or dying, faint and feeble, God alone can revive us, he has in other times refreshed his people, he is still the same, he will repeat his love. Will he not? Why should he not? We appeal to him—Wilt thou not? That thy people may rejoice in thee. Thou lovest to see thy children happy with that best of happiness which centres in thyself, therefore revive us, for revival will bring us the utmost joy. The words before us teach us that gratitude has an eye to the giver, even beyond the gift—thy people may rejoice in thee. Those who were revived would rejoice not only in the new life but in the Lord who was the author of it. Joy in the Lord is the ripest fruit of grace, all revivals and renewals lead up to it. By our possession of it we may estimate our spiritual condition, it is a sure gauge of inward prosperity. A genuine revival without joy in the Lord is as impossible as spring without flowers, or daydawn without light. If, either in our own souls or in the hearts of others, we see declension, it becomes us to be much in the use of this prayer, and if on the other hand we are enjoying visitations of the Spirit and bedewings of grace, let us abound in holy joy and make it our constant delight to joy in God.

Verse 7. Shew us thy mercy, O LORD. Reveal it to our poor half blinded eyes. We cannot see it or believe it by reason of our long woes, but thou canst make
it plain to us. Others have beheld it, Lord shew it to us. We have seen thine anger, Lord let us see thy mercy. Thy prophets have told us of it, but O Lord, do thou thyself display it in this our hour of need. And grant us thy salvation. This includes deliverance from the sin as well as the chastisement, it reaches from the depth of their misery to the height of divine love. God's salvation is perfect in kind, comprehensive in extent, and eminent in degree; grant us this, O Lord, and we have all. Having offered earnest intercession for the afflicted but penitent nation, the sacred poet in the true spirit of faith awaits a response from the sacred oracle. He pauses in joyful confidence, and then in ecstatic triumph he give utterance to his hopes in the richest form of song.

Verse 8. *I will hear what God the LORD will speak.* When we believe that God hears us, it is but natural that we should be eager to hear him. Only from him can come the word which can speak peace to troubled spirits; the voices of men are feeble in such a case, a plaister far too narrow for the sore; but God's voice is power, he speaks and it is done, and hence when we hear him our distress is ended. Happy is the suppliant who has grace to lie patiently at the Lord's door, and wait until his love shall act according to its old wont and chase all sorrow far away. For he will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints. Even though for a while his voice is stern with merited rebuke, he will not always chide, the Great Father will reassume his natural tone of gentleness and pity. The speaking of peace is the peculiar prerogative of the Lord Jehovah, and deep, lasting, ay, eternal, is the peace he thus creates. Yet not to all does the divine word bring peace, but only to his own people, whom he means to make saints, and those whom he has already made so. But let them not turn again to folly. For if they do so, his rod will fall upon them again, and their peace will be invaded. Those who would enjoy communion with God must be jealous of themselves, and avoid all that would grieve the Holy Spirit; not only the grosser sins, but even the follies of life must be guarded against by those who are favoured with the delights of conscious fellowship. We serve a jealous God, and must needs therefore be incessantly vigilant against evil. Backsliders should study this verse with the utmost care, it will console them and yet warn them, draw the back to their allegiance, and at the same time inspire them with a wholesome fear of going further astray. To turn again to folly is worse than being foolish for once; it argues wilfulness and obstinacy, and it involves the soul in sevenfold sin. There is no fool like the man who will be a fool cost him what it may.

Verse 9. *Surely his salvation is nigh them that fear him.* Faith knows that a saving God is always near at hand, but only (for such is the true rendering) to those who fear the Lord, and worship him with holy awe. In the gospel
dispensation this truth is conspicuously illustrated. If to seeking sinners salvation is nigh, it is assuredly very nigh to those who have once enjoyed it, and have lost its present enjoyment by their folly; they have but to turn unto the Lord and they shall enjoy it again. We have not to go about by a long round of personal mortifications or spiritual preparations, we may come to the Lord, through Jesus Christ, just as we did at the first, and he will again receive us into his loving embrace. Whether it be a nation under adversity, or a single individual under chastisement, the sweet truth before us is rich with encouragement to repentance, and renewed holiness. That glory may dwell in our land. The object of the return of grace will be a permanent establishment of a better state of things, so that gloriously devout worship shall be rendered to God continuously, and a glorious measure of prosperity shall be enjoyed in consequence. Israel was glorious whenever she was faithful—her dishonour always followed her disloyalty; believers also live glorious lives when they walk obediently, and they only lose the true glory of their religion when they fall from their steadfastness. In these two verses we have, beneath the veil of the letter, an intimation of the coming of THE WORD OF GOD to the nations in times of deep apostacy and trouble, when faithful hearts would be looking and longing for the promise which had so long tarried. By his coming salvation is brought near, and glory, even the glory of the presence of the Lord, tabernacles among men. Of this the succeeding verses speak without obscurity.

Verse 10. Mercy and truth are met together. In answer to prayer, the exulting psalmist sees the attributes of God confederating to bless the once afflicted nation. Mercy comes hand in hand with Truth to fulfil the faithful promise of their gracious God; the people recognise at once the grace and the veracity of Jehovah, he is to them neither a tyrant nor a deceiver. Righteousness and peace have kissed each other. The Lord whose just severity inflicted the smart, now in pity sends peace to bind up the wound. The people being now made willing to forsake their sins, and to follow after righteousness, find peace granted to them at once. "The war drum throbbed no longer, and the battle flags were furled; " for idolatry was forsaken, and Jehovah was adored. This appears to be the immediate and primary meaning of these verses; but the inner sense is Christ Jesus, the reconciling Word. In him, the attributes of God unite in glad unanimity in the salvation of guilty men, they meet and embrace in such a manner as else were inconceivable either to our just fears or to our enlightened hopes. God is as true as if he had fulfilled every letter of his threatenings, as righteous as if he had never spoken peace to a sinner's conscience; his love in undiminished splendour shines forth, but no other of his ever blessed characteristics is eclipsed thereby. It is the custom of modern thinkers (?) to make sport of this representation of the result of our Lord's substitutionary
atonement; but had they ever been themselves made to feel the weight of sin upon a spiritually awakened conscience, they would cease from their vain ridicule. Their doctrine of atonement has well been described by Dr. Duncan as the admission "that the Lord Jesus Christ did something or other, which somehow or other, was in some way or other connected with man's salvation." This is their substitute for substitution. Our facts are infinitely superior to their dreams, and yet they sneer. It is but natural that natural men should do so. We cannot expect animals to set much store by the discoveries of science, neither can we hope to see unspiritual men rightly estimate the solution of spiritual problems—they are far above and out of their sight. Meanwhile it remains for those who rejoice in the great reconciliation to continue both to wonder and adore.

Verse 11. *Truth shall spring out of the earth.* Promises which lie unfulfilled, like buried seeds, shall spring up and yield harvests of joy; and men renewed by grace shall learn to be true to one another and their God, and abhor the falsehood which they loved before. And righteousness shall look down from heaven, as if it threw up the windows and leaned out to gaze upon a penitent people, whom it could not have looked upon before without an indignation which would have been fatal to them. This is a delicious scene. Earth yielding flowers of truth, and heaven shining with stars of holiness; the spheres echoing to each other, or being mirrors of each other's beauties. "Earth carpeted with truth and canopied with righteousness, "shall be a nether heaven. When God looks down in grace, man sends his heart upward in obedience. The person of our adorable Lord Jesus Christ explains this verse most sweetly. In Him truth is found in our humanity, and his deity brings divine righteousness among us. His Spirit's work even now creates a hallowed harmony between his church below, and the sovereign righteousness above; and in the latter day, earth shall be universally adorned with every precious virtue, and heaven shall hold intimate intercourse with it. There is a world of meaning in these verses, only needing meditation to draw it out. Reader, "the well is deep, "but if thou hast the Spirit, it cannot be said, that "thou hast nothing to draw with."

Verse 12. *Yea, the LORD shall give that which is good.* Being himself pure goodness, he will readily return from his wrath, and deal out good things to his repenting people. Our evil brings evil upon us, but when we are brought back to follow that which is good, the Lord abundantly enriches us with good things. Material good will always be bestowed where it can be enjoyed in consistency with spiritual good. And our land shall yield her increase. The curse of barrenness will fly with the curse of sin. When the people yielded what was due to God, the soil would recompense their husbandry. See at this day what sin has
done for Palestine, making her gardens a wilderness; her wastes are the scars of her iniquities: nothing but repentance and divine forgiveness will reclaim her desolations. The whole world also shall be bright with the same blessing in the days yet to come,—

"Freed from the curse, the grateful garden gives
Its fruit in goodly revenue. Nor frost,
Nor blight, nor mildew fall, nor cankerworm,
Nor caterpillar, mar one ripening hope.
The clouds drop fatness. The very elements
Are subject to the prayerful will of those
Whose pleasure is in unison with God's."

Verse 13. Righteousness shall go before him; and shall set us in the way of his steps. God's march of right will leave a track wherein his people will joyfully follow. He who smote in justice will also bless in justice, and in both will make his righteousness manifest, so as to affect the hearts and lives of all his people. Such are the blessings of our Lord's first advent, and such shall be yet more conspicuously the result of his second coming. Even so, come Lord Jesus.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. This beautiful psalm, like some others, has come down to us without name or date; the production of some unknown poetic genius, touched, purified, and exalted by the fire of celestial inspiration; a precious relic of that golden age, when the Hebrew music was instinct with a spirit such as never breathed on Greece or Rome. It is interesting to reflect on the anonymous origin of some of the psalms; to remember how largely the church of God is indebted to some nameless worthies who wrote for us hymns and spiritual songs, full of richer strains than were ever poured forth by the most illustrious of pagan name. These holy men are passed away, they have left no record of their history; but they have bequeathed legacies of rich, varied, and inspired sentiments, which will render the church debtors to them to the end of time. John Stoughton. 1852.

Whole Psalm. This Psalm may be thus divided: Ps 85:1-3, express the thanks of the people for their return from captivity; Ps 85:4-6, their prayer for their own reformation; in Ps 85:7, they pray for the coming of Messiah; Ps 85:8 contains the words of the High priest, with God's Gracious answer; which answer is followed by the grateful acclamation of the people, to the end of the Psalm. To prepare for this interpretation, let us observe, how very strangely the
I will hear what God the Lord will say: FOR he shall speak peace unto his people. But surely, God could not be consulted, because it was unnecessary; nor could the High priest possibly say, that he would ask of God, because he knew what God would answer; especially, as we have now a question to God proposed, and yet no answer from God given at all. Under these difficulties we are happily relieved; since it appears, on satisfactory authorities, that, instead of the particle rendered for, the word here originally signified in or by me, which slight variation removes the obscurity, and restores that very light which has long been wanted. The people having prayed for the speedy arrival of their great salvation; the High priest says, (as it should be here expressed), I will hear what the Almighty sayeth.—Jehovah, BY ME sayeth, PEACE unto his people, even unto his saints: but let them not turn again to folly. Whereupon, as the Jews understood peace to comprehend every blessing, and of course their greatest blessing, they at once acknowledged the certainty of this salvation, the glory of their land—they proclaim it as nigh at hand—and then, in rapture truly prophetical, they see this glory as actually arrived, as already dwelling in Judea—they behold God in fulfilling most strictly what he had promised most graciously—they see therefore the mercy of God, and the truth of God met together—they see that scheme perfected, in which the righteousness (i.e. the justice) of God harmonizes with the peace (i.e. the happiness) of man; so that righteousness and peace salute each other with the tenderest affection. In short, they see TRUTH flourishing out of the earth; i.e. they see him, who is the way, the truth, and the life, born here on earth; and they even see the righteousness, or justice of God, looking down from heaven, as being well pleased. Ps 85:12 is at present translated so unhappily, that it is quite despoiled of all its genuine glory. For, could the prophet, after all the rapturous things said before, coldly say here, that God would give what was good and that Judea should have a plentiful harvest? No: consistency and good sense forbid it; and truth confirms their protest against it. The words here express the reasons of all the preceding energies, and properly signify—Yea, Jehovah granteth THE BLESSING; and our land granteth HER OFFSPRING. And what can be the blessing—what, amidst these sublime images, can be Judea's offspring—but HE, and HE only, who was the blessing of all lands in general, and the glory of Judea in particular? And what says the verse following? Righteousness goeth before HIM—certainly, not before the fruit of the earth—but certainly before that illustrious person, even the MESSIAH. Righteousness goeth before HIM, and directeth his goings in the way. As to the word rendered the blessing, and applied to the redemption; the same word is so used by Jeremiah, thus: Behold, the days come, that I will perform that good thing (the blessing) which I have promised... at that time will I cause to grow up unto David the Branch of righteousness (Jer 33:14-15). And as to the
Messiah being here described, partly as springing up from the earth; so says Isaiah: "In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious; and the fruits of the earth shall be excellent and comely." But this evangelical prophet, in another place, has the very same complication of images with that found in the psalm before us. For Isaiah also has the heavens, with their righteousness; and the earth, with its salvation: "Drop down, ye heavens from above, and let the skies pour down righteousness: let the earth open, and let them bring forth salvation." But, "let them bring forth"—who, or what can be here meant by them, but the heavens and the earth? It is heaven and earth which are here represented as bringing forth, and introducing the Saviour of the world. For what else can be here meant as brought forth by them? What, but HE alone; who, deriving his divine nature from heaven, and his human from the earth was (what no other being ever was) both GOD and MAN. Benjamin Kennicott.

**Verse 1.** Thy land. The land of Jehovah the poet calls it, in order to point out the close relation of God to it, and to the people thereof, and so confirm the favour of God towards it. For this land God has chosen as the dwelling place of his people, true religion, and his own presence; this also in his own time He himself had trodden in the person of his Son, and in it He first gathered and founded his Church. Venema.

**Verse 1.** The captivity of Jacob. All true believers are the sons of Jacob, and the seed of Abraham; as well as the believing Gentiles, who are the sons of Jacob according to the Spirit, as the believing Jews the sons of Jacob according to the flesh; and the Church of these true Jacobins and Israelites is the land of the Lord, and the captivity here mentioned is bondage under sin. In this captivity Satan is the gaoler, the flesh is our prison, ungodly lusts are the manacles, a bad conscience the tormentor, all of them against us; only Christ is Emmanuel, God with us; he turneth away the captivity of Jacob in forgiving all his offences, and in covering all his sins. Abraham Wright.

**Verse 2.** Thou hast forgiven the iniquity. nvs tsn, nasatha avon, Thou hast borne, or carried away, the iniquity. An allusion to the ceremony of the scapegoat. Adam Clarke.

**Verse 2.** Thou hast covered all their sin. When God is said to cover sin, he does so, not as one would cover a sore with a plaster, thereby merely hiding it only; but he covers it with a plaster that effectually cures and removes it altogether. Bellarmine.
Verse 2. Selah. Rabbi Kimchi regards it as a sign to elevate the voice. The authors of the Septuagint translation appear to have regarded it as a musical or rhythmical note. Herder regarded it as indicating a change of note; Mathewson as a musical note, equivalent, perhaps, to the word repeat. According to Luther and others, it means silence. Gesenius explains it to mean, "Let the instruments play and the singers stop." Wocher regards it as equivalent to sursum corda—up, my soul! Sommer, after examining all the seventy four passages in which the word occurs, recognises in every case "an actual appeal or summons to Jehovah." They are calls for aid and prayers to be heard, expressed either with entire directness, or if not in the imperative, "Hear, Jehovah!" or Awake, Jehovah! and the like, still earnest addresses to God that he would remember and hear, &c. The word itself he regards as indicating a blast of the trumpets by the priests. Selah, itself, he thinks an abridged expression, used for Higgaion Selah—Higgaion indicating the sound of the stringed instruments and Selah a vigorous blast of trumpets. From the "Bibliotheca Sacra," quoted by Plumer.

Verse 3. Thou hast taken away all thy wrath. Or gathered it; sin occasions wrath, and the people of God are as deserving of it as others; but the Lord has gathered it up, and poured it forth upon his Son, and their Surety; hence nothing of this kind shall ever fall upon them, either here or hereafter; and it is taken away from them, so as to have no sense, apprehension, or conscience of it, which before the law had wrought in them, when pardon is applied unto them, which is what is here meant. John Gill.

Verse 3. Thou hast turned thyself. Here are six hasts drawing in the next turn, Ps 85:4. God hath, and therefore God will is a strong medium of hope, if not a demonstration of Scripture logic. See 2Co 1:10. John Trapp.

Verse 4. Cause thine anger toward us to cease. The phrase, break thine indignation towards us, (that is, wherewith thou art angry with us, in order that it may cease of itself,)comprehends the abolition of the signs and the effects of anger. The word drk, for this is the root to be taken, properly denotes a breaking by means of notches and gaps, as when the edge of anything is broken by many notches and gaps, and it is made utterly worn and useless. Indignation, so long as it is vigorous and spreads its effects, has an edge, which smites and pierces; but it is considered blunt and broken, when it ceases to exert itself, and produces evils no longer, this they affirm of the anger of God. Venema.

Verse 6. Wilt thou not revive us again? The Hebrew is, Wilt thou not return and revive us? We translate the verb return by the adverb again: Wilt thou not revive us again? Thou hast given us many revives: when we were as dead men, and like carcases rotting in the grave, thou didst revive us, wilt thou not revive
us once more, and act over those powerfully merciful works and strong salvations once more, or again? Joseph Caryl.

Verse 6. That thy people may rejoice in thee. Bernard in his 15th Sermon on Canticles says Jesus is honey in the mouth, melody in the ear, joy in the heart. Is any among us sad? Let Jesus enter the heart, and thence spring to the countenance, and behold, before the rising brightness of his name, every cloud is scattered, serenity returns. Origen in his 10th Hom on Genesis, has the remark, Abraham rejoiced not in present things, neither in the riches of the words, nor deeds of time. But do you wish to hear, whence he drew his joy? Listen to the Lord speaking to the Jews, Joh 8:56: Your father, Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad: hope heaped up his joys. Le Blanc.

Verse 6. That thy people may rejoice in thee. When God changeth the cheer of his people, their joy should not be in the gift, but in the Giver. David Dickson.

Verse 6. It is the most natural thing, the most delightful thing, for the people of God to rejoice in God. God is the fountain of joy, and whom should he fill with it but his people? And whom should his people breathe it into again but him? This posture God delights to have them in; this posture they delight to be in; but this cannot be in that estate of death and captivity wherein God for a long season shutteth them up. "The living, the living shall praise thee," but alas, the dead cannot. John Pennington, 1656.

Verse 6. Truly sin kills. Men are dead in trespasses and sins, dead in law, dead in their affections, dead in a loss of comfortable communion with God. Probably the greatest practical heresy of each age is a low idea of our undone condition under the guilt and dominion of sin. While this prevails we shall be slow to cry for reviving or quickening. What sinners and churches need is quickening by the Holy Ghost. William S. Plumer.

Verses 6-7. Wilt thou not revive us, by the first and spiritual resurrection, and so thy people, quickened from a life of sin to a life of grace, will rejoice in thee, not in themselves, presuming nothing on their own power. And in order that these things may be fulfilled in us, Shew us, O Lord, thy mercy, that is, Christ, through whom thou hast pitied the human race, shew him to us after this exile that we may see him face to face. Richardus Hampolus.

Verse 7. Thy mercy. It is not merely of the Lord's mercies that we are not consumed, but all is mercy, from first to last,—mercy that met us by the way,—mercy that looked upon us in our misery,—mercy that washed us from our sins
in his own blood,—mercy that covered our nakedness and clad us in his own robe of righteousness,—mercy that led and guided us by the way,—and mercy that will never leave nor forsake us till mercy has wrought its perfect work in the eternal salvation of our souls through Jesus Christ. Barton Bouchier.

**Verse 8.** *I will hear,* etc. The true attitude for a sinner to take in the presence of divine revelation, is that of a **listener.** To enter the place of a **doer** before you have occupied that of a **listener,** is to reverse God's order, and throw everything into confusion. Adam tried this plan, and found it a failure. He tried "works." He "sewed fig leaves together," but it was no use. He could not even satisfy his own conscience, or remove his guilty fear. He had to listen to the voice of God—to hearken to divine revelation. "**Things New and Old.**" 1859.

**Verse 8.** *I will hear,* etc. The eye as a mere organ of sense must give place to the ear. Therefore it is wittily observed, that our Saviour commanding the abscession of the offending hand, foot, and eye, (Mr 9:43-47), yet never spake of the ear. If thy hand, thy foot, or thine eye, cause thee to offend, deprive thyself of them; but part not with thine ear, for that is an organ to derive unto thy soul's salvation. As Christ says there, a man may enter into heaven, lamed in his feet, as Mephibosheth, blind in his sight, as Barzillai, maimed in his hand, as the dry handed man in the gospel; but if there be not an ear to hear of the way, there will be no foot to enter into heaven. If God be not first in the ear, he is neither sanctifiedly in the mouth, nor comfortably in the heart. The Jews had eyes to see Christ's miracles, but because they had no ears to hear his wisdom, therefore they had no feet to enter into his kingdom. The way into the house is by the door, not by the window: the eye is but the window of the heart, the ear is the door. Now Christ stands knocking at the door, not at the window. Re 3:20. And he will not come in at the window, but at the door. "He that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep." Joh 10:2. He comes now in by his oracles, now by his miracles. "To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice,"Joh 10:3. The way to open and let him in is by the door; to hear his voice. There was a man in the gospel blind and deaf; blind eyes is ill; but deaf ears, worse. It is bad to have the eyes seeled (Seel, to close up: a term in falconry), but worse to have the ears sealed up. Open your ears therefore to this heavenly voice. Bernard hath this description of a good ear: Which willingly hears what is taught, wisely understands what it heareth, and obediently practises what it understandeth. O give me such an ear, and I will hang on it jewels of gold, ornaments of praise. **Thomas Adams.**

**Verse 8.** *I will hear,* etc. My text carries in it a poetical allusion to the consulting of the cloud of glory, which was between the cherubims, and to the receiving answer from it, upon all critical occasions. David turned his thoughts
from all the other views he might have, to this, *I will hear what God the Lord will speak* and that so he might depend wholly on the assurances that he should receive of God's favour, upon the repentance and prayers of the people; and in consideration of God's covenant with them, he knew the answer would be *peace,* which being the form of salutation in those ages, among friends, imported as entire reconciliation. So that by *speaking peace* is to be understood as assurance of God's love and favour to his people, and to his saints: that is, to the people that was sanctified, and dedicated to the service of God by so many federal rites. *Gilbert Burnet,* 1643-1714/5.

**Verse 8.** *I will hear what God the Lord will speak.* Carnal men speak peace to themselves on account of some supposed goodness in themselves. And unsound professors steal peace from God's promises, such as Isa 55:7 Ho 14:4. But an upright heart will not be satisfied without hearing God speak peace to his heart by his Spirit. And for this he will pray, and wait, and hearken, and when God speaks peace, there comes such sweetness with it, and such discovery of his love, as lays a powerful influence on the soul not to turn again to folly. This peace is an humbling, melting peace, which brings humiliation to the soul as well as joy; but this never happens when men speak peace to themselves. *John Berridge,* 1716-1793.

**Verse 8.** *I will hear what God the LORD will speak,* etc. His prayer being finished, and he having spoke, he now stands and listens, as you used to do when you expect an echo, what echo he should have, what answer would be returned from heaven, whether his prayer had already come: *I will hear what the Lord will speak;* or, as some read it, *I will hear what the Lord doth speak:* for sometimes there is a present echo, a speedy answer returned to a man's heart, even ere the prayer is half finished. *He will speak peace.* When the child of God wants peace, he can have no peace till God speaks it... Let God's people be in never so great distress, yet it is an easy thing for God to give peace to them. Mark the expression here used: it is but *speaking peace,* that is, it is as easy for him to give peace as it is for you to speak a word; it is no more to him. Then our comfort is, that as he only must do it, so he easily can do it, even with a word. *Thomas Goodwin.*

**Verse 8.** *He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints,* etc. The voice of the Lord is comfortable, and his words are sweet to those that fear him. It is a plain sign that all is not well with us, when the voice of God doth cast us into fear, when we are afraid to hear the word preached, when just reproofs of our sins are unwelcome to us, and anger us, and make us think the less of our minister that chideth and threateneth us. A good life and a well governed conversation doth not fear the voice of God; the word of God is the light which
God hath set up in his church, to guide her feet in the ways of peace. They that do evil hate the light, and will not come near it, lest their works should be reproved; the children of the light resort to it, and call upon God: "Search my veins and my heart, and see if there be any way of wickedness in me." Edward Marbury.

Verse 8. To his people and to his saints. He will give prosperity to the people in general; and to his saints—his followers, in particular. Adam Clarke.

Verse 8. To his saints. It is remarkable that we have the suffrage of a celebrated Jewish writer, Kimchi, to understand the word rendered saints in this place, of the godly among the Gentiles, as distinguished from the Lord's people, the Jews. John Fry.

Verse 8. He will speak peace unto his people, and to his saints: but let them not return again to folly. This imports that if his saints turn again to folly, which by woeful experience we find too frequently done, God may change his voice, and turn his peace, formerly spoken, into a warlike defiance to their conscience. Thomas Fuller.

Verse 8. But let them not turn again to folly. If God did not in the end speak peace, they would indeed return to folly. For his end of speaking peace is, that they might not return to folly: Ps 125:3, "The rod of the wicked shall not always be upon the righteous, lest they put forth their hand to iniquity; therefore, at the last verse, "peace shall be upon Israel." As it is a rule in physic still to maintain nature, and therefore when that shall be in hazard to be destroyed, they leave giving purging physic, and give cordials; so doth God with his people: though with purging physic he often brings their spirits very weak and low, yet he will uphold and maintain their spirits, so as they shall not fail and be extinguished, but then he will give cordials to raise them up again. Thomas Goodwin.

Verse 8. It is hard to know, in spiritual exercises, whether is be more difficult to attain some good frame, or to keep and maintain it when it is attained; whether more seriousness is required for making peace with God, or for keeping of it when made; whether more diligence should be in preparing for a communion, or more watchfulness after it: sure both are required; and it was our blessed Lord's word, Mt 26:41, after the first celebration of his supper, "Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation." Here that saying holds eminently: "Non minor est virtus, quam quaerere, parta tueri:" no less virtue and valour is requisite to maintain, than to make a purchase or conquest. In the words there are,
1. A great mercy promised from the Lord to his people, viz., *He will speak peace to them.*

2. A special caveat and advertisement given them, pointing at their hazard: *But let them not turn again to folly:* that is, let not his people and saints to whom he hath spoken peace, return to sin; let them beware of bourding (Bourding— jesting), and dallying with God's mercy, and of turning his grace into wantonness, of cooling in their affections to him, of slipping back to their old way, and of embracing their old lovers and idols: for that is folly, even in folio, to speak so. *James Durham, in "The Unsearchable Riches of Christ."*

**Verse 9.** *That glory may dwell in our land.* What land the true church of Christ, the saints and they that fear God, do dwell in; there doth glory dwell: there God, there Christ by his Spirit bringing righteousness and salvation to such a society, is glorious; and for his presence the people are glorious; and the land glorious above all other lands whatsoever. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 10.** *Mercy and truth; righteousness and peace.* Note, four virtues stand out prominently in the incarnation; namely, mercy, truth, righteousness and peace, or love producing peace. These were like four steps of the throne of Christ, or four princes standing near and accompanying Him.

1. On the right hand, is mercy presenting the olive.

2. On the left, truth holding the white lily.


4. Peace follows Him, having a *cornucopiae* full of flowers, and scattering the flowers around. *Le Blanc.*

**Verse 10.** *Mercy and truth; righteousness and peace.* These four divine attributes parted at the fall of Adam, and met again at the birth of Christ. Mercy was ever inclined to save man, and Peace could not be his enemy; but Truth extracted the performance of God's threat,—"The soul that sinneth, it shall die; "and Righteousness could not but give to every one his due, Jehovah must be true in all his ways, and righteous in all his works. Now there is no religion on earth, except the Christian, which can satisfy the demands of all these claimants, and restore an union between them; which can show how God's word can be true, and his work just, and the sinner, notwithstanding, find mercy, and obtain peace. *George Horne.*
Verse 10. This is a remarkable text, and much has been said on it; but there is a beauty in it which, I think, has not been noticed. Mercy and peace are on one side; truth and righteousness on the other. Truth requires righteousness; mercy calls for peace. They meet together on the way; one going to make inquisition for sin, the other to plead for reconciliation. Having met, their differences on certain considerations, not here particularly mentioned, are adjusted; and their mutual claims blended together in one common interest; on which peace and righteousness immediately embrace. Thus, righteousness is given to truth, and peace is given to mercy. Now, where did these meet? In Christ Jesus. When were they reconciled? When he poured out his life on Calvary. Adam Clarke.

Verse 10. Mercy and truth are met together.

1. They meet together in God; for all the paths of the Lord are mercy and truth, Ps 25:9; mercy in making, and truth in keeping his promise to his people. Paul saith, Jesus Christ was a minister of the circumcision to the truth of God, to confirm the promises made unto the fathers, and that the Gentiles might glorify God for his mercy. Ro 15:8. God promised his Son unto the Jews, and he gave him in the fulness of time to be both a light to the Gentiles, and glory to his people Israel; herein shewing his mercy more principally to the Gentiles, his truth unto the Jews, and so his mercy and truth embraced each other so that he made both people but one, to wit, one flock, in one sheepfold, under one shepherd. If we take truth and righteousness for God's justice in punishing, mercy and peace for his graciousness in pardoning; yet as they meet together in all his ways unto such as keep his covenant and his testimonies. For as the mercies of the wicked are full of cruelty, so the very judgments of God upon his servants are full of mercy. In his wrath he remembers pity; punishing a little, that he may pardon a great deal; destroying the flesh only to save the spirit, 1Co 5:5. Misericordiae est aliquando subtrahere misericordiam. It was good for Joseph that he was a captive; good for Naaman that he was a leper; good for Bartimaeus that he was blind, and for David that he was in trouble. Bradford thanked God more of his prison, than of any parlour or pleasure. All things are for the best unto the faithful, and so God's mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other, his mercy being just, and his justice being merciful; but God in giving his only Son unto the world, more abundantly shewed his mercy and justice kissing one another. His justice that every soul that sins should die; but his mercy desires not the death of a sinner. Eze 33:11...

2. Righteousness and peace meet together in man; so Augustine expounds it: an unjust man is full of quarrels, like Ishmael, "every man's hand is against him, and his hand against every man; "but he who is righteous, and giveth every man
his due, shall have peace, so much as is possible with all men, especially with his own self and soul. Righteousness and peace are so near, so dear, that thou canst not have the one without the other.

3. Righteousness and peace meet in Christ, God's man; for by these two, some divines understand the Old Testament and the New. The Law doth exact justice, requiring of a malefactor "eye for eye, tooth for tooth, hand for hand, foot for foot; "but the Gospel is full of mercy and peace, saying unto the sinner, who truly repenteth him of his sins, and unfeignedly believes the word of promise, "Son, be of good comfort, thy sins are forgiven thee; ""Daughter be of good cheer, thy faith hath made thee whole; ""Go thy way, they belief hath saved thee; ""Behold, thou art now made whole, sin no more." These two testaments meet together in Christ, as in their proper centre, they kissed each other on this (Christmas) day, because the gospel performed what the law promised. John Boys.

Verse 10. When our Lord spake that parable of the prodigal son, and represented the Father as seeing his child afar off in his misery, and how he had compassion on him, and ran and fell on his neck and kissed him, one cannot but feel what a touching and tender illustration he has given of this most exquisite passage of his own word: Mercy and truth are met together; righteousness and peace have kissed each other. Barton Bouchier.

Verses 10-11. Mercy and Peace if they had met, or Truth and Righteousness, either of the two, it had not been strange. But for these that seem to be in opposition to do it, that makes this meeting marvellous in our eyes. Will you stay a little and take a view of the parties? Four they are. These four,

1. Mercy, and

2. Truth,

3. Righteousness, and

4. Peace. Which quaternion at the first sight divides itself into two and two. Mercy and Peace, they two pair well; they be collectanae, as Bernard saith of them in one place, 'bed fellows, 'sleep together; collectanae, as in another place, 'sucked one milk, one breast' both. And as these two, so the other two; Truth and Righteousness seem to be of one complexion and disposition, and commonly take part together. Of these Mercy seems to favour us; and Peace no enemy to us or to any (seeing we must speak of them as of persons); mild and gentle persons both. For Righteousness I know not well what to say: gestat
gladium, (bears the sword), and I fear non frustra (not in vain). Nor of Truth, who is vera and severa, 'severe' too otherwhile. These I doubt are not like affected. The reason of my doubt. One of them, Righteousness, it is told here for great news, that she but "looked down hitherwards from heaven." Before then she would not have done that. A great sign it is of heart burning, when one will not do so much as look at another—not endure his sight. We cannot promise ourselves much of her. No, nor of Truth. One was so bold in a place to say, omnis homo mendax (Ro 3:4), and feared no challenge for it. By that it seems all stands not well with her neither. So then two for us, two against us. For their order. Mercy is first, and Peace last. With both ends we shall do well enough. God send us to do but so with the midst! Yet this is not amiss that they which favour us less are in the midst; hemmed in on both sides, closed about with those that wish us well; and they between us and them. On the one side, Mercy before; on the other, Peace behind another; that in this double meeting Mercy sorts not herself, goes not to Righteousness; nor Righteousness to her, but to Peace. A kind of cross meeting, as it were, there is—the better hope of accord. Mercy and Righteousness have no symbolizing quality at all, no hope of them; but Truth with Mercy hath. There is truth as well in the promise of Mercy as in the threat of justice. Lancelot Andrewes.

Verse 11. Truth shall spring. The literal sense is, that the promises which for a long time are not fulfilled, and seem like seeds or roots hidden and concealed under ground, when they shall be fulfilled, shall be considered to spring up, to grow, etc. Lorinus.

Verse 11. Spring. The Metaphor is taken from flowers and trees. In the Greek the expression is aneile, that is, has sprung like the morning, for anatllw and anatolh are properly said of the rising of the sun and moon. Le Blanc.

Verse 11. Shall look down. This looking down, pqsg rendered generally parakuptw in the Greek, implies such a look as in 1Pe 1:12, angels give into the things of salvation, and such a look as the disciples gave into the sepulchre. It is really the Righteous One who is resting over them in complacent love, not as in Ps 14:2 53:2, but fulfilling Ps 102:19-20. Andrew A. Bonar.

Verse 12. It has sometimes been objected that the Christian doctrine of a Millennium cannot be true, for the earth could not support the teeming millions that would naturally be found upon it, if wars and vice should cease to waste its population. But omitting other and pertinent answers that have been given, we find one here that covers the whole ground, the earth shall yield her increase. Now and then the season is unusually propitious, and we have a specimen of
what God can do when he chooses. He can without any miracle make it many times more fruitful than it has ever been. William S. Plumer.

Verse 13. Righteousness shall go before him, etc. The meaning of this difficult verse may probably be as follows:—Righteousness shall go before Him (Jehovah), and shall make his footsteps a pathway for his servants to walk in.—Ernest Hawkins.

Verse 13. Shall set us in the way of his steps. It is reported in the Bohemian History, that St. Wenceslaus, their king, one winter night going to his devotions, in a remote church, barefooted in the snow and sharpness of unequal and pointed ice, his servant Podavivus, who waited upon his master's piety, and endeavoured to imitate his affections, began to faint through the violence of the snow and cold; till the king commanded him to follow him, and set his feet in the same footsteps, which his feet should mark for him: the servant did so, and either fancied a cure, or found one; for he followed his prince, helped forward with shame and zeal to his imitation, and by the forming footsteps for him in the snow. In the same manner does the blessed Jesus; for, since our way is troublesome, obscure, full of objections and danger, apt to be mistaken, and to affright our industry, he commands us to mark his footsteps, to tread where his feet have stood, and not only invite us forward by the argument of his example, but he hath trodden down much of the difficulty, and made the way easier and fit for our feet. For he knows our infirmities, and himself hath felt their experience in all things but in the neighbourhoods of sin; and therefore he hath proportioned a way and a path to our strength and capacities, and like Jacob, hath marched softly and in evenness with the children and the cattle, to entertain us by the comforts of his company, and the influence of a perpetual guide. Jeremy Taylor.

Verse 13. (last clause). The sinner who feels his need of salvation, is set—in the way of his steps; as Bartimaeus sat by the way side begging, by which way Jesus walked; and when he came where he was, heard his prayer, and restored him his sight. Adam Clarke.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. There is,

1. Captivity.
(a) Of the people of God.
(b) Although they are the people of God.
(c) Because they are the people of God. You only have I known, etc.

2. Restoration from Captivity: Thou hast brought back, etc.

(a) The fact.

(b) The Author: Thou: by thine own power; in thine own manner; at thine own time.

3. The cause of the Restoration; the favour of God: Thou hast been favourable.

(a) On account of favour past: "Thou hast."
(b) On account of favour in reserve.

Verse 2.

1. The subjects of forgiveness: Thy people.

(a) By choice.
(b) By redemption.
(c) By effectual calling.

2. The time of forgiveness: Thou hast forgiven, etc.

3. The method of forgiveness.

(a) Forgiven. Hebrew, borne, same word as in Le 16:22: "The goat shall bear upon him all their iniquities."

(b) Covered; as the mercy seat covered the law that had been broken. IV. The extent of forgiveness: all their sin.

Verse 3.

1. The language of penitence. It is implied here that the wrath was,

(a) Great:

(b) Just thy wrath.

2. The language of faith.
(a) In the grace of pardon: *Thou hast turned away wrath.* We could not, by anything we could do or suffer.

(b) In the method of pardon: *Turned away.* Turned it from us to our Surety.


**Verse 4.**

1. In what salvation consists.

(a) In the removal of God's enmity from us.
(b) In the removal of our enmity to him.

2. By whom it is accomplished. By the God of salvation.

(a) He causes his anger toward us to cease, and
(b) Our anger toward him.

3. How is it obtained? By prayer: "Turn us, "etc.

**Verse 6.**

1. Revivals imply decline.

(a) That there is grace to be revived.
(b) That this grace has declined.

2. Revivals are from God: *Wilt not thou,* etc.: they cannot be got up by men.

3. Revivals are frequently needed: *Wilt thou revive us again.*

4. Revivals are in answer to prayer: *Wilt thou not,* etc.

5. Revivals are occasions for great joy.

(a) *To* the saints.
(b) *In* God.

**Verse 7.**

1. Salvation is God's work: *Thy salvation.*
(a) The plan is his.
(b) The provision is his.
(c) The condition is his.
(d) The application is his.
(e) The consummation is his.

2. Salvation is God's gift.

(a) Of his mercy: Show us thy mercy.
(b) Of his grace: Grant us, etc.

3. Salvation is God's answer to prayer.

(a) It is the first object of prayer.
(b) It includes every other.

Verse 8.

1. We should look for an answer to prayer. Having spoken to God, we should hear what he has to say to us in reply.

(a) In his word.
(b) In his providence.
(c) By his Spirit in our own souls.

2. We should look for an answer of peace: He will speak peace.

3. We should avoid whatever might deprive us of that peace: But let them not turn, etc. G. R.

Verse 8. Thomas Goodwin has three sermons upon this verse, (First clause), entitled The Return of Prayers. (Second clause).—Tidings of Peace. (Last clause)—The Folly of Relapsing after Peace spoken.

Verse 8. (last clause). They should not turn again to folly,

1. Because it will be a greater aggravation in sinning. It is made the aggravation of Solomon's sin (1Ki 11:9), that "God had appeared to him twice."

2. The second reason is intimated in the word folly: as if the Lord should have said, Set aside the unkindness and wrong you do to me, yet therein you befool yourselves; you will have the worst of it. T. Goodwin.
Verse 10.

1. The attributes displayed in man's salvation.

(a) Mercy in the promise.
(b) Truth in its fulfilment.
(c) Righteousness in the manner of its fulfilment.
(d) Peace in its results.

2. These attributes harmonized in man's salvation.

(a) How? Met together—kissed each other.

(b) Why? Each on its own account. All on each others' account.

(c) Where? Met and kissed—(1.) In the covenant. (2.) At the incarnation. (3.) At the cross. (4.) At the conversion of every sinner. (5.) At the completion of the saints in heaven. G. R.

Verse 10. The Pulpit, vol. 28, 1836, contains a sermon by R. W. Sibthorpe, in which the preacher,

1. Considers the harmony of the divine perfections in the redemption of a sinner.

2. The wisdom of the divine dealings in the calling and guidance of the believer; so that mercy, truth, etc., each becomes in turn conspicuous in our experience.

3. The completeness of the divine image in the sanctified soul, so that the perfected saint abounds in mercy and truth, is filled with peace, and is conformed to his righteous Lord.

Verse 12.

1. All spiritual good is from God: The Lord will give, etc.

(a) Is repentance a good thing? The Lord will give repentance.
(b) Is pardon? The Lord, etc.
(c) Is faith?
(d) Is justification?
(e) Is regeneration?
(f) Is growth in grace?
(g) Is preservation unto the end?
(h) Is eternal glory? *The Lord will give*, etc.

2. All temporal good is from God. *Our land*, etc.

(a) In a lawful manner *our land*.

(b) In the use of appointed means: *Shall yield her increase*, etc.

(c) In dependence upon the divine blessing. "Who giveth fruitful seasons," etc.

Spiritual good is not less given in the use of appointed means. *G. R.*

**Verse 12.** The fertility of our spheres of labour the gift of God.

**Verse 13.**

1. The righteousness by which we are justified long precedes our justification: this righteousness is gone before, etc.

2. Our justification by that righteousness precedes our sanctification.

3. The righteousness of sanctification invariably follows that of justification. *G. R.*

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**WORK UPON THE EIGHTY-FIFTH PSALM**

In an old quarto volume of 788 pages, containing Expositions of several passages of Scripture, is a short Exposition of this Psalm (pp. 452-64) entitled "A Taste of the Breathings, Pantings, Waitings, and Hopes of Israel after the true Saviour, and his effectual Redemption." There is no Author's name, but some previous owner has written "John Pennington" on the title page: date 1656.
Psalm 86

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. A Prayer of David. We have here one of the five psalms entitled Tephillahs or prayers. This psalm consists of praise as well as prayer, but it is in all parts so directly addressed to God that it is most fitly called "a prayer." A prayer is none the less but all the more a prayer because veins of praise run through it. This psalm would seem to have been specially known as David's prayer; even as the ninetieth is "the prayer of Moses." David composed it, and no doubt often expressed himself in similar language; both the matter and the wording are suitable to his varied circumstances and expressive of the different characteristics of his mind. In many respects it resembles Ps 17:1-15, which bears the same title, but in other aspects it is very different; the prayers of a good man have a family likeness, but they vary as much as they agree. We may learn from the present psalm that the great saints of old were accustomed to pray very much in the same fashion as we do; believers in all ages are of one genus. The name of God occurs very frequently in this psalm, sometimes it is Jehovah, but more commonly Adonai, which it is believed by many learned scholars was written by the Jewish transcribers instead of the sublimer title, because their superstitious dread led them to do so: we, labouring under no such tormenting fear, rejoice in Jehovah, our God. It is singular that those who were so afraid of their God, that they dared not write his name, had yet so little godly fear, that they dared to alter his word.

DIVISION. The psalm is irregular in its construction but may be divided into three portions, each ending with a note of gratitude or of confidence: we shall therefore read from Ps 86:1-7, and then, (after another pause at the end of Ps 86:13), we will continue to the end.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. Bow down thine ear, O Lord, hear me. In condescension to my littleness, and in pity to my weakness, "bow down thine ear, O Lord." When our prayers are lowly by reason of our humility, or feeble by reason of our sickness, or without wing by reason of our despondency, the Lord will bow down to them, the infinitely exalted Jehovah will have respect unto them. Faith, when she has the loftiest name of God on her tongue, and calls him Jehovah, yet dares to ask from him the most tender and condescending acts of love. Great as he is he loves his children to be bold with him. For I am poor and needy—doubly a son of poverty, because, first, poor and without supply for my needs, and next needy, and so full of wants, though unable to supply them. Our distress is a forcible reason for our being heard by the Lord God, merciful, and gracious, for misery is ever the master argument with mercy. Such reasoning as this would never be adopted by a proud man, and when we hear it repeated in the public congregation by those great ones of the earth who count the peasantry to be little better than the earth they tread upon, it sounds like a mockery of the Most High. Of all despicable sinners those are the worst who
use the language of spiritual poverty while they think themselves to be rich and increased in goods.

Verse 2. Preserve my soul. Let my life be safe from my enemies, and my spiritual nature be secure from their temptations. He feels himself unsafe except he be covered by the divine protection. For I am holy. I am set apart for holy uses, therefore do not let thine enemies commit a sacrilege by injuring or defiling me: I am clear of the crimes laid to my charge, and in that sense innocent; therefore, I beseech thee, do not allow me to suffer from unjust charges: and I am inoffensive, meek, and gentle towards others, therefore deal mercifully with me as I have dealt with my fellow men. Any of these renderings may explain the text, perhaps all together will expound it best. It is not self righteous in good men to plead their innocence as a reason for escaping from the results of sins wrongfully ascribed to them; penitents do not bedaub themselves with mire for the love of it, or make themselves out to be worse than they are out of compliment to heaven. No, the humblest saint is not a fool, and he is as well aware of the matters wherein he is clear as of those wherein he must cry "peccavi." To plead guilty to offences we have never committed is as great a lie as the denial of our real faults. O thou my God, save thy servant that trusteth in thee. Lest any man should suppose that David trusted in his own holiness he immediately declared his trust in the Lord, and begged to be saved as one who was not holy in the sense of being perfect, but was even yet in need of the very elements of salvation. How sweet is that title, "my God", when joined to the other, "thy servant"; and how sweet is the hope that on this ground we shall be saved; seeing that our God is not like the Amalekitish master who left his poor sick servant to perish. Note how David's poor I am (or rather the I repeated without the am) appeals to the great I AM with that sacred boldness engendered by the necessity which breaks through stone walls, aided by the faith which removes mountains.

Verse 3. Be merciful unto me, O Lord. The best of men need mercy, and appeal to mercy, yea to nothing else but mercy; they need it for themselves, and crave it eagerly of their God as a personal requisite. For I cry unto thee daily. Is there not a promise that importunity shall prevail? May we not, then, plead our importunity as an argument with God? He who prays every day, and all the day, for so the word may mean, may rest assured that the Lord will hear him in the day of his need. If we cried sometimes to man, or other false confidences, we might expect to be referred to them in the hour of our calamity, but if in all former times we have looked to the Lord alone, we may be sure that he will not desert us now. See how David pleaded, first that he was poor and needy, next that he was the Lord's set apart one, then that he was God's servant and had
learned to trust in the Lord, and lastly that he had been taught to pray daily; surely these are such holy pleadings as any tried believer may employ when wrestling with a prayer hearing God, and with such weapons the most trembling suppliant may hope to win the day.

Verse 4. *Rejoice the soul of thy servant.* Make my heart glad, O my Maker, for I count it my honour to call myself again and again thy servant, and I reckon thy favour to be all the wages I could desire. I look for all my happiness in thee only, and therefore unto thee, O Lord, do I lift up my soul. As the heliotrope looks to the sun for its smile, so turn I my heart to thee. Thou art as the brazen serpent to my sick nature, and I lift up my soul's eye to thee that I may live. I know that the nearer I am to thee the greater is my joy, therefore be pleased to draw me nearer while I am labouring to draw near. It is not easy to lift a soul at all; it needs a strong shoulder at the wheel when a heart sticks in the miry clay of despondency: it is less easy to lift a soul up to the Lord, for the height is great as well as the weight oppressive; but the Lord will take the will for the deed, and come in with a hand of almighty grace to raise his poor servant out of the earth and up to heaven.

Verse 5. *For thou, Lord, art good, and ready to forgive.* Good at giving and forgiving; supplying us with his good, and removing our evil. Here was the great reason why the Psalmist looked to the Lord alone for his joy, because every joy creating attribute is to be found in perfection in Jehovah alone. Some men who would be considered good are so self exultingly indignant at the injuries done them by others, that they cannot forgive; but we may rest assured that the better a being is, the more willing he is to forgive, and the best and highest of all is ever ready to blot out the transgressions of his creatures. And plenteous in mercy unto all them that call upon thee. God does not dispense his mercy from a slender store which perchance may be so impoverished as to give out altogether, but out of a cornucopiae he pours forth the infinite riches of his mercy: his goodness flows forth in abounding streams towards those who pray and in adoring worship make mention of his name. David seems to have stood in the cleft of the rock with Moses, and to have heard the name of the Lord proclaimed even as the great lawgiver did, for in two places in this psalm he almost quotes *verbatim* the passage in Ex 34:6—"The Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth."

Verse 6. *Give ear, O LORD, unto my prayer.* Even the glory which his spirit had beheld did not withdraw him from his prayer, but rather urged him to be more fervent in it; hence he implores the Lord to hear his requests. Attend to the voice of my supplications. Here are repetitions, but not vain repetitions. When a child cries it repeats the same note, but it is equally in earnest every
time, and so was it with the suppliant here. Note the expression, "the voice of
my supplications", as if they were not all voice but were partly made up of
inarticulate noise, yet amid much that was superfluous there really was a
distinct voice, an inner meaning, a living sense which was the heart's intention.
This he would have the Lord sift out from the chaff, and hear amid the mingled
din. May our prayers never be voiceless; may the soul's intent always give them
a live core of meaning.

Verse 7. In the day of my trouble I will call upon thee: for thou wilt answer me.
A pious resolve backed by a judicious reason. It is useless to cry to those who
cannot or will not hear; once convince men that prayer has no effect upon God,
and they will have no more of it. In these busy days and especially in troublous
times, men cannot afford to waste time in entreaties which must be unavailing.
Our experience confirms us in the belief that Jehovah the living God really
does aid those who call upon him, and therefore we pray and mean to pray, not
because we are so fascinated by prayer that for its own sake we would continue
in it if it proved to be mere folly and superstition, as vain philosophers assert;
but because we really, indeed, and of a truth, find it to be a practical and
effectual means of obtaining help from God in the hour of need. There can be
no reason for praying if there be no expectation of the Lord's answering. Who
would make a conscience of pleading with the winds, or find a solace in
supplicating the waves? The mercy seat is a mockery if there be no hearing nor
answering. David, as the following verses show, believed the Lord to be a
living and potent God, and indeed to be "God alone", and it was on that account
that he resolved in every hour of trouble to call upon him.

Verse 8. Among the gods there is none like unto thee, O Lord. There are gods
by delegated office, such as kings and magistrates, but they are as nothing in
the presence of Jehovah; there are also gods by the nomination of superstition,
but these are vanity itself, and cannot be compared with the living and true
God. Even if the heathen idols were gods, none of them in power or even in
character, could be likened unto the self existent, all creating God of Israel. If
every imaginary deity could start into actual existence, and become really
divine, yet would we choose Jehovah to be our God, and reject all others.
Neither are there any works like unto thy works. What have the false gods ever
made or unmade? What miracles have they wrought? When did they divide a
sea, or march through a wilderness scattering bread from the skies? O Jehovah,
in thy person and in thy works, thou art as far above all gods as the heavens are
above the nethermost abyss.

Verse 9. All nations whom thou hast made, and these include all mankind,
since they all come of the first Adam—thy creature, and their lives are all
distinct creations of thine omnipotence. All these shall come with penitent hearts, in thine own way, to thine own self, and worship before thee, O Lord. Because thou art thus above all gods, the people who have been so long deceived shall at last discover thy greatness, and shall render thee the worship which is thy due: thou hast created them all, and unto thee shall they all yield homage. This was David's reason for resorting to the Lord in trouble, for he felt that one day all men would acknowledge the Lord to be the only God. It makes us content to be in the minority today, when we are sure that the majority will be with us tomorrow, ay, and that the truth will one day be carried unanimously and heartily. David was not a believer in the theory that the world will grow worse and worse, and that the dispensation will wind up with general darkness, and idolatry. Earth's sun is to go down amid tenfold night if some of our prophetic brethren are to be believed. Not so do we expect, but we look for day when the dwellers in all lands shall learn righteousness, shall trust in the Saviour, shall worship thee alone, O God, and shall glorify thy name. The modern notion has greatly damped the zeal of the church for missions, and the sooner it is shown to be unscriptural the better for the cause of God. It neither consorts with prophecy, honours God, nor inspires the church with ardour. Far hence be it driven.

Verse 10. *For thou art great.* He had before said, "thou art good"; it is a grand thing when greatness and goodness are united; it is only in the Divine Being that either of them exists absolutely, and essentially. Happy is it for us that they both exist in the Lord to an equal degree. To be great and not good might lead to tyranny in the King, and for him to be good and not great might involve countless calamities upon his subjects from foreign foes, so that either alternative would be terrible; let the two be blended, and we have a monarch in whom the nation may rest and rejoice. And doest wondrous things. Being good, he is said to be ready to forgive: being great, he works wonders: we may blend the two, for there is no wonder so wonderful as the pardon of our transgressions. All that God does or makes has wonder in it; he breathes, and the wind is mystery; he speaks, and the thunder astounds us; even the commonest daisy is a marvel, and a pebble enshrines wisdom. Only to fools is anything which God has made uninteresting: the world is a world of wonders. Note that the verb doest is in the present, the Lord is doing wondrous things, they are transpiring before our eyes. Where are they? Look upon the bursting buds of spring or the maturing fruits of autumn, gaze on the sky or skim the sea, mark the results of providence and the victories of grace, everywhere at all times the great *Thaumaturge* stretches forth his rod of power.
Thou art God alone. Alone wast thou God before thy creatures were; alone in
godhead still art thou now that thou hast given life to throngs of beings; alone
for ever shalt thou be, for none can ever rival thee. True religion makes no
compromises, it does not admit Baal or Dagon to be a god; it is exclusive and
monopolizing, claiming for Jehovah nothing less than all. The vaunted
liberality of certain professors of modern thought is not to be cultivated by
believers in the truth. "Philosophic breadth" aims at building a Pantheon, and
piles a Pandemonium; it is not for us to be helpers in such an evil work.
Benevolently intolerant, we would, for the good of mankind, as well as for the
 glory of God, undeceive mankind as to the value of their compromises,—they
are mere treason to truth. Our God is not to be worshipped as one among many
good and true beings, but as God alone; and his gospel is not to be preached as
one of several saving systems, but as the one sole way of salvation. Lies can
face each other beneath one common dome; but in the temple of truth the
worship is one and indivisible.

Verse 11. Teach me thy way. O LORD. Instruct me thus at all times, let me live
in thy school; but teach me now especially since I am in trouble and perplexity.
Be pleased to shew me the way which thy wisdom and mercy have prepared for
my escape; behold I lay aside all wilfulness, and only desire to be informed as
to thy holy and gracious mind. Not my way give me, but thy way teach me, I
would follow thee and not be wilful. I will walk in thy truth. When taught I will
practise what I know, truth shall not be a mere doctrine or sentiment to me, but
a matter of daily life. The true servant of God regulates his walk by his master's
will, and hence he never walks deceitfully, for God's way is ever truth.
Providence has a way for us, and it is our wisdom to keep in it. We must not be
as the bullock which needs to be driven and urged forward because it likes not
the road, but be as men who voluntarily go where their trusted friend and helper
appoints their path. Unite my heart to fear thy name. Having taught me one
way, give me one heart to walk therein, for too often I feel a heart and a heart,
two natures contending, two principles struggling for sovereignty. Our minds
are apt to be divided between a variety of objects, like trickling streamlets
which waste their force in a hundred runnels; our great desire should be to have
all our life floods poured into one channel and to have that channel directed
towards the Lord alone. A man of divided heart is weak, the man of one object
is the man. God who created the bands of our nature can draw them together,
tighten, strengthen, and fasten them, and so braced and inwardly knit by his
uniting grace, we shall be powerful for good, but not otherwise. To fear God is
both the beginning, the growth, and the maturity of wisdom, therefore should
we be undividedly given up to it, heart, and soul.
Verse 12. *I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart.* When my heart is one, I will give thee all of it. Praise should never be rendered with less than all our heart, and soul, and strength, or it will be both unreal and unacceptable. This is the second time in the psalm that David calls the Lord "my God", the first time he was in an agony of prayer (Ps 86:2), and now he is in an ecstasy of praise. If anything can make a man pray and praise, it is the knowledge into that the Lord is his God. And I will glorify thy name for evermore, eternity gratitude will prolong its praise. God has never done blessing us, let us never have done blessing him. As he ever gives us grace, let us ever render to him the glory of it.

Verse 13. *For great is thy mercy toward me.* Personal experience is ever the master singer. Whatever thou art to others, to me thy mercy is most notable. The psalmist claims to sing among the loudest, because his debt to divine mercy is among the greatest. And thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. From the direst death and the deepest dishonour David had been kept by God, for his enemies would have done more than send him to hell had they been able. His sense of sin also made him feel as if the most overwhelming destruction would have been his portion had not grace prevented, therefore does he speak of deliverance from the nethermost abode of lost spirits. There are some alive now who can use this language unfeignedly, and he who pens these lines most humbly confesses that he is one. Left to myself to indulge my passions, to rush onward with my natural vehemence, and defy the Lord with recklessness of levity, what a candidate for the lowest abyss should I have made myself by this time. For me, there was but one alternative, great mercy, or the lowest hell. With my whole heart do I sing, "Great is thy mercy towards me, and thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell." The psalmist here again touches a bold and joyful note, but soon he exchanges it for the mournful string.

Verse 14. *O God, the proud are risen against me.* They could not let God's poor servant alone, his walk with God was as smoke to their eyes, and therefore they determined to destroy him. None hate good men so fiercely as do the high minded and domineering. And the assemblies of violent men have sought after my soul. Unitedly oppressors sought the good man's life; they hunted in packs, with keen scent, and eager foot. In persecuting times many a saint has used these words in reference to Papal bishops and inquisitors. And have not set thee before them. They would not have molested the servant if they had cared one whit for the master. Those who fear not God are not afraid to commit violent and cruel acts. An atheist is a misanthrope. Irreligion is akin to inhumanity.
Verse 15. *But thou, O Lord.* What a contrast! We get away from the hectorings and blusterings of proud but puny men to the glory and goodness of the Lord. We turn from the boisterous foam of chafing waves to the sea of glass mingled with fire, calm and serene. "Art a God full of compassion, and gracious, long suffering, and plenteous in mercy and truth." A truly glorious doxology, in which there is not one redundant word. As we have before observed, it is mainly transcribed from Ex 34:6. Here is compassion for the weak and sorrowing, grace for the undeserving, longsuffering for the provoking, mercy for the guilty, and truth for the tried. God's love assumes many forms, and is lovely in them all. Into whatsoever state we may be cast, there is a peculiar hue in the light of love which will harmonize with our condition; love is one and yet sevenfold, its white ray contains the chromatic scale. Are we sorrowful? We find the Lord full of compassion. Are we contending with temptation? His grace comes to our aid. Do we err? He is patient with us. Have we sinned? He is plenteous in mercy. Are we resting on his promise? He will fulfil it with abundant truth.

Verse 16. *O turn unto me.* As though the face of God had been before averted in anger, the suppliant pleads for a return of conscious favour. One turn of God's face will turn all our darkness into day. And have mercy upon me, that is all he asks, for he is lowly in heart; that is all he wants, for mercy answereth all a sinner's needs. Give thy strength unto thy servant. Gird me with it that I may serve thee, guard me with it that I may not be overcome. When the Lord gives us his own strength we are sufficient for all emergencies, and have no cause to fear any adversaries. And save the son of thine handmaid. He meant that he was a home born servant of God. As the sons of slaves were their master's property by their birth, so he gloried in being the son of a woman who herself belonged to the Lord. What others might think a degrading illustration he uses with delight, to show how intensely he loved the Lord's service; and also as a reason why the Lord should interpose to rescue him, seeing that he was no newly purchased servant, but had been in the house from his very birth.

Verse 17. *Shew to me a token for good.* Let me be assured of thy mercy by being delivered out of trouble.

That they which hate me may see it, and be ashamed.
"Some token of thy favour show,
Some sign which all my foes may see;
And filled with blank confusion know,
My comfort and my help in thee."
What bodes good to me shall make them quail and blush. Disappointed and defeated, the foes of the good man would feel ashamed of what they had designed. "Because thou, LORD, hast holpen me, and comforted me." God doth nothing by halves, those whom he helps he also consoles, and so makes them not merely safe but joyful. This makes the foes of the righteous exceedingly displeased, but it brings to the Lord double honour. Lord, deal thou thus with us evermore, so will we glorify thee, world without end. Amen.

**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS**

**TITLE.**—The prophet David has penned two psalms, which he has eminently appropriated to himself as his own: the one is styled *David's prayer*, though many other psalms are prayers—it is Ps 86:1-17; the other *David's praise*, Ps 145:1-21. The first his *tephilla*, the latter his *tehilla*; in each of these he makes a solemn rehearsal of the very words of Moses, in Ex 34:6-7. In Ps 86:1-17 he brings them in as they were a support unto his faith in his distresses from sins and miseries, to which use he puts them, Ps 86:3-4 6-7. And again, Ps 86:16-17, he makes a plea of these words by way of prayer. In Ps 145:1-21, he brings them in as they are an *elogium* or celebration of the glorious nature and excellencies of God, to excite the sons of men to love and praise him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

**Title.**—This Psalm was published under the title of *A Prayer of David*; not as if David sung all his prayers, but into some of his songs he inserted prayers; for a psalm will admit the expression of any pious and devout affections. But it is observable how very plain the language of this psalm is, and how little there is in it of poetical flights or figures, in comparison with some other psalms; for the flourishes of wit are not the proper ornaments of prayer.—*Matthew Henry.*

**Title.**—There was much, very much, of God's peculiar character, his glorious name, brought to view in the close of the last Psalm. This may account for its being followed by another, *A Prayer of David*, almost equally full of the character of Jehovah. The key note of this Psalm is Jehovah's name.—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

**Whole Psalm.** Christ prays throughout the whole of this Psalm. All the words are spoken exclusively by Christ, who is both God and man.—*Psalt. Cassiodori,* 1491.

**Whole Psalm.** In this Psalm Christ the Son of God and Son of Man, one God with the Father, one man with men, to whom we pray as God, prays in the form
of a servant. For he prays for us, and he prays in us, and he is prayed to by us. He prays for us as our Priest. He prays in us as our Head. He is prayed to by us as our God.—Psalt. Pet. Lombard. 1474.

Verse 1. Bow down thine ear, O Lord. As the careful physician doth to his feeble patient: so Basil glosseth here.—John Trapp.

Verses 1-4. Poor, holy, trusteth, I cry. The petitioner is first described as poor, then holy, next trusting, after that crying, finally, lifted up to God. And each epithet has its fitting verb; bow down to the poor, preserve the holy, save the trusting, be merciful to him who cries, rejoice the lifted up. It is the whole gamut of love from the Incarnation to the Ascension; it tells us that Christ's humiliation will be our glory and joy.—Neale and Littledale's Commentary.

Verse 2. Holy. The word has been variously translated:—Godly, De Muis, Ainsworth and others; charitable, or beneficent, Piscator; merciful or tenderhearted, Mariana; diligently or earnestly compassionate, Vatablus; meek, Calvin; a beloved one, Version of American Bible Union; one whom thou lovest, Perowne; a devoted or dedicated man, —Weiss.

Verse 2. For I am Holy. Some have objected to David's pleading his own good character; but if he did not go beyond the truth, and the occasion called for it, there was nothing wrong in his so doing. Job, David, Peter, John and Paul all did it, Job 27:5 Ps 116:16 Joh 21:15-17 Re 1:10 1Co 9:1. Nor is it presumptuous to ask God to show mercy to us for we show it to others; or to forgive us for we forgive others, Mt 5:7 6:14-15.—William S. Plumer.

Verse 2. I am holy...thy servant which trusteth in thee. They that are holy, yet must not trust in themselves, or in their own righteousness, but only in God and his grace.—Matthew Henry.

Verse 2. Save thy servant that trusteth in thee. When God saves his servant, he saves what belongs to himself; and, when he saves him that trusts in him, he shows himself to be just and faithful, in carrying out what he promised.—Bellarmine.

Verses 2-5. The aspirations after holiness which are found in this Psalm, coupled with its earnest invocation of mercy from the God with whom there is forgiveness, render it peculiarly applicable to those whose daily access is to a throne of needed grace. Christians know that while their standing is the blameless perfection of the Lord their righteousness, they are in many things offenders still. Nor do we ever fully prove the preciousness of Jesus as our
portion, except we are drawn to him by that Spirit which reveals to us a nakedness and poverty within ourselves, which his blessed fulness can alone redress. There is a consciousness of personal sanctification through faith (Ps 86:2) associated with an acutely sensitive perception of intrinsic worthlessness, such as only finds relief in the remembrance of unaltered grace (Ps 86:5), which, to the exercised spirit of one really growing in the knowledge of God, will address itself with an especial acceptance.—Arthur Pridham.

Verse 3. Be merciful unto me. Lest any should by the former words, ("I am holy", )suspect him to be a merit monger, he beggeth mercy with instancy and constancy of request.—John Trapp.

Verse 3. I cry unto thee daily. A great difference between saints and sinners in prayer is that sinners who pray at all, pray only when they are in trouble, whereas saints cry daily unto God. Compare Job 27:10.—William S. Plumer.

Verse 4. Rejoice the soul of thy servant, etc. As I have not found rest in anything created, I have raised up my soul on the wings of thought and desire to thee my Creator. Love bears one's soul up; and it has been truly said, that the soul is more where it loves, than where it actually is. Thought and desire are the wings of love; for he that loves is borne on to, and abides in, what he loves, by thinking constantly on, and longing for, the object of his love. Whoever truly, and from his heart, loves God, by thinking on him and longing for him lifts up his soul to God; while, on the contrary, whoever loves the earth, by thinking on and coveting the things of the earth, lets his soul down to its level.—Bellarmine.

Verse 4. Unto thee, Lord, do I lift my soul. If thou hadst corn in thy rooms below, thou wouldest take it up higher, lest it should grow rotten. Wouldest thou remove thy corn, and dost thou suffer thy heart to rot on the earth? Thou wouldest take thy corn up higher: lift up thy heart to heaven. And how can I, dost thou say? What ropes are needed? What machines? What ladders? Thy affections are the steps; thy will the way. By loving thou mountest, by neglect thou descendest. Standing on the earth thou art in heaven, if thou loveth God. For the heart is not so raised as the body is raised: the body to be lifted up changes its place: the heart to be lifted up changes its will.—Augustine.

Verse 4. Unto thee, O Lord, do I lift my soul, intimates that he had brought himself to the Lord as a living sacrifice, even as the heave offering in the tabernacle—to show that it belonged to God and to his altar, and, that man had no part in it—was lifted up by the hands of the priests.—Benjamin Weiss.
Verse 4. —I lift up my soul. It denotes the devotion, fervency, heartiness, and sincerity of his prayer; the doing of it with a true heart, the lifting up of the heart with the hands unto God, La 3:41; or by way of offering unto the Lord, not the body only, but the soul or heart also; or as a deposition committed into is hands.—John Gill.

Verse 4. Lord. Here, and in all the verses in this psalm where ynda Adonai, occurs, many MSS read hwhy, Yehovah. The Jews, out of reverence to the incomunicable name Jehovah pronounce ynda where hwhy is in the text. It is, therefore, not improbable that hwhy is in the true reading in all these places.—Note to Calvin in loc.

Verse 5. For thou, Lord, art good, and whither should beggars go but to the door of the good house keeper?—Matthew Henry.

Verse 5. Ready to forgive. The mercy of God is a ready mercy, and his pardons are ready for his people; his pardons and mercies are not to seek, he hath them at hand, he is good and ready to forgive. Whereas most men, though they will forgive, yet they are not ready to forgive, they are hardly brought to it, though they do it at last. But God is "ready to forgive": he hath, as it were, pardons ready drawn (as a man who would be ready to do a business, he will have such writings as concern the passing of it ready); there is nothing to do but to put in the date and the name; yea indeed, the date and the name are put in from all eternity. Thus the Scripture speaks to show how forward God is to do good; he needs not set his heart to it; his heart is ever in the exactest fitness.—Joseph Caryl.

Verse 5. Plenteous in mercy. It is a thing marvellously satisfactory and pleasing to the heart of a man to be still taking from a great heap; and upon this ground are those proverbial sayings. There is no fishing like to a fishing in the sea; no service like the service of a king: because in one there is the greatest plenty and abundance of that kind of pleasure that fishers look after; and for them that serve, and must live by their service, there is none like that of princes, because they have abundance of reward and opportunity whereby to recompense the services of those that do wait and attend upon them. . . . And upon the same ground is it that the Scriptures, in several places, do not only assert and testify that God is merciful and gracious, but abundant in mercy and full of grace; and not simply that there is redemption in him, but plenteousness of redemption: Ps 103:8 130:7 Isa 55:7; "Let the wicked forsake his way", etc.; "Let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy; and unto our God, for lie will abundantly pardon." The commodity which we stand in need of is mercy and the pardon of our sins, in case we have been unholy and ungodly creatures; this commodity is
abundantly in God. There it is treasured up as waters are in the store house of the sea; there is no end of the treasures of his grace, mercy, pardon, and compassion. There is no man, being in want, but had ten times rather go to a rich man's door to be relieved, than to the door of a poor man, if he knoweth the rich man to be as liberal and bountifully disposed as the poor man can be.—John Goodwin.

Verse 6. Supplications ytwnwxt, deprecations. The Psalmist forms a peculiar Hebrew word, feminine plural, not found elsewhere, to convey more impressively the idea of suppliant weakness.—A.R. Fausset.

Verses 8-10.—There are two kinds of doubt which are wont in the hour of temptation to assail the soul: the doubt as to God's willingness, and the doubt as to God's power to succour. The first of these the Psalmist has already put from him; he now shows that he has overcome the second. God is able as well as willing to help, and every being on the face of the earth who receives help, receives it from the hand of Him who is the only God, and who shall one day be recognized (so speaks the strong prophetic hope within him, Ps 86:9) as the only God.—J.J.S. Perowne.

Verses 9-10. All nations shall worship before thee, because as King of Nations, thou art great, thy sovereignty absolute and incontestable, thy Majesty terrible and unsupportable, thy power universal and irresistible, thy riches vast and inexhaustible, thy dominion boundless and unquestionable; and for the proof of this, thou dost wondrous things, which all nations admire, and from whence they might easily infer that thou art God alone; not only none like thee, but none beside thee.—Matthew Henry.

Verse 11. Teach me thy way: I will walk in thy truth: unite my heart. Here is the "Via, Veritas, Vita" of the Gospel (Joh 14:6). "Via tua, Veritas tua, Vita tua, Christus." Christ is our Way, Truth, and Life, because he is Man united to God, and is one substance with the Father.—Christopher Wordsworth.

Verse 11. Teach me. There is no point on which the world is more dark than that of its own ignorance—we might truly say, "it is ignorant of its ignorance"—it knows enough when it learns by rote a few first principles of religion; it comforts itself that it is not atheistical because it believes that there is a God; but as to knowing his ways, laws, mind, or any such things, with them it has nothing at all to do. The people of the world do not care for enlightenment; they feel no pressing need for it; in all probability they have an instinctive feeling that if enlightened they would know a little more than they wish to know, that their newly acquired knowledge would interfere with their
old habits and ways, and this is one reason why all spiritual teaching which goes beneath the surface is distasteful to the majority of men. They cannot bear to be brought into contact with God, in anything but a general way; the particulars of his character may not agree over well with the particulars of their lives! It is the fashion in the present day to talk of man's enlightenment, and to represent human nature as upheaving under its load, as straining towards a knowledge of truth; such is not in reality the case, and whenever there is an effort in the mind untaught of the Spirit, it is directed towards God as the great moral and not as the great spiritual Being. A man untaught of the Holy Ghost may long to know a moral, he can never desire to know a spiritual Being.—John Hyatt, 1767-1826.

Verse 11. Teach. The common version of the verb here is too vague, as it fails to bring out the peculiar suitableness of the term to express the kind of teaching here specifically meant. The original meaning of the Hebrew word is to point out or mark the way.—J.A. Alexander.

Verse 11. I will walk in thy truth. Conform to Scripture. Let us lead Scripture lives. Oh that the Bible might be seen to be printed in our lives! Do what the Word commands. Obedience is an excellent way of commenting upon the Bible. Let the Word be the sun dial by which you set your life. What are we the better for having the Scriptures, if we do not direct all our speeches and actions according to it? What is a carpenter better for his rule about him, if he sticks it at his back, and never makes use of it for measuring and squaring? So, what are we the better for the rule of the Word, if we do not make use of it, and regulate our lives by it?—Thomas Watson.

Verse 11. I will walk in thy truth. Walking, in the Scripture, takes in the whole of our conversation or conduct: and to walk in anything, intends a fulness of it. For a man to walk in pride, is something more than to be proud: it says, that pride is his way, his element; that he is wholly under the influence of it.—William Jay.

Verse 11. Unite my heart to fear thy name. The end which he desired to secure was that he might truly fear God, or properly reverence and honour him; the means which he saw to be necessary for this was that his "heart" might be "united" in this one great object; that is, that his heart might be single in its views and purposes; that there might be no distracting purposes; that one great aim might be always before him. The word rendered unite—dxy, yahhad—occurs as a verb only in three places. In Ge 49:6 it is rendered united: "Unto their assembly, mine honour, be not thou united." In Isa 14:20 it is translated joined: "Thou shalt not be joined unto them." The adverb—dxy ya-hhad—
occurs often, and is rendered together, Ge 13:6 22:6,8,19 36:7; et soepe. The idea is that of union, or conjunction; of being together; of constituting one; and this is accomplished in the heart when there is one great ruling object before the mind which nothing is allowed to interfere with. It may be added, that there is no more appropriate prayer which a man can offer than that his heart may have such unity of purpose, and that nothing may be allowed to interfere with that one supreme purpose.—Albert Barnes.

Verse 11. Unite my heart, etc. Sincerity drives but one design, and that is to please and enjoy God; and what can more establish and fix the soul in the hour of temptation than this? The reason why the hypocrite is unstable in all his ways, is given us by the apostle: he is "a double minded man", a man of two souls in one body; as a profane wretch once boasted, that he had one soul for God, and another for anything. But all the designs of a gracious heart are united in one; and so the entire stream of his affections runs strong. It is base by ends and self interests, that, like a great many ditches cut out of the bank of a river, draw away the stream out of its proper channel, and make its waters fail. But if the heart be united for God, then we may say of such a Christian, as was said of a young Roman, "What he does is done with all his might." A man of only one design, puts out all his strength to carry it; nothing can stand before him. Sincerity brings a man's will into subjection to the will of God; and this being done, the greatest danger and difficulty is over with such a man. This is that holy oil which makes the wheels of the soul run nimbly, even in the difficult paths of obedience.—John Flavel.

Verse 11. Unite my heart.

Give me thine heart but as I gave it thee:
Or give it me at least as I
Have given mine
To purchase thine.

I halved it not when I did die;
But gave myself wholly to set thee free.
The heart I gave thee was a living heart;
And when thy heart by sin was slain,
I laid down mine
To ransom thine,

That thy dead heart might live again,
And live entirely perfect, not in part.
But whilst thine heart's divided, it is dead;
Dead unto me, unless it live
To me alone.
It is all one
To keep all, and a part to give:
For what's a body worth without an head!

Yet, this is worse, that what thou keepest from me
Thou dost bestow upon my foes
And those not mine
Alone, but thine;
The proper causes of thy woes,
From whom I gave my life to set thee free.

Have I betrothed thee to myself, and shall
The devil, and the world, intrude
Upon my right,
Eeen in my sight?

Think not thou canst me so delude:
I will have none, unless I may have all.
I made it all, I gave it all to thee,
I gave all that I had for it:
If I must lose,
I would rather choose
Mine interest in all to quit:
Or keep it whole, or give it whole to me.
—Francis Quarles, in "The School of the Heart."

**Verse 11.** Unite my heart to fear thy name.

In knotts, to be loosed never,
Knitt my heart to thee forever,
That I to thy name may beare
Fearful love and loving feare.
—Francis Davison.

**Verse 12.** I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart: and I will glorify thy name. We glorify God by praising him. Doxology, or praise, is a God exalting work. Ps 50:23. "Whoso offereth praise glorifieth me." The Hebrew word, Bara, to create, and Barak, to praise, are little different, because the end of creation is to praise God. Though nothing can add to God's essential glory, yet praise exalts him in the eyes of others. When we praise God, we spread his fame and renown, we display the trophies of his excellency. In this
manner the angels glorify him; they are the choristers of heaven, and do
trumpet forth his praise. Praising God is one of the highest and purest acts of
religion. In prayer we act like men; in praise we act like angels. Believers are
called "temples of God", 1Co 3:16. When our tongues praise, then the organs of
God's spiritual temple are sounding. How sad it is that God hath no more glory
from us in this way! Many are full of murmuring and discontent, but seldom
bring glory to God, by giving him the praise due to his name. We read of the
saints having harps in their hands, the emblems of praise. Many have tears in
their eyes and complaints in their mouths, but few have harps in their hands,
blessing and glorifying God. Let us honour God this way. Praise is the quit rent
we pay to God: while God renews our lease, we must renew our rent.—Thomas
Watson.

Verse 12. I will praise thee, O Lord, & c. Such a soul as David was is enlarged
to talk high of God: I will praise thee, O Lord my God, with all my heart; and I
will glorify thy name for evermore. Alas! poor creature, how canst thou
proclaim him "for evermore"? A soul fired with desire to praise God, burns
after both more perfect things and more lasting than it is able to perform. "To
will is present with it", etc. See but the reachings and longings of such a soul,
how it swells in desires to glorify God!—Thomas Goodwin.

Verse 12. With all my heart. When my heart is united to fear thy name, then
shall I praise thee with my whole heart.—Adam Clarke.

Verse 13. Hell is put metaphorically for great and extreme dangers, or miseries
which seem irrecoverable and remediless; these are figuratively called hell,
because hell, properly taken, is a place from whence there is no recovery.
There's no release from the chains of darkness: all changes are on earth; heaven
and hell know none. When David praises the Lord for delivering his soul from
the lowest hell, he meaneth an estate on earth of the lowest and deepest danger
imaginable: mercy helped him at the worst. To be as low as hell, is to be at the
lowest.—Joseph Caryl.

Verse 13. The lowest hell. According to Jewish traditions, there are seven
different regions, in the abode of departed souls.—Daniel Creswell.

Verse 13. Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell. Someone having a
troublesome cause was to be sent to prison: another comes and defends him;
what does he say when he thanks him? Thou hast delivered my soul out of
prison. A debtor was to be tortured: his debt is paid; he is said to be delivered
from being tortured. They were not in all these evils; but because they were in
such due course towards them, that unless aid had been brought, they would
Verses 13, 16. There is no stronger argument of God's infallible readiness to grant our requests, than the experience of his former concessions. So David reasons, "The Lord that delivered me out of the paw of the lion, and out of the paw of the bear, he will deliver me out of the hand of this Philistine", 1Sa 17:37. This is the argument *a priori*, the voice of a strong faith, that persuades the conscience God will be gracious to him, because he hath been gracious. The prophet thus often comforted his soul: "Thou hast enlarged me when I was in distress"; therefore, "have mercy upon me, and hear my prayer", Ps 4:1. So, 

*Thou hast delivered my soul from the lowest hell; therefore, O turn unto me, and have mercy upon me.* Let the justiciaries deduce arguments from their own present merits, my soul from God's former mercies. Thou, O Lord, madest me good, restoredst me when I was evil; therefore have mercy upon me, miserable sinner, and give me thy salvation. Thus Paul grounded his assurance: because the Lord had stood with him, and delivered him out of the lion's mouth; therefore the Lord shall deliver me still, from every evil work, and preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom. 2Ti 4:17-18.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 15. *Thou, O Lord, Adonai, art a God; El, the strong God, full of compassion;* the same words as Moses useth. Instead of Jehovah, Adonai is used, "O Lord"; but then El, strong God, is the same word. The meaning is, let all the strength and power thou the strong God hast in thee be for my advantage. Now, is it not a bold request to say, Lord, wilt thou give me all thy strength to help me? A very bold request indeed; but his mercy moves him to grant it. Thus then petition him: Thou art a God merciful and gracious, give thy strength to me! Thou, O God, givest all thy attributes up to thy children, to serve their advantage, as well as to serve thy own glory; give me thy strength!—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 15. *Full of compassion.* The original word Rachum is very emphatical; it signifies such tenderness as parents have toward their children when their bowels yearn within them.—"*Critical and Practical Exposition of the Pentateuch.*" 1748.

Verse 16. *Save the son of thine handmaid.* Deliver me, who am as completely thy property, as the offspring of a female slave born in her master's house, and which belongs of right to him. Ge 14:14 Jer 2:14.—*William Keatinge Clay.*

Verse 17. *Shew me a token for good.* These words do not, as some think, necessarily imply David's asking for some specific or miraculous token; he

have been in them, they rightly say that they are delivered from thence, whither they were not suffered by their deliverers to be taken.—*Augustine.*
regards deliverance itself as a token. We ask whether it be not true, that in the same measure as we recognise the mysteriously governing influence of God in every day events, we regard those things as signs and miracles, which to others appear common place?—Augustus F. Tholuck.

Verse 17. Perhaps, the token for good means that spiritual joy which he asked for in the beginning of the Psalm, when he said, "Rejoice the soul of thy servant" for such joy to a holy soul in tribulation is the clearest sign of the grace of God, and on the sight of it all manner of persecutors are confounded; and then the meaning would be, "shew me a token for good"; give me the grace of that spiritual joy that will appear exteriorly in my countenance, "that they which hate me may see" such calmness and tranquillity of soul, "and be confounded"; for thou, O Lord, hast helped me in the struggle, consoled me in my sorrow, and hast already converted my sadness into interior joy and gladness.—Robert Bellarmine.

Verse 17. Shew me a token for good, may be rendered "make me a sign for good." Weiss paraphrases it, "make of me such a sign or monument of good that all my enemies may be arrested by it, and be daunted at injuring a man so assisted by the Lord."

Verse 17. Hast holpen me, in struggle; and comforted me, in sorrow.—Augustine.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1.

1. A singular request—that the Lord should bow his ear.

2. A singular plea—"I am poor and needy."

3. The singular grace of God will answer the request, because singular grace has made the petitioner feel his need.

Verse 2.

1. The blessing sought is present, spiritual, complete and final preservation.

2. Our reasons for expecting it are—
(a) Our belonging to God—"I am holy."
(b) God's belonging to us—"my God."
(c) Our faith, which has the promise.
(d) Our fruits, which prove our faith—"thy servant"

Verse 3.—Importunity.

1. When she pleads—"daily."
2. How she pleads—"I cry."
3. To whom she pleads—"unto thee."
4. For what she pleads—"be merciful."

Verse 3.—I will cry daily for pardoning, sanctifying, assisting, preserving, providing and guiding mercy.—William Jay.

Verse 4.

1. The believer's joy is from God—"Rejoice", & c.
2. The believer's joy is in God—"unto thee", & c.—G.R.

Verse 4.

1. The great lift.
2. The heavy weight—"my soul".
3. The weak worker—"I lift".
4. The great height—"unto thee".
5. The appointed machinery—means of grace; and,
6. The expected aid—"Rejoice", etc.

Verse 5.—Encouraging thoughts of God.

1. He has goodness in his essence.
2. He has forgiveness in readiness.
3. He has mercy in action, flowing forth from him plenteously.
4. His very discrimination is gracious—"all them that call upon him."

Verse 6. The praying man desires above all things an answer. Objections to such an expectation. Grounds for continuing to expect, and duties incumbent upon those who realise such expectations.

Verse 6. The voice of supplication. It is the voice of weakness, of penitence, of faith, of hope, of the new nature, of knowledge, & c.
Verse 7.

1. Help needed.
2. Help sought.
3. Help found.—G.R.

Verse 7.

1. A time to be expected—"day of my trouble."
2. A resolve to be practised—"I will call upon thee."
3. A result to be experienced—"thou wilt answer me."

Verse 7.—Prayer is the design of trouble, the evidence that it is sanctified, its solace, and the medium of deliverance from it.—William Jay.

Verse 8.

1. God is one; the only God: characters of false gods inferior far.

2. His works are unique. Nature, providence, grace, all peculiar in many respects. A good theme for a thoughtful preacher.

Verse 9. The certain conversion of the world as opposed to modern theories.

Verse 10.

1. God is "great", therefore great things may be expected of him.

2. He is unsearchable, therefore "wondrous things" may be expected of him.

3. He is irresistible, therefore impossibilities to others may be expected of him: "Thou art God alone".—G.R.

Verse 11. In the disposition of mind which is expressed in these words, the believer stands opposed to four descriptions of character.

1. The ignorant and thoughtless sinner, who neither regards his way nor his end.

2. The Antinomian, who is zealous for doctrines, and averse from the practice of religion.
3. The Pharisee, who disregards religious sentiment, and makes practice all in all.

4. The hypocrite, who appears to be divided between religion and the world.—*John Hyatt*, 1811.

**Verse 11.** The Christian as a scholar, a man of action, and a man of devotion.

**Verse 11.** Holiness taught, truth practised, God adored; and thus the life perfected.

**Verse 11. (middle clause).** We should walk in the belief of the truth, its practice, enjoyment, and profession.—*William Jay*.

**Verse 11. (third clause).** The necessity, benefit, and reasonableness of whole heartedness in religion.

**Verse 12.**—The art of praising God by heart.

**Verse 13.**

1. Where I might have been—"*the lowest hell.*"
2. What thou hast done for me—"*hast delivered.*"
3. What thou art doing—"*great is thy mercy.*"

**Verse 13. (first clause).**—God's mercy *great* in election, redemption, calling, pardon, upholding, etc. It is so, at this very moment, in supplying my needs, preserving from danger, consoling in sorrow, etc. Great is thy mercy *towards me*—so great a sinner, with such needs, so provoking, so full of doubts, etc.

**Verses 13-15.** The three verses describe salvation, consequent persecution, and all sufficient consolation.

**Verse 15.** The shades of the light of love. Compassion upon suffering, grace towards unworthiness, long suffering to provocation, mercy towards sin, truth towards the promise.

**Verse 16.**

1. My pedigree—"*son of thine handmaid.*"
2. My occupation—"thy servant."
3. My character—needing "*mercy.*"
4. My request "*turn unto me.*"
Verse 16. In what respects a servant of God may be girt with divine power.

Verse 17. What inward feelings and outward providences are "tokens for good."
Psalm 87

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher
Other Works

TITLE. A Psalm or Song for the sons of Korah. A sacred hymn and a national lyric. A theocracy blends the religious and the patriotic ideas in one; and in proportion as nations become Christianized, their popular songs will become deeply imbued with pious sentiments. Judged by this standard, our own land is far in arrears. This "Psalm or song" was either composed by the sons of Korah, or dedicated to them: as they kept the doors of the house of the Lord, they could use this beautiful composition as a Psalm within the doors, and as a song outside.

SUBJECT AND DIVISION. The song is in honour of Zion, or Jerusalem, and it treats of God's favour to that city among the mountains, the prophecies which made it illustrious, and the honour of being a native of it. Many conceive that it was written at the founding of David's city of Zion, but does not the mention of Babylon imply a later date? It would seem to have been written after Jerusalem and the Temple had been built, and had enjoyed a history, of which glorious things could be spoken. Among other marvels of God's love in its later history, it had been untouched by Sennacherib when other cities of Israel and Judah had fallen victims to his cruelty. It was in Hezekiah's reign that Babylon became prominent, when the ambassadors came to congratulate the king concerning his recovery, at that time also Tyre would be more famous than at any period in David's day. But as we have no information, and the point is not important, we may leave it, and proceed to meditate upon the Psalm itself. We have no need to divide so brief a song.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. **His foundation is in the holy mountains.** The Psalm begins abruptly, the poet's heart was full, and it gained vent on a sudden.

"God's foundation stands forever
On the holy mountain towers;
Sion's gates Jehovah favours
More than Jacob's thousand bowers."

Sudden passion is evil, but bursts of holy joy are most precious. God has chosen to found his earthly temple upon the mountains; he might have selected other spots, but it was his pleasure to have his chosen abode upon Zion. His election made the mountains holy, they were by his determination ordained and set apart for the Lord's use. The foundation of the church, which is the mystical Jerusalem, is laid in the eternal, immutable, and invincible decrees of Jehovah. He wills that the church shall be, he settles all arrangements for her calling, salvation, maintenance and perfection, and all his attributes, like the mountains round about Jerusalem, lend their strength for her support. Not on the sand of
carnal policy, nor in the morass of human kingdoms, has the Lord founded his
cr of his beloved church, which is to him the chief of all his works.
What a theme for meditation is the founding of the church of God in the ancient
covenant engagements of eternity; the abrupt character of this first verse
indicates long consideration on the part of the writer, leading up to his bursting
forth in wonder and adoration. Well might such a theme cause his heart to
glow. Rome stands on her seven hills and has never lacked a poet's tongue to
sing her glories, but more glorious far art thou, O Zion, among the eternal
mountains of God: while pen can write or mouth can speak, thy praises shall
never lie buried in inglorious silence.

Verse 2. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the *dwellings of
Jacob*. The gates are put for the city itself. The love of God is greatest to his
own elect nation, descended from his servant Jacob, yet the central seat of his
worship is dearer still; no other supposable comparison could have so fully
displayed the favour which Jehovah bore to Jerusalem,—he loves Jacob best
and Zion better than the best. At this hour the mystical teaching of these words
is plain, God delights in the prayers and praises of Christian families and
individuals, but he has a special eye to the assemblies of the faithful, and he has
a special delight in their devotions in their church capacity. The great festivals,
when the crowds surrounded the temple gates, were fair in the Lord's eyes, and
even such is the general assembly and church of the first born, whose names
are written in heaven. This should lead each separate believer to identify
himself with the church of God; where the Lord reveals his love the most, there
should each believer most delight to be found. Our own dwellings are very dear
to us, but we must not prefer them to the assemblies of the saints; we must say
of the church—

"Here my best friends, my kindred dwell:
Here God, my Saviour reigns."

Verse 3. Glorious things are spoken of thee, O city of God. This is true of
Jerusalem. Her history, which is the story of the nation of which she is the
capital, is full of glorious incidents, and her use and end as the abode of the true
God, and of his worship, was preeminently glorious. Glorious things were
taught in the streets, and seen in her temples. Glorious things were foretold of
her, and she was the type of the most glorious things of all. This is yet more
true of the church: she is founded in grace, but her pinnacles glow with glory.
Men may glory in her without being braggarts, she has a lustre about her brow
which none can rival. Whatever glorious things the saints may say of the
church in their eulogies, they cannot exceed what prophets have foretold, what
angels have sung, or what God himself has declared. Happy are the tongues which learn to occupy themselves with so excellent a subject, may they be found around our fire sides, in our market places, and in all the spots where men most congregate. Never let thy praises cease, O thou bride of Christ, thou fairest among women, thou in whom the Lord himself hath placed his delight, calling thee by that pearl of names, Hephzibah,—"for my delight is in her." Since the Lord has chosen thee, and deigns to dwell in thee, O thou city of beauty, none can rival thee, thou art the eye of the world, the pearl, the queen of all the cities of the universe; the true "eternal city", the metropolitan, the mother of us all. The years to come shall unveil thy beauties to the astonished eyes of all peoples, and the day of thy splendour shall come to its sevenfold noon. Selah. With the prospect before him of a world converted, and the most implacable foes transformed into friends, it was meet that the Psalmist should pause. How could he sing the glories of new born Tyre and Ethiopia, received with open arms into union with Zion, until he had taken breath and prepared both voice and heart for so divine a song.

Verse 4. *I will make mention of Rahab and Babylon to them that know me.* This shall be a glorious subject to speak of concerning Zion, that her old foes are new born and have become her friends, worshipping in the temple of her God. Rahab or Egypt which oppressed Israel shall become a sister nation, and Babylon in which the tribes endured their second great captivity, shall become a fellow worshipper; then shall there be mention made in familiar talk of the old enmities forgotten and the new friendships formed. Some consider that these are the words of God himself, and should be rendered "I will mention Rahab and Babylon as knowing me": but we feel content with our common version, and attribute the words to the Psalmist himself, who anticipates the conversion of the two great rival nations and speaks of it with exultation. Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia. These also are to bow before the Lord. Philistia shall renounce her ancient hate, Tyre shall not be swallowed up by thoughts of her commerce, and distant Ethiopia shall not be too far off to receive the salvation of the Lord. This man was born there. The word man is inserted by the translators to the marring of the sense, which is clear enough when the superfluous word is dropped,—"Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this was born there"—i.e., this nation has been born into Zion, regenerated into the church of God. Of the new births of nations we will make mention, for it is at once a great blessing and a great wonder. It is a glorious thing indeed when whole nations are born unto God.

"Mark ye well Philistia's legions, Lo, to seek the Lord they came;
And within the sacred regions 
Tyre and Cush have found a home."

Many understand the sense of these verses to be that all men are proud of their native country, and so also is the citizen of Zion, so that while of one it is said, "he was born in Egypt" and of another, "he came from Ethiopia", it would be equally to the honour of others that they were home born sons of the city of God. The passage is not so clear that any one should become dogmatical as to its meaning, but we prefer the interpretation given above.

**Verse 5.** *And of Zion it shall be said, This and that man was born in her.* Not as nations only, but one by one, as individuals, the citizens of the New Jerusalem shall be counted, and their names publicly declared. Man by man will the Lord reckon them, for they are each one precious in his sight; the individual shall not be lost in the mass, but each one shall be of high account. What a patent of nobility is it, for a man to have it certified that he was born in Zion; the twice born are a royal priesthood, the true aristocracy, the imperial race of men. The original, by using the noblest word for man, intimates that many remarkable men will be born in the church, and indeed every man who is renewed in the image of Christ is an eminent personage, while there are some, who, even to the dim eyes of the world, shine forth with a lustre of character which cannot but be admitted to be unusual and admirable. The church has illustrious names of prophets, apostles, martyrs, confessors, reformers, missionaries and the like, which bear comparison with the grandest names honoured by the world, nay, in many respects far excel them. Zion has no reason to be ashamed of her sons, nor her sons of her. "Wisdom is justified of her children." And the highest himself shall establish her—the only establishment worth having. When the numbers of the faithful are increased by the new birth, the Lord proves himself to be the builder of the church. The Lord alone deserves to wear the title of Defender of the Faith; he is the sole and sufficient Patron and Protector of the true church. There is no fear for the Lord's heritage, his own arm is sufficient to maintain his rights. The Highest is higher than all those who are against us, and the good old cause shall triumph over all.

**Verse 6.** *The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there.* At the great census which the Lord himself shall take, he will number the nations without exception and make an exact registry of them, whether they were by their natural descent Babylonians or Tyrians, or other far off heathen. May it be our happy lot to be numbered with the Lord's chosen both in life and death, in the church roll below, and in the church roll above. Jehovah's census of his chosen will differ much from ours; he will count many whom we should have disowned, and he will leave out many whom we should
have reckoned. His registration is infallible. Let us pray then for that adoption and regeneration which will secure us a place among the heaven born. It was thought to be a great honour to have one's name written in the golden book of the Republic of Venice, kings and princes paid dearly for the honour, but the book of life confers far rarer dignity upon all whose names are recorded therein.

**Verse 7.** In vision the Psalmist sees the citizens of Zion rejoicing at some sacred festival, and marching in triumphant procession with vocal and instrumental music:—As well the singers as the players on instruments shall be there. Where God is there must be joy, and where the church is increased by numerous conversions the joy becomes exuberant and finds out ways of displaying itself. Singers and dancers, Psalmists and pipers, united their efforts and made a joyful procession to the temple, inspired not by Bacchus, or by the Castalian fount, but by draughts from the sacred source of all good, of which they each one sing *All my springs are in thee*. Did the poet mean that henceforth he would find all his joys in Zion, or that to the Lord he would look for all inspiration, comfort, strength, joy, life and everything. The last is the truest doctrine. Churches have not such all sufficiency within them that we can afford to look to them for all, but the Lord who founded the church is the eternal source of all our supplies, and looking to him we shall never flag or fail. How truly does all our experience lead us to look to the Lord by faith, and say "all my fresh springs are in thee." The springs of my faith and all my graces; the springs of my life and all my pleasures; the springs of my activity and all its right doings; the springs of my hope, and all its heavenly anticipations, all lie in thee, my Lord. Without thy Spirit I should be as a dry well, a mocking cistern, destitute of power to bless myself or others. O Lord, I am assured that I belong to the regenerate whose life is in thee, for I feel that I cannot live without thee; therefore, with all thy joyful people will I sing thy praises.

"With joy shall sing the choral train,
The minstrels breathe the answering strain:
'O Zion, Zion fair, I see
The fountains of my bliss in thee.'"

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**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS**

**TITLE.** — *A Psalm or Song for the Sons of Korah.* The title prefixed is "A Psalm to be sung by the sons of Korah", i.e. of fallen man. Korah signifies the state in which trees are during winter, when stript of their verdure and fruit. In the same sense it is used for the bald head, when age or sickness has deprived it
of its glory and left it without hair. This is a lively description of fallen man. He has lost his pristine beauty and fruitfulness. When he left God and turned to his own ways, he became like the trees of the field in winter, from which the genial warmth of the sun is withdrawn, or like the head, which by the abating of the natural heat and rigour is left naked and bald. But being brought to a light sense of this, and finding himself stript of all the glory which the first Adam had in paradise, he has been led to seek the restoration of his nature, and has obtained of the second Adam, the Lord from heaven, a much better state than he had lost. Every such person is entitled to sing this sacred hymn, and he is called upon to do it. The name of the person whom he is to celebrate is not mentioned at first, but is soon discovered by the character given of him.—*William Romaine*.

**Whole Psalm** —Bishop Bruno entitles this Psalm, "The voice of prophecy concerning the heavenly Jerusalem", that is, the Church of Christ.

**Verse 1.** —*His foundation is in the holy mountains.* The foundation that God has given his city is in "the holy mountains." What are these holy mountains? What can they be but the eternal purpose of Jehovah—the purpose out of which the being of the Church and the whole dispensation of Divine love have sprung? What but those attributes of mercy, justice, holiness, and sovereignty, from the ineffable embrace and holy cooperation of which it comes to pass that his chosen people are redeemed? What but the promise of life that was given in Christ to the elect before the world began? What but the everlasting covenant, "ordered in all things and sure" from which grace and salvation proceed? What but these things, and Christ himself, the Rock of Ages, on which rock we know that the Church is so firmly founded, that the gates of hell cannot prevail against her? Yes, these are the holy mountains, whereon the city of God is built, and in which its deep and sure foundations are laid. The sure decree, the divine perfections, the promise of him that cannot lie, the oath and covenant of God, and the incarnate Son himself, are the holy mountains, the perpetual hills, whose summits are gloriously crowned by the city of the Great King. There the city sits securely, beautiful for situation, the joy of the whole earth.—*Andrew Gray*.

**Verse 1.** *Mountains.* The situation of Jerusalem is in several respects singular amongst the cities of Palestine. Its elevation is remarkable, occasioned, not from its being on the summit of one of the numerous hills of Judaea, like most of the towns and villages, but because it is on the edge of one of the highest table lands of the country. Hebron, indeed, is higher still, by some hundred feet; and from the south, accordingly, the approach to Jerusalem is by a slight descent. But from every other side, the ascent is perpetual; and, to the traveller
Psalm 87

Verses 1-2.—If we suppose the Psalm to have been composed in the days of Hezekiah, it will appear quite intelligible that the Psalmist should break out so suddenly at the beginning with praise of the security of Sion: he merely lends his mouth in this case to the full heart of the people; The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob, is seen in its true light, for this preference for Sion was at that time verified—its gates remained closed upon the enemies, while all the rest of the country was subject to their sway.—E.W. Hengstenberg.

Verse 2. The Lord loveth the gates, etc. The gates of a walled city give access to it and power over it, and are therefore naturally here put for the whole. The Hebrew participle (loving) implies constant and habitual attachment.—J.A. Alexander.

Verse 2. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion. Because of the going out and coming in of the people of God. Thus indeed the disposition of lovers is shown, that they are filled with a remarkable affection of love towards those places through which those whom they love frequently pass, as doors and gates, and those ways which they daily traverse. What other reason could God have for loving the gates of Zion?—Musculus.
Verse 2. *The gates of Zion* are the doctrines of the Gospel, *the tabernacles of Jacob* are the teachings of the law, the law was accomplished in the gospel; therefore it is said that "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob."—"Plain, Commentary", 1859.

Verse 2. *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more*, etc. No doubt the prayers which the faithful put up to heaven from under their private roofs were very acceptable unto him; but if a saint's single voice in prayer be so sweet to God's ear, much more the church choir, his saints' prayers in concert together. A father is glad to see any one of his children, and makes him welcome when he visits him, but much more when they come together; the greatest feast is when they all meet at his house. The public praises of the church are the emblem of heaven itself, where all the angels make but one concert.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 2. *The Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all*, etc. It is here assumed that the Lord loves the dwellings of Jacob—he loves those that are true Israelites. These are succeeded by the name *Christian*, for the Christian Church is now become the true Israel of God. He loves his saints on account of that image of himself which they bear; he loves them on account of those graces which are infused into them when they are renewed by the Spirit; he loves them on account of the relation they stand in to him as his people, and as his church, who are qualified for the duties of the relation by that love of their Father, that reliance upon his care, that delight in his person, that enjoyment in his service, which belongs to dutiful and affectionate children. He loves them because they imitate his perfections in some humble measure—because they receive the word of his mouth—because they are ready to obey every call of his providence, setting themselves in the paths of his testimony wherever he may direct—because they yield themselves to God, as those that are alive from the dead, and their bodies as instruments of righteousness, no longer walking after the deeds of the flesh, but after the will of God. He takes a delight in them; the Lord delighteth in the righteous; he knoweth their way; he loves, approves, and confirms them. The most common occupations of life—the honest industry of the servants of God, is looked upon by him with approbation. By these they show forth their Father, and the praises of him who called them from darkness to light. The most ordinary duties of our calling become sacrifices to God, and religious duties, when performed in the Spirit, and directed to the great end of glorifying God. He looks with peculiar complacency on the dwellings of his people on account of those domestic devotional acknowledgments of his majesty which are there maintained, when the head walks before his family as a priest to offer praise and thanksgiving; this attracts peculiar approbation and delight. He loves to see his people training up their children in the nurture and
admonition of the Lord, and their children walking after them in the paths of that obedience which he has enjoined. He delights to see the course of purity which runs in Christian families. He loves to see the progress which the younger parts of religious families make in piety, while they grow in grace, and in favour with God and man. He looks down with peculiar delight on such circles as these: there he deigns his presence, and bestows peculiar blessings. However obscure the dwellings of Jacob may be, to him they are open and manifest at all times; and whether in cottages or in palaces, his eye rests there with complacency; and he says of such places, "Here will I dwell forever and ever." Prayer and devotion sanctify every family, and diffuse a spirit of piety through all the avocations of life, so that we need not retire from the world, but are rather called to show forth the virtues of the Christian life in it. But it is said, that, although "he loves the dwellings of Jacob", yet "he loves the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob"—that nothing in the dwellings of Jacob so much attracts his attention as the people of God connected together in a spiritual capacity.

1. In the first place, the Divine Being regards with peculiar complacency the worship of his saints on its own account.

2. On account of that union of mind and consent of heart, evinced in the assembling of God's people together, and constituting themselves into a church.

3. Because of the testimony which the church bears toward the truth.

4. Upon account of that deference to his authority, which is evinced by maintaining and keeping up the practice of those institutes which rest entirely on that authority.

5. By making the assembly of the saints the grand means of conversion.

6. That peculiar presence of God is generally vouchsafed to his saints, and made manifest to them, although it be hidden from the world, which induces the conviction that God is present of a truth.

7. The Divine Being shows his preference of the gates of Zion to the dwellings of Jacob, by continually maintaining in operation those gifts which are for the edification of the saints, and without which the union of the saints would be with difficulty maintained.

8. The Divine Being shows his preference to Zion by that marvellous protection which is afforded to the interests of the church of God: whereby, though weak,
and frequently reduced to a handful of disciples, yet they have been protected, and their society on earth continued.—Robert Hall.

Verse 2. Some absent themselves from public worship, under pretence that they can serve the Lord at home as well in private. How many are apt to say, they see not but their time may be as well spent at home, in praying, reading some good book, or discoursing on some profitable subject, as in the use of ordinances in public assemblies! They see not but private prayer may be as good to them as public, or private reading and opening the Scripture as profitable as public preaching; they say of their private duties, as Naaman of the waters of Damascus, 2Ki 5:12: May I not serve the Lord as acceptably, with as much advantage, in private exercises of religion? May I not wash in these and be clean? They see not the great blessings God has annexed to public worship more than to private. Oh, but if it be thus, if one be as good as the other, what means the Lord to prefer one before the other? To what purpose did the Lord choose the gates of Zion, to place his name there, if he might have been worshipped as well in the dwellings of Jacob? How do men of this conceit run counter to the Lord? He prefers the gates of Zion, not only before one or some, but before all the dwellings of Jacob; and they prefer one such dwelling before the gates of Zion.—David Clarkson.

Verse 3. Glorious things are spoken of the people of God. Take the church for a visible congregation, a mixed congregation; glorious things are spoken of that. It is the house of God. Take it as visible, 'the vessels of honour and dishonour', 2Ti 2:20, and the field, the 'tares and the wheat', Mt 13:1 etc., it is God's field. Though we take the church as visible, it hath a glorious name for the good that is in it, especially for the wheat. But take the church of God for the company of his children that are gathered by the means of grace, dwelling in the visible church, enjoying the ordinances: so they are the house and temple of Christ, 'the temple of the Holy Ghost, the body of Christ, the spouse of Christ.' They are God's delight, they are spiritual kings and priests, etc. The most glorious things that can be, all other excellencies in the world are but titular things, mere shadows of things. There is some little reality in earthly things, but it is nothing in comparison, it is scarce worth the name of reality, but Solomon calls them "vanity of vanities." In comparison of the excellencies of the church all is nothing. I might be large in these particulars. It is enough to give you the generals of the delights and excellencies of God's house, "the beauty of the Lord."—Richard Sibbes.

Verse 3. The glories of the wilderness are in thee. The Schechinah, which appeared upon Sinai, and marshalled the army of the Israelites upon their
journey through the wilderness, has now fixed its residence in thee, O city of
God. Compare Ps 68:17.—*Samuel Horsley*

**Verse 4.** *I will make mention*, etc. As if he had said, I do not deny the due
praises which belong to other places and countries, but rather am wont to make
honourable mention of them among my acquaintance; and to allow that *this
man*, that is, some notable person, though comparatively of no great value, was
born in them.—*Thomas Fenton.*

**Verse 4.** *Rahab*, a poetical name of *Egypt.* The same word signifies "fierceness,
insolence, pride"; if Hebrew when applied to Egypt, it would indicate the
national character of the inhabitants.—*Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.*

**Verse 4.**—It should comfort the church that God is able to make her chiepest
enemies to become converts, and that he hath done it sundry times, and will yet
do it more; and that he can take order with those enemies which shall not be
converted, as he did with *Rahab* and *Babylon*; for, *I will make mention of
Rahab and Babylon to them that know me*, signifieth a mention making of
them; *viz.*, to the edification of the church's children, both concerning what God
had done in those nations in justice; and what he would do to them in mercy, or
unto other enemies like unto them.—*David Dickson.*

**Verse 4.** *Rahab, Babylon, Philistia, Tyre, Ethiopia.* This is the glory of the
Church, that into her the fulness of the nations shall enter,—the proud from
Egypt, who for her haughtiness is called Rahab,—the worldly from Babylon,
the city of confusion,—the wrathful from Philistia, so long the enemies of
Israel,—the covetous from Tyre, the rich city of the traders,—and the slaves of
ignorance from Cush, and from the land of Ham,—all these shall learn the love
of Christ and confess his truth, and shall enter into that all glorious city, and be
admitted and acknowledged as citizens of the celestial Sion.—*"Plain
Commentary".*

**Verse 4.**—By this testimony of the nations here mentioned, we may understand
the testimony of the Gentile Christians in general, though, perhaps, a special
reference is had to that extraordinary scene which took place at Jerusalem on
the day of Pentecost: "And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men,
out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the
multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard
them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled,
saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And
how hear we every man in his own tongue, wherein we were born?" Ac 2:5-8.
The reader will find that there is a remarkable agreement between the nations
specified in the book of the Acts, and the nations pointed out in the Psalm before us. Rahab, that is, Egypt, is first mentioned; and in the Acts we find enumerated, "Egypt and the parts of Libya about Cyrene"; next Babylon is in the record; and the Parthians, Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, were inhabitants of what once was the Babylonian empire: Philistia is also mentioned; and "dwellers in Judea" are spoken of in the Acts—"dwellers in Judea" speaking a different language from what was common at Jerusalem. Who could these be, so probably, as the inhabitants of the ancient Philistia, which was in the precincts of the allotment of Judah? Here, too, perhaps, on account of its port of Joppa, was a grand resort of "Cretes and Arabians", and "strangers of Rome." The Grecian settlements of Asia Minor are the only ones specified in the Acts of the Apostles, which we have not noticed in the Psalm—"Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia": but what could so probably indicate these countries, and all who spoke the dialects of the Grecian tongue, as the great mart of Tyre, in frequenting which, the Jews would have the most frequent opportunity of intercourse with these nations?—John Fry.

**Verse 4. Born in her.** The Missionary Society set forth in the Prophets, by our Lord and by his apostles, is, the Church; and so, whereas our natural state, after Adam's fall, was alienation from God, and disunion among ourselves, would He restore "glory to God in the highest and on earth peace, good will towards men", by binding us up in one holy fellowship, and making the continuance of his blessings dependent upon that unity, which he imparted and preserves. To adduce the whole proof for this, would be to go through the whole Old Testament; for the Old Testament is direct prophecy and type, is one large prophecy of the Redeemer and his Kingdom or Church. No sooner had disunion multiplied with the multiplying of men, but in the second generation from Adam, he formed union through a Church, and "Men began to call upon the name of the Lord" (Ge 4:26), *i.e.*, they began to unite in worshipping the Lord, and amid the growing corruption, religion was no longer entrusted to the insulated care of single families, but concentrated in a church. And when, after the flood, one righteous man was called out of the fast corrupting world, unity was preserved, in that one only was called, but in that one a church was founded; for this was the reason assigned by God himself: "All the nations of the earth shall be blessed in him. For I know him, that he will command his children and his household after him, and they shall keep the way of the Lord", (Ge 18:18-19). "God called Abraham alone, and blessed him, and increased him" (Isa 51:2), and formed the Jewish Church out of him, that however largely it might spread, it might be bound in one by its origin of one; and he gave it also outward marks and signs between him and it, which by severing it from
others, might keep it one in itself. The temporal people had their union through a temporal birth of one, and outward signs; the Christian Church has its unity by a spiritual birth, and inward graces, through the power deposited in her to give spiritual birth, so that through one mother, we are all born of one Father, God, and amongst ourselves are brethren, by being members of One, our ever blessed Lord.

The unity of the Christian Church and her office of gathering all nations unto the Lord, are set forth, in many ways, in prophecy. Thus, in our Psalm, Zion is set forth as the special object of God's love, as having (in language which anticipates the Gospel) been "founded" by him "on the holy mountains", as the "city of God", whereof "glorious things are spoken." And what are these? That she should be the spiritual birthplace of all nations. It is not merely said, as in other places, that they should "come to her", should "flow into her", but that they should be "born in her." "Of Zion it shall be said, This and that man (i.e. all, one by one) was born in her; "and whence? all the nations of the earth, Rahab or Egypt, Babylon, Tyre, Ethiopia, Philistia, the most learned, the most powerful, the wealthiest, the furthest, and her nearest, oldest and bitterest enemy Philistia, all, being already born after the flesh, as Egyptians, Babylonians, Ethiopians, Tyrians, Philistines, should be "born in her", and by being "born there", should become children of God, citizens of the heavenly Jerusalem, written by God in the roll of his book. "The Lord shall count, when he writeth up the people, that this man was born there"; he shall account them as his, being reborn in his Church. In like manner, with regard to every prophecy, whereat men's hearts beat, as an encouragement to Missionary labours. Throughout, it is the Lord and Saviour of the Church, or the Church itself, filled with his Spirit, and restored and enlarged, and widening herself by his favour, and gathering his people into herself, his fold.—E.B. Pusey, in a Sermon entitled, "The Church the Converter of the Heathen." 1838.

Verses 4-6. It is made the honour and dignity of Sion, that is, of the true Church of God, to have such and such born in it: "this and that man was born in her." There are two things signified in this expression, as branches of their honour; the one is the quality of the persons; and the other is the number of them. For the quality of them, this; for the number of them, this and that. To have both of these born in Sion, persons of note and eminency, and a multitude and plurality of such persons; this is a part of that dignity and renown which belongs unto it. . . . And so for the noun, man; the Hebrew word vya which is here used for a man, except qualified by some other word as joined with it, signifies a man of worth, not a common or ordinary person. The Church brings forth such as these, Mvh yvna, men of renown, famous and eminent men, and
that in all kinds of perfections, whether natural, or civil, or spiritual; men of
parts, or men of power, or men of piety. There are those in all these
excellencies which have been and still are born in her.

First, take it for natural or acquired abilities; men of parts, and knowledge, and
wisdom, and improved understandings; the church is not without these: this
man, i.e., this learned man, or this wise man was born in Sion. All are not idiots
who are Christians; no, but there are some of very rare and admirable
accomplishments in all kinds and pieces of learning and secular knowledge,
which are graciously qualified. There's Paul with his parchments, and Peter
with his fisher's net.

So also secondly, take it for civil or secular qualifications; men of dignity, and
power, and estate: "this man", i.e., this honourable man, Mynp awvn, eminent
in countenance, as he is called, Isa 3:2, he is likewise born in Sion; the mighty
man, and the man of war. The Syriac interpreter was so far sensible of this, as
that he expresses it in the very text; and therefore instead of saying, "This
man was born there", he says, "A potent man was born there, `and he has established
it; "whereby (as I conceive), he takes in the word highest, which follows
afterwards in the verse, and refers it here to this place...And again, the Chaldee
paraphrast in the text, "This King was born there", understanding thereby
Solomon, as most conceive and apprehend it.

Thirdly, take it for spirituals, and for these accomplishments especially; This
man, i.e., this godly man; this is that which is most proper and essential to Sion,
and to the being born in it; yea, it is that which makes Sion itself, in the sense
we now take it. It is the highest perfection of it, and the greatest commendation
to it of any thing else. This is the great honour of the church, that it forms men
to such qualities and dispositions as those are, which no other place does
beside...As for other places, they may perhaps now and then reach to some
other principles, and those likewise very glorious in the eyes of the world—
morality, and civility, and ingenuity, and smoothness of behaviour. The school
of nature and common reason may sometimes come up to these, and that in a
very great measure; yea, but now go a little higher, to brokenness of heart, to
self denial, to love of enemies, to closing with Christ, the frame and spirit of the
gospel; this is to be found nowhere but only in Sion. And here it is: "This man
was born there."

Behold Philistia, and Tyre, with Ethiopia; this man was born there. Here's the
excellency of the ordinances, and that power and energy which is stirring in the
Church of Christ; that it is able to work such a miraculous alteration as this; to
bring men from darkness to light, from Satan to God, from a state of sin and
corruption and unregeneracy, to a state of grace and holiness and regeneration; yea, from the lowest degree of the one to the highest degree of the other. That Philistia should turn into Palestina, Tyre into, Jerusalem, Ethiopia into Judea; here's the wonder of all; the reconciling of these two opposite terms thus both together. That "princes should come out of Egypt", and that Ethiopia should stretch out her hands to God, as it is in Ps 68:31; that the blackamoor should change his skin, and that the leopard should change his spots; and that this Ethiopian should become this Christian; "that he which was born there, should be born here." Thomas Horton, in "Zion's Birth Register unfolded in a Sermon to the native citizens of London." 1656.

Verses 4-6. Foreign nations are here described not as captives or tributaries, not even as doing voluntary homage to the greatness and glory of Zion, but as actually incorporated and enrolled, by a new birth, among her sons. Even the worst enemies of their race, the tyrants and oppressors of the Jews, Egypt and Babylon, are threatened with no curse, no shout of joy is raised at the prospect of their overthrow, but the privileges of citizenship are extended to them, and they are welcomed as brothers. Nay more, God himself receives each one as a child newly born into his family, acknowledges each as his son, and enrols him with his own hand on the sacred register of his children. It is the mode of anticipating a future union and brotherhood of all the nations of the earth, not by conquest, but by incorporation into one state, and by a birthright so acquired, which is so remarkable. In some of the prophets, more especially in Isaiah, we observe the same liberal, conciliatory, comprehensive language towards foreign states, as Tyre and Ethiopia, and still more strikingly toward Egypt and Assyria (Isa 19:22-25). But the Psalm stands alone amongst the writings of the Old Testament, in representing this union of nations as a new birth unto the city of God ...It is the first announcement of that great amity of nations, or rather of that universal common citizenship of which heathen philosophers dreamt, which was "in the mind of Socrates when he called himself a citizen of the world", which had become a common place of Stoic philosophy, which Judaism tried finally to realize by the admission of proselytes, through baptism, into the Jewish community; which Rome accomplished, so far as the external semblance went, first by subduing the nations, and then by admitting them to the rights of Roman citizenship. But the true fulfilment of this hope is to be found only in that kingdom which Christ has set up. He has gathered into his commonwealth all the kingdoms of the earth. He has made men one, members of the same family, by teaching them to feel that they are all children of the same Father. He has made it evident that the hope of the Jewish singer is no false hope; that there is a Father in heaven who cares for all, whatever name they bear. Thus the Psalm has received a
better and higher fulfilment than that which lies on the surface of its words. It was fulfilled in Christ.—J. J. Stewart Perowne.

Verses 4-7. The main thought is that contained in Ps 87:4-7, the glorifying of Sion by the reception of the heathen into the number of its citizens; and a well defined form and arrangement of this thought forms the proper kernel of the Ps 87:1-7, "Sion, the birth place of the nations", which occurs in every one of the three verses (Ps 87:4-6), which are bounded by a Selah behind and before.—E. W. Hengstenberg.

Verse 5. This man. The word rendered "Man" is generally used for a person of eminence; and the clause "this and that man", is simply, "a Man and a Man", which some think is used as a peculiar superlative, and means, the most eminent of men, even the Lord Jesus Christ, and they suppose that He, in his divine nature, is the Highest who "shall establish the church." No doubt he is the glory of the church, and of his people Israel; but his crucifixion was the deepest disgrace imaginable to Jerusalem itself.—Thomas Scott.

Verse 5. This man. It is well to observe that the word for man, used here, is not Mda adam, the common name for man, but vya ish, which is usually employed when a name is introduced to be designated with distinction and honour. There are in Hebrew, in fact, three words to designate man, with varied signification—Mda adam, the common name; vya ish, the name of excellency and honour; and vwna enosh, man in his weak and inferior character, as liable to misfortune, misery, and death. The illustrative discrimination with which these words are respectively employed, gives to many passages of the Hebrew Scriptures a force and significance which cannot be preserved in translation into a language which has but one word to represent all these meanings—or indeed has no word for man but the one answering to Adam, unless indeed our "male", in a sense of dignity and strength, answers in some measure to ish.—John Kitto, in "The Pictorial Bible."

Verse 6.—The Lord will count (rpoy) record it in a book, when he writes up the people (Myme bwtkb) registers the several nations of the earth; that "this man, was born in" Sion. The Psalmist here describes the peculiar regard of God to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and figuratively represents him, as keeping a register of all the nations of the earth, and marking, as it were, in that register every one that was a citizen of Jerusalem, as thereby entitled to his distinguishing favour and protection.—Samuel Chandler.

Verse 6. —This man was born there. When events shall be traced to their principles at the last day, many a scene will come forth into prominence, which
now is of little regard. Humble churches will then prove to have been the birthplace, and stately palaces the graves of many an immortal soul, while every saved soul will ascribe its springs of glory to its Redeemer, through the instrumentality of that church, which he has ordained.—Edward Garrard Marsh.

Verse 6.—Selah. The Hebrew text addeth "Selah", which St. Jerome translates semper (always). For the Church, as a bride glorious in her husband, shall evermore be preached of; glorious things shall be spoken of her, and in her shall be continually sung the ineffable glory of the everlasting grace of God in Christ our Lord. And so the Jews for the most part interpret the word "Selah" by "everlasting". This is evident in their epitaphs, even as the Jewish epitaph is in Hebrew at Basle—"His soul continues in Paradise, Amen, Amen, Amen, forever and ever."—Urbanus Regius (Le Roi) (1541) in "The Solace of Sion."

Verse 7. The singers; the players on instruments. Song and music were prominent features of Divine worship in David's time. This is evident from the large number of two hundred and eighty-eight Levites who were expressly appointed for singing and the performance of music. Not less than two hundred and fifty-five singing men and singing women returned from the exile...The chief instruments used by the Levites were, according to the records of the Books of Chronicles, cymbals, harps, and lutes: according to Ps 5:1-12 (title), we should add the flute, which is frequently noticed on Egyptian monuments.—Augustus F. Tholuck.

Verse 7. (First clause). For all its inhabitants are expert musicians; lit. Sing like flute players. The Hebrews seem to have surpassed all nations in the skill of poetry and music; and every citizen could sing and dance. This preeminence the Psalmist seems to hint at.—Alexander Geddes.

Verse 7. All my springs are in thee. The original word ynym, which we render "springs", is used in a figurative sense, to denote any one's posterity. Thus Pr 5:16, "Let thy fountains be dispersed abroad"; i.e., thy posterity be exceeding numerous. And thus in the place before us: the inhabitants of Jerusalem should triumph and sing, "All my springs", or fountains, all my friends, my family, my children, are in thee, are thy citizens, enjoy the glorious privileges thou art favoured with, are all inserted in God's register, and entitled to his protection and favour. Thus there is a harmony and connection between all the parts of this ode, which I think is very intelligible and poetical.—Samuel Chandler.

Verse 7. All my springs are in thee. Whatever conduit pipe be used, Christ is the fountain and foundation of every drop of comfort; Christ is the God of all
true consolation. It is not in the power of all the angels of heaven to give any soul one drop of comfort, nor can all on earth give you one drop of comfort. They can speak the words of comfort, but they cannot cause the soul to receive comfort. God comforts by them, 2Co 7:6. Titus was but an instrument. Comforting is called frequently in Scripture the speaking to the heart, Ho 2:14. Who is able to speak to the heart but he who is the Lord and commander of the heart? God hath put all the oil of spiritual joy into the hands of Christ, Isa 61:3, and none but he can give it out. He that wants comfort must go to Christ, he that hath received any true comfort must ascribe it to Christ. "All my springs", saith the Church, "are in thee."—Ralph Robinson.

Verse 7. The silver springs of grace, and the golden springs of glory are in him.—Thomas Watson.

Verse 7. Springs. The meaning of this verse is obscure, partly from its abrupt brevity, and partly from the ambiguity of one word. The word "springs" is, beyond all controversy, to be here taken metaphorically; but interpreters are not agreed as to the explanation of the metaphor. Some understand it as denoting hopes, some affections, and others thoughts. Did the idiom of the language admit, I would willingly subscribe to the opinion of those who translate it melodies or songs. But as this might be considered unsupported by the usage of the Hebrew term, I am rather inclined to adopt, as most suitable to the subject in hand, the opinion that lookings is the proper translation, the root of the word signifying an eye. It is as if the Psalmist had said, I will always be earnestly looking, as it were, with fixed eyes upon thee.—John Calvin.

Verse 7. My springs.

Whether songs or melodies
In Thee are all my well springs.

This passage is given obscurely in most of the versions; it is here rendered strictly, and, as the author hopes, perspicuously. As the Greeks had their Pierian springs, their fountains of Aganippe dedicated to the Muses, Jerusalem had, in like manner, her sacred springs, her fountains of inspiration, in a much higher degree. It is to these the holy bard alludes in the passage before us, as Milton does in the following, who has perhaps copied from the present in his address to the "Heavenly Muse":

"Or if Zion's hill
Delight thee more, or Siloa's fount that flowed
Hard by the oracle of God, I thence
Invoke thine aid to my adventurous song."
—John Mason Good.

Verse 7.—All my springs. Fitly may we here quote the delightful hymn of Robert Robinson which has puzzled so many, but which has in it a fine classical allusion to Hippocrene and Mount Parnassus.

"Come, thou fount of every blessing,
Tune my heart to sing Thy grace,
Streams of mercy, never ceasing,
Call for songs of loudest praise.

Teach me some melodious sonnet,
Sung by flaming tongues above:
Praise the mount—oh fix me on it,
Mount of God's unchanging love."—C.H.S.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verses 2-3.

1. The foundation of Zion.

(a) It is but one: "foundation."
(b) It is the Lord's: "his."
(c) It is in conformity with holiness: "holy mountains."
(d) It consists of eternal purposes.
(e) It is built up on immutable principles.
(f) It is situated in a glorious position.

2. The favour enjoyed by Zion.

(a) God "loves the dwellings of Jacob." He led, fed, guarded, lighted, visited them.

(b) He loves Zion "better"; and gives all those blessings in a richer form.

(c) There are more to love.

(d) Their occupations are more spiritual.

(e) Their songs and worship are more enthusiastic.
(f) Their testimony is more powerful.

(g) Their knowledge of truth is more clear.

(h) Their fellowship is on a scale more heavenly. Let us be in the Church, and love her.

3. The fame of Zion. "Glorious things are spoken",

(a) of her in history;
(b) in her by ministry;
(c) for her by Jesus;
(d) about her in prophecy.

Here is a fruitful theme.

Verse 3. The idea of the text presents the Church as "the city of God": let us touch upon some of the "glorious things" that are spoken of it.

1. There are glorious things with respect to the erection of the city.

(a) There is the plan of its erection. There was never a plan so faultless, so complete, so wonderful for its beauty and grandeur. The gates, the walls, the buildings, the streets, the monuments, the fountains, the gardens, unite to proclaim it a master piece of skill. The Architect was he who built the skies.

(b) There is the site where the city is erected. See Ps 87:1.

(c) There is the date of the city's erection. A halo and a glory attach, in a case like this, to great antiquity. Now it is long since the city was built. It was standing in the days of Paul "Ye are come unto the city of the living God." Heb 12:22. David was well acquainted with it. Ps 46:1-11.

(d) It was standing before the flood. Noah, Enoch, Abel, dwelt in it. It is almost as old as the creation.

2. There are glorious things to tell of the defences of the city. It has been besieged ever since it was a city at all, and it is not taken to this hour. "We have a strong city", etc.

3. There are glorious things in connection with the stores and supplies on which the city depends;
(a) their excellence;
(b) their abundance;
(c) their source.

4. There are glorious things respecting the *King* of the city; his name, person, character, etc.

5. There are glorious things in connection with the *citizens* of the day.— *Andrew Gray*, 1805-1861.

**Verse 3.**

1. Observe, that a city is not like a flower, a tree, or a plant—something that grows out of the earth, and is nourished from the earth, and dependent wholly on its juices. It is an artificial thing, constructed by wisdom and raised by power, as it was designed by genius and forethought.

2. A city upon earth is surrounded generally by walls.

3. Jerusalem (the most celebrated of cities, from which this figure is obviously drawn) was built upon the brow of a hill, an extremely conspicuous and beautiful object.

4. In a city there are various buildings, and structures of various shapes, materials and value: illustrate by the different denominations, & c.

5. A city has municipal laws.

6. It has also trade, traffic, & c.

7. The figure, as applied to the Church of Christ, involves the idea of safety or security, honour, & c.

8. There is also the idea of fewness.—*John Cumming*, 1843.

**Verse 3.** The things "spoken" of the city of God.

1. It shall be the permanent and the peculiar residence of God.

2. It shall be the scene of delightful privileges and blessings.

3. It shall be invested with absolute and inviolable security.
4. It shall possess renown and empire throughout the whole world.

5. Its institutions and existence shall be perfected in the celestial state.—*James Parsons*, 1839.

**Verse 4. (last clause).**

1. Behold what the "man" was: a native of "Philistia", a heathen, and an enemy to God.

2. Behold what happened to him: he "was born there," *i.e.* new born in Zion.

3. Behold what he became—he became by his new birth a freeman and burgess of Zion, & c.

**Verses 4-5.**

1. What is not the most honourable birth place—not Rahab nor Egypt, nor Babylon, nor any earthly palace or kingdom.

2. What is? "Of Zion", & c.

   (a) Because it is a nobler birth; a being born again of the Spirit of God.

   (b) Because it is a nobler place; the residence of the Highest, and established for ever.

   (c) Because it brings nobler rank and privileges.—*G.R.*

**Verses 4-7.**

1. Zion shall produce many good and great men.
2. Zion's interest shall be established by divine power.
3. Zion's sons shall be registered with honour.
4. Zion's songs shall be sung with joy and triumph.—*Matthew Henry.*

**Verses 4-7.**

1. The excellence of the church is here stated.

2. Her enlargement is here promised.—*J. Scholefield*, 1825.

**Verse 5.** The renowned men of the church of God.
1. Great warriors, who have fought with temptation.

2. Great poets, whose lives were Psalms.

3. Great heroes, who have lived and died for Jesus.

4. Great kings, who have ruled themselves, & c. Apostles, martyrs, confessors, reformers, men renowned for virtues such as only grace can produce.

Verse 5. This and that man. The individuality of true religion.

1. Each soul sins for itself.

2. Rejects or accepts the Saviour for itself.

3. Must be judged, and

4. Saved or lost individually. The consequent need of personal piety; the temptations to neglect it; and the habits which promote it.

Verse 5. (last clause). The Established Church of God—her Head, her protection, her power. & c.

Verse 6.

1. "The Lord" will make the Census.
2. He will "count" whether a man be rightly there or no.
3. Every man truly born in Zion shall be admitted on the register.

Verse 6.

1. The time referred to. "When he writeth up", & c.; when all the true Israel is saved.

2. The account to be taken: "When he writeth up", & c., i.e. revises and reenters the names in the Lamb's Book of Life. Compares the called with the chosen.

3. The test to be applied.

(a) Their being in Zion, or having the means of grace.
(b) Their being born there.
4. The completion of their number: "The Lord shall count." An exact number of stones in a perfect building and of members in a perfect body. So in Christ's Church. All make one bride.

5. The notice taken of each one: "This man was born there." Men fell as a whole; they are saved individually. —G.R.

Verse 7.

1. In God our joy.
2. From God our supplies.
3. To God our praise.

Verse 7. (last clause).—All the springs within me, all the springs which flow for me, are in my God. There are "upper and nether springs", springs "shut up", "valley" springs (Ps 104:10), rock springs, & c.; but all these flow from the Lord.

WORKS UPON THE EIGHTY-SEVENTH PSALM

In "Sermons preached before the University of Oxford ... by John Eveleigh, D.D., 1815, "is "Sermon, twelve, in which is proposed a New Interpretation of the Eighty-Seventh Psalm."

Psalm 88

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah. This sad complaint reads very little like a Song, nor can we conceive how it could be called by a name which denotes a song of praise or triumph; yet perhaps it was intentionally so called to show how faith "glories in tribulations also." Assuredly, if ever there was a song of sorrow and a Psalm of sadness, this is one. The sons of Korah, who had often united in chanting jubilant odes, are now bidden to take charge of this mournful dirge like hymn. Servants and singers must not be choosers. To the chief Musician. He must superintend the singers and see that they do their duty well, for holy sorrow ought to be expressed with quite as much care as the most joyful praise; nothing should be slovenly in the Lord's house. It is more difficult to express sorrow fitly than it is to pour forth notes of gladness. Upon Mahalath Leannoth. This is translated by Alexander, "concerning afflictive sickness", and if this be correct, it indicates the mental malady which occasioned this plaintive song. Maschil. This term has occurred many times before, and the reader will remember that it indicates an instructive or didactic Psalm:—the sorrows of one saint are lessons to others; experimental teaching is exceedingly valuable. Of Heman the Ezrahite. This, probably, informs us as to its authorship; it was written by Heman, but which Heman it would not be easy to determine, though it will not be a very serious mistake if we suppose it to be the man alluded to in 1Ki 4:31, as the brother of Ethan, and one of the five sons of Zerah (1Ch 2:6), the son of Judah, and hence called "the Ezrahite": if this be the man, he was famous for his wisdom, and his being in Egypt during the time of Pharaoh's oppression may help to account for the deep bass of his song, and for the antique form of many of the expressions, which are more after the manner of Job than David. There was, however, a Heman in David's day who was one of the grand trio of chief musicians, "Heman, Asaph, and Ethan" (1Ch 15:19), and no one can prove that this was not the composer. The point is of no consequence; whoever wrote the Psalm most have been a man of deep experience, who had done business on the great waters of soul trouble.

SUBJECT AND DIVISION. This Psalm is fragmentary, and the only division of any service to us would be that suggested by Albert Barnes, viz.—A description of the sick man's sufferings (Ps 88:1-9), and a prayer for mercy and deliverance (Ps 88:10-18). We shall, however, consider each verse separately, and so exhibit the better the incoherence of the author's grief. The reader had better first peruse the Psalm as a whole.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. O Lord God of my salvation. This is a hopeful title by which to address the Lord, and it has about it the only ray of comfortable light which shines throughout the Psalm. The writer has salvation, he is sure of that, and God is the sole author of it. While a man can see God as his Saviour, it is not altogether midnight with him. While the living God can be spoken of as the life of our salvation, our hope will not quite expire. It is one of the characteristics of true faith that she turns to Jehovah, the saving God, when all other confidences have proved liars unto her. I have cried day and night before thee. His distress had not blown out the sparks of his prayer, but thickened them into a greater ardency, till they burned perpetually like a furnace at full blast. His prayer was
personal—whover had not prayed, he had done so; it was intensely earnest, so that it was correctly described as a cry, such as children utter to move the pity of their parents; and it was unceasing, neither the business of the day nor the weariness of the night had silenced it: surely such entreaties could not be in vain. Perhaps, if Heman's pain had not been incessant his supplications might have been intermittent; it is a good thing that sickness will not let us rest if we spend our restlessness in prayer. Day and night are both suitable to prayer; it is no work of darkness, therefore let us go with Daniel and pray when men can see us, yet, since supplication needs no light, let us accompany Jacob and wrestle at Jabbok till the day breaketh. Evil is transformed to good when it drives us to prayer. One expression of the text is worthy of special note; "before thee" is a remarkable intimation that the Psalmist's cries had an aim and a direction towards the Lord, and were not the mere clamours of nature, but the groanings of a gracious heart towards Jehovah, the God of salvation. Of what use are arrows shot into the air? The archer's business is to look well at the mark he drives at. Prayers must be directed to heaven with earnest care. So thought Heman—his cries were all meant for the heart of his God. He had no eye to onlookers as Pharisees have, but all his prayers were before his God.

Verse 2. Let my prayer come before thee. Admit it to an audience; let it speak with thee. Though it be my prayer, and therefore very imperfect, yet deny it not thy gracious consideration. Incline thine ear unto my cry. It is not music save to the ear of mercy, yet be not vexed with its discord, though it be but a cry, for it is the most natural expression of my soul's anguish. When my heart speaks, let thine ear hear. There may be obstacles which impede the upward flight of our prayers—let us entreat the Lord to remove them; and as there may also be offences which prevent the Lord from giving favourable regard to our requests—let us implore him to put these out of the way. He who has prayed day and night cannot bear to lose all his labour. Only those who are indifferent in prayer will be indifferent about the issue of prayer.

Verse 3. For my soul is full of troubles. I am satiated and nauseated with them. Like a vessel full to the brim with vinegar, my heart is filled up with adversity till it can hold no more. He had his house full and his hands full of sorrow; but, worse than that, he had his heart full of it. Trouble in the soul is the soul of trouble. A little soul trouble is pitiful; what must it be to be sated with it? And how much worse still to have your prayers return empty when your soul remains full of grief. And my life draweth nigh unto the grave. He felt as if he must die, indeed he thought himself half dead already. All his life was going, his spiritual life declined, his mental life decayed, his bodily life flickered; he was nearer dead than alive. Some of us can enter into this experience, for many
a time have we traversed this valley of death shade, aye and dwelt in it by the month together. Really to die and be with Christ will be a gala day's enjoyment compared with our misery when a worse than physical death has cast its dreadful shadow over us. Death would be welcomed as a relief by those whose depressed spirits make their existence a living death. Are good men ever permitted to suffer thus? Indeed they are; and some of them are even all their life time subject to bondage. O Lord, Be pleased to set free thy prisoners of hope! Let, none of thy mourners imagine that a strange thing has happened unto him, but rather rejoice as he sees the footprints of brethren who have trodden this desert before.

**Verse 4.** *I am counted with them that go down into the pit.* My weakness is so great that both by myself and others I am considered as good as dead. If those about me have not ordered my coffin they have at least conversed about my sepulchre, discussed my estate, and reckoned their share of it. Many a man has been buried before he was dead, and the only mourning over him has been because he refused to fulfil the greedy expectations of his hypocritical relatives by going down to the pit at once. It has come to this with some afflicted believers, that their hungry heirs think they have lived too long. I am as a mat, that hath no strength. I have but the name to live; my constitution is broken up; I can scarce crawl about my sick room, my mind is even weaker than my body, and my faith weakest of all. The sons and daughters of sorrow will need but little explanation of these sentences, they are to such tried ones as household words.

**Verse 5.** *Free among the dead.* Unbound from all that links a man with life, familiar with death's door, a freeman of the city of the sepulchre, I seem no more one of earth's drudges, but begin to anticipate the rest of the tomb. It is a sad case when our only hope lies in the direction of death, our only liberty of spirit amid the congenial horrors of corruption. Like the slain that lie in the grave, whom you remember no more. He felt as if he were as utterly forgotten as those whose carcasses are left to rot on the battle field. As when a soldier, mortally wounded, bleeds unheeded amid the heaps of slain, and remains to his last expiring groan unpitied and unsuccoured, so did Heman sigh out his soul in loneliest sorrow, feeling as if even God himself had quite forgotten him. How low the spirits of good and brave men will sometimes sink. Under the influence of certain disorders everything will wear a sombre aspect, and the heart will dive into the profoundest deeps of misery. It is all very well for those who are in robust health and full of spirits to blame those whose lives are sicklied over with the pale cast of melancholy, but the evil is as real as a gaping wound, and all the more hard to bear because it lies so much in the region of the soul that to
the inexperienced it appears to be a mere matter of fancy and diseased imagination. Reader, never ridicule the nervous and hypochondriacal, their pain is real; though much of the evil lies in the imagination, it is not imaginary. And they are cut off from thy hand. Poor Heman felt as if God himself had put him away, smitten him and laid him among the corpses of those executed by divine justice. He mourned that the hand of the Lord had gone out against him, and that lie was divided from the great author of his life. This is the essence of wormwood. Man's blows are trifles, but God's smitings are terrible to a gracious heart. To feel utterly forsaken of the Lord and cast away as though hopelessly corrupt is the very climax of heart desolation.

Verse 6. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness, in the deeps. What a collection of forcible metaphors, each one expressive of the utmost grief. Heman compared his forlorn condition to an imprisonment in a subterranean dungeon, to confinement in the realms of the dead, and to a plunge into the abyss. None of the similes are strained. The mind can descend far lower than the body, for it there are bottomless pits. The flesh can bear only a certain number of wounds and no more, but the soul can bleed in ten thousand ways, and die over and over again each hour. It is grievous to the good man to see the Lord whom he loves laying him in the sepulchre of despondency; piling nightshade upon him, putting out all his candles, and heaping over him solid masses of sorrow; evil from so good a hand seems evil indeed, and yet if faith could but be allowed to speak she would remind the depressed spirit that it is better to fall into the hand of the Lord than into the hands of man, and moreover she would tell the despondent heart that God never placed a Joseph in a pit without drawing him up again to fill a throne; that he never caused a horror of great darkness to fall upon an Abraham without revealing his covenant to him; and never cast even a Jonah into the deeps without preparing the means to land him safely on dry land. Alas, when under deep depression the mind forgets all this, and is only conscious of its unutterable misery; the man sees the lion but not the honey in its carcass, he feels the thorns but he cannot smell the roses which adorn them. He who now feebly expounds these words knows within himself more than he would care or dare to tell of the abysses of inward anguish. He has sailed round the Cape of Storms, and has drifted along by the dreary headlands of despair. He has groaned out with one of old—"My bones are pierced in me in the night season; and my sinews take no rest. I go morning without the sun. Terrors are turned upon me, they pursue my soul as the wind." Those who know this bitterness by experience will sympathise, but from others it would be idle to expect pity, nor would their pity be worth the having if it could be obtained. It is an unspeakable consolation that our Lord Jesus knows this experience, right well, having, with the exception of the sin of
it, felt it all and more than all in Gethsemane when he was exceeding sorrowful even unto death.

Verse 7. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me. Dreadful plight this, the worst in which a man can be found. Wrath is heavy in itself; God's wrath is crushing beyond conception, and when that presses hard the soul is oppressed indeed. The wrath of God is the very hell of hell, and when it weighs upon the conscience a man feels a torment such as only that of damned spirits can exceed. Joy or peace, or even numbness of indifference, there can be none to one who is loaded with this most tremendous of burdens. And thou hast afflicted me with all thy waves, or all thy breakers. He pictures God's wrath as breaking over him like those waves of the sea which swell, and rage, and dash with fury upon the shore. How could his frail barque hope to survive those cruel breakers, white like the hungry teeth of death. Seas of affliction seemed to rush in upon him with all the force of omnipotence; he felt himself to be oppressed and afflicted like Israel in Egypt, when they cried by reason of their afflictions. It appeared impossible for him to suffer more, he had exhausted the methods of adversity and endured all its waves. So have we imagined, and yet it is not really quite so bad. The worst case might be worse, there are alleviations to every woe; God has other and more terrible waves which, if he chose to let them forth, would sweep us into the infernal abyss, whence hope has long since been banished. Selah. There was need to rest. Above the breakers the swimmer lifts his head and looks around him, breathing for a moment, until the next wave comes. Even lamentation must have its pauses. Nights are broken up into watches, and even so mourning has its intervals. Such sorrowful music is a great strain both on voices and instruments, and it is well to give the singers the relief of silence for a while.

Verse 8. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance far from me. If ever we need friends it is in the dreary hour of despondency and the weary time of bodily sickness; therefore does the sufferer complain because divine providence had removed his friends. Perhaps his disease was infectious or defiling, so that he was legally separated from his fellow men, perhaps their fears kept them away from his plague stricken house, or else his good name had become so injured that they naturally avoided him. Lost friends require but small excuse for turning their backs on the afflicted. The swallows offer no apology for leaving us to winter by ourselves. Yet it is a piercing pain which arises from the desertion of dear associates; it is a wound which festers and refuses to be healed. Thou hast made me an abomination unto them. They turned from him as though he had become loathsome and contaminating, and this because of something which the Lord had done to him; therefore, he brings his complaint
to the prime mover in his trouble. He who is still flattered by the companions of his pleasure can little guess the wretchedness which will be his portion should he become poor, or slanderously accused, for then one by one the parasites of his prosperity will go their way and leave him to his fate, not without cutting remarks on their part to increase his misery. Men have not so much power to bless by friendship as to curse by treachery. Earth's poisons are more deadly than her medicines are healing. The mass of men who gather around a man and flatter him are like tame leopards; when they lick his hand it is well for him to remember that with equal gusto they would drink his blood. "Cursed is he that trusteth in man." I am shut up, and I cannot come forth. He was a prisoner in his room, and felt like a leper in the lazaretto, or a condemned criminal in his cell. His mind, too, was bound as with fetters of iron; he felt no liberty of hope, he could take no flights of joy. When God shuts friends out, and shuts us in to pine away alone, it is no wonder if we water our couch with tears.

**Verse 9.** *Mine eye mourneth by reason of affliction.* He wept his eyes out. He exhausted the lachrymal glands, he wore away the sight itself. Tears in showers are a blessing, and work our good; but in floods they become destructive and injurious. Lord, I have called daily upon thee. His tears wetted his prayers, but did not damp them fervour. He prayed still, though no answer came to dry his eyes. Nothing can make a true believer cease praying; it is a part of his nature, and pray he must. I have stretched out my hands unto thee. He used the appropriate posture of a supplicant, of his own accord; men need no posture maker, or master of the ceremonies, when they are eagerly pleading for mercy, nature suggests to them attitudes both natural and correct. As a little child stretches out its hands to its mother while it cries, so did this afflicted child of God. He prayed all over, his eyes wept, his voice cried, his hands were outstretched, and his heart broke. This was prayer indeed.

**Verse 10.** *Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?* Wherefore then suffer me to die? While I live thou canst in me display the glories of thy grace, but when I have passed into the unknown land, how canst thou illustrate in me thy love? If I perish thou wilt lose a worshipper who both reverenced, and in his own experience illustrated, the wonders of thy character and acts. This is good pleading, and therefore he repeats it. Shall the dead arise and praise thee? He is thinking only of the present, and not of the last great day, and he urges that the Lord would have one the less to praise him among the sons of men. Shades take no part in the quires of the Sabbath, ghosts sing no joyous Psalms, sepulchres and vaults send forth no notes of thanksgiving. True the souls of departed saints render glory to God, but the dejected Psalmist's thoughts do not mount to heaven but survey the gloomy grave: he stays on this side of eternity, where in
the grave he sees no wonders and hears no songs. Selah. At the mouth of the tomb he sits down to meditate, and then returns to his theme.

Verse 11. Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave? Thy tender goodness—who shall testify concerning it in that cold abode where the worm and corruption hold their riot? The living may indite "meditations among the Tombs", but the dead know nothing, and therefore can declare nothing. Or thy faithfulness in destruction? If the Lord suffered his servant to die before the divine promise was fulfilled, it would be quite impossible for his faithfulness to be proclaimed. The poet is dealing with this life only, and looking at the matter from the point of view afforded by time and the present race of men; if a believer were deserted and permitted to die in despair, there could come no voice from his grave to inform mankind that the Lord had rectified his wrongs and relieved him of his trials, no songs would leap up from the cold sod to hymn the truth and goodness of the Lord; but as far as men are concerned, a voice which loved to magnify the grace of God would be silenced, and a loving witness for the Lord removed from the sphere of testimony.

Verse 12. Shall thy wonders be known in the dark? If not here permitted to prove their goodness of Jehovah, how could the singer do so in the land of darkness and death shade? Could his tongue, when turned into a clod, alarm the dull cold ear of death? Is not a living dog better than a dead lion, and a living believer of more value to the cause of God on earth than all the departed put together? And thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? What shall be told concerning thee in the regions of oblivion? Where memory and love are lost, and men are alike unknowing and unknown, forgetful and forgotten, what witness to the divine holiness can be borne? The whole argument amounts to this—if the believer dies unblessed, how will God's honour be preserved? Who will bear witness to his truth and righteousness?

Verse 13. But unto thee have I cried, O LORD; I have continued to pray for help to thee, O Jehovah, the living God, even though thou hast so long delayed to answer. A true born child of God may be known by his continuing to cry; a hypocrite is great at a spurt, but the genuine believer holds on till he wins his suit. And in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. He meant to plead on yet, and to increase his earnestness. He intended to be up betimes, to anticipate the day light, and begin to pray before the sun was up. If the Lord is pleased to delay, he has a right to do as he wills, but we must not therefore become tardy in supplication. If we count the Lord slack concerning his promise we must only be the more eager to outrun him, lest sinful sloth on our part should hinder the blessing.
"Let prayer and holy hymn
Perfume the morning air; Before the world with smoke is dim
Bestir thy soul to prayer."
"While flowers are wet with dew
Lament thy sins with tears,
And ere the sun shines forth anew
Tell to thy Lord thy fears."

Verse 14. LORD, why castest thou oft my soul? Hast thou not aforetime chosen me, wilt thou now reject me? Shall thine elect ones become thy reprobates? Dost thou, like changeable men, give a writing of divorcement to those whom thy love has espoused? Can thy beloveds become thy cast offs? Why hidest thou thy face from me? Wilt thou not so much as look upon me? Canst thou not afford me a solitary smile? Why this severity to one who has in brighter days basked in the light of thy favour? We may put these questions to the Lord, nay, we ought to do so. It is not undue familiarity, but holy boldness. It may help us to remove the evil which provokes the Lord to jealousy, if we seriously beg him to shew us wherefore he contends with us. He cannot act towards us in other than a right and gracious manner, therefore for every stroke of his rod there is a sufficient reason in the judgment of his loving heart; let us try to learn that reason and profit by it.

Verse 15. I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up. His affliction had now lasted so long that he could hardly remember when it commenced; it seemed to him as if he had been at death's door ever since he was a child. This was no doubt an exaggeration of a depressed spirit, and yet perhaps Heman may have been born under the cypress, and have been all his days afflicted with some chronic disease or bodily infirmity; there are holy men and women whose lives are a long apprenticeship to patience, and these deserve both our sympathy and our reverence,—our reverence we have ventured to say, for since the Saviour became the acquaintance of grief, sorrow has become honourable in believers' eyes. A life long sickness may by divine grace prove to be a life long blessing. Better suffer from childhood to old age than to be let alone to find pleasure in sin. While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. Long use had not blunted the edge of sorrow, God's terrors had not lost their terror; rather had they become more overwhelming and had driven the man to despair. He was unable to collect his thoughts, he was so tossed about that he could not judge and weigh his own condition in a calm and rational manner. Sickness alone will thus distract the mind; and when a sense of divine anger is added thereto, it is not to be wondered at if reason finds it hard to hold the reins. How near akin to madness soul depression sometimes may be, it is not our province to decide;
but we speak what we do know when we say that a feather weight might be sufficient to turn the scale at times. Thank God O ye tempted ones who yet retain your reason! Thank him that the devil himself cannot add that feather while the Lord stands by to adjust all things. Even though we have grazed upon the rock of utter distraction, we bless the infinitely gracious Steersman that the vessel is seaworthy yet, and answers to her helm: tempest tossed from the hour of her launch even to this hour, yet she mounts the waves and defies the hurricane.

Verse 16. *Thy fierce wrath goeth over me.* What an expression, "fierce wrath", and it is a man of God who feels it! Do we seek an explanation? It seemed so to him, but "tidings are not what they seem." No punitive anger ever falls upon the saved one, for Jesus shields him from it all; but a father's anger may fall upon his dearest child, none the less but all the more, because he loves it. Since Jesus bore my guilt as my substitute, my Judge cannot punish me, but my Father can and will correct me. In this sense the Father may even manifest "fierce wrath" to his erring child, and under a sense of it that dear broken down one may be laid in the dust and covered with wretchedness, and yet for all that he may be accepted and beloved of the Lord all the while. Heman represents God's wrath as breaking over him as waves over a wreck. Thy terrors have cut me off. They have made me a marked man, they have made me feel like a leper separated from the congregation of thy people, and they have caused others to look upon me as no better than dead. Blessed be God this is the sufferer's idea and not the very truth, for the Lord will neither cast off nor cut off his people, but will visit his mourners with choice refreshments.

Verse 17. *They came round about me daily like water.* My troubles, and thy chastisement poured in upon me, penetrating everywhere, and drowning all. Such is the permeating and pervading power of spiritual distress, there is no shutting it out; it soaks into the soul like the dew into Gideon's fleece; it sucks the spirit down as the quicksand swallows the ship; it overwhelms it as the deluge submerged the green earth. They compassed me about together. Griefs hemmed him in. He was like the deer in the hunt, when the dogs are all around and at his throat. Poor soul! and yet he was a man greatly beloved of heaven!

Verse 18. *Lover and friend: hast thou put far from me.* Even when they are near me bodily, they are so unable to swim with me in such deep waters, that they stand like men far away on the shore while I am buffeted with the billows; but, alas, they shun me, the dearest lover of all is afraid of such a distracted one, and those who took counsel with me avoid me now! The Lord Jesus knew the meaning of this in all its wormwood and gall when in his passion. In dreadful loneliness he trod the wine press, and all his garments were distained
with the red blood of those sour grapes. Lonely sorrow falls to the lot of not a few; let them not repine, but enter herein into close communion with that dearest lover and friend who is never far from his tried ones. And mine acquaintance into darkness, or better still, my acquaintance is darkness. I am familiar only with sadness, all else has vanished. I am a child crying alone in the dark. Will the heavenly Father leave his child there? Here he breaks off, and anything more from us would only spoil the abruptness of the unexpected FINIS.

(We have not attempted to interpret this Psalm concerning our Lord, but we fully believe that where the members are, the Head is to be seen preeminently. To have given a double exposition under each verse would have been difficult and confusing; we have therefore left the Messianic references to be pointed out in the Notes, where, if God the Holy Ghost be pleased to illustrate the page, we have gathered up more than enough to lead each devout reader to behold Jesus, the man of sorrows and the acquaintance of grief.)

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**EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN'T SAYINGS**

**TITLE.** *Mahalath Leannoth* I lean to the idea, that the words *Mahalath Leannoth*, are intended to denote some musical instrument of the plaintive order, and in this opinion Kimchi and other Jewish writers perfectly agree. They assert that it was a wind instrument, answering very much to the flute, and employed mainly in giving utterance to sentiments of grief, upon occasions of great sorrow and lamentation. With this view of the title, I should look for no new translation, but should just read it substantially as our translators here: "A Song or Psalm for the sons of Korah", to the giver of victory, upon Mahalath Leannoth, an instruction for Heman, the Ezrahite.—John Morison.

**Title.** Leannoth is variously rendered, according as it is derived from hne, *anah, to suffer, be afflicted*, or from hne *anah, to chant, sing*. Gesenius, De Wette, Dr. Davies, and others take the latter view; while Mudge, Hengtenberg, Alexander, and others take the former. Mudge translates, *to create dejection*; Alexander renders, *mahalath leannoth, concerning afflictive sickness*; Hengstenberg reads, *upon the distress of oppression*. The Septuagint (apokriyhnai) and the Vulgate (*respondendum*) indicate a *responsive* song, and Houbigant translates the words in question, *for the choirs, that they may answer*. Many etymologists consider the primary idea of hne, *anah, to sing*, that of *answering*. The tone of the Psalm in question, however, being decidedly that of *sadness and dejection*, it appears more probable that *leannoth* denotes the strictly elegiac character of the performance, and the whole title may read
therefore, "A Song or Psalm, for the sons of Korah, to the chief musician, upon the flutes (or the hollow instruments,) to afflict (or cause dejection,) a didactic Psalm of Heman, the Ezrahite."—F.G. Hibbard, in "The Psalms chronologically arranged, with Historical Introductions." New York, 1856.

**Title.** The explanation:—to be performed mournfully with subdued voice, agrees with the mournful contents, whose tone is even more gloomy than that of Ps 77:1-20.—From "The Psalms, by C.B. Moll." (Lange's Series of Commentaries.)

**Title.**—Heman.

1. David was not the only man acquainted with sad exercise and affliction of spirit, for here is another, to wit, Heman the Ezrahite, as deep in trouble of spirit as he or any other beside.

2. They are not all men of weak minds and shallow wit who are acquainted with trouble of spirit, and borne down with the sense of God's wrath; for here is Heman, one amongst the wisest of all Israel, (and inferior to none for wisdom, except to Solomon alone), under the heaviest exercise we can imagine possible for a saint.

3. When it pleaseth God to exercise a man of parts, of great gifts and graces, he can make his burden proportionable to his strength, and give him as much to do with the difficulties he puts him to, as a weaker man shall find in his exercise, as appeareth in the experience of Heman.

4. Wise men in their trouble must take the same course with the simpler sort of men; that is, they must run to God as others do, and seek relief only in his grace, who as he distributeth the measures of trouble, can also give comfort, ease, and deliverance from them, as the practice of Heman doth teach us.

5. What trouble of wounded spirit some of God's children have felt in former times, others dear to God may find the like in after ages, and all men ought to prepare for the like, and should not think the exercise strange when it cometh, but must comfort themselves in this, that other saints whose refines are recorded in Scripture, have been under like affliction; for the Psalm is appointed "to give instruction"; it is Maschil of Heman.

6. What is at one time matter of mourning to one of God's children, may become matter of joy and singing afterward, both to himself and to others, as this sad anguish of spirit in Heman is made a song of joy unto God's glory, and
the comfort of all afflicted souls, labouring under the sense of sin and felt wrath of God, unto the world's end; it is *A Song, a Psalm for the sons of Korah*.

7. Such as are most heartily afflicted in spirit, and do flee to God for reconciliation and consolation through Christ, have no reason to suspect themselves, that they are not esteemed of and loved as dear children, because they feel so much of God's wrath: for here is a saint who hath drunken of that cup (as deep as any who shall read this Psalm,) here is one so much loved and honoured of God, as to be a penman of Holy Scripture, and a pattern of faith and patience unto others; even *Heman the Ezrahite*. —David Dickson.

**Whole Psalm.** "We have in this Psalm the voice of our suffering Redeemer", says Horne; and the contents may be thus briefly stated—


2. *His soul exceeding sorrowful even unto death*, Ps 88:3-5. The word "free" in our version, is ṣāʾâh, properly denoting separation from others, and here rendered by Junius and Tremellius, "set aside from intercourse and communication with men, having nothing in common with them, like those who are afflicted with leprosy, and are sent away to separate dwellings." They quote 2Ch 26:21.


6. *His submission to the Lord*, Ps 88:9. It is the very tone of Gethsemane, "Nevertheless, not my will!"

7. *The sustaining hope of resurrection*, Ps 88:10 (with a solemn pause, "Selah"), Ps 88:11-12. The "land of forgetfulness", and "the dark", express the unseen world, which, to those on this side of the vail, is so unknown, and where those who enter it are to us as if they had forever been forgotten by those they left behind. God's wonders shall be made known there. There shall be victory gained over death and the grave: God's "lovingkindness" to man, and his "faithfulness", pledge him to do this new thing in the universe. Messiah must return from the abodes of the invisible state; and in due time, Heman, as well as all other members of the Messiah's body, must return also. Yes, God's wonders
shall be known at the grave's mouth. God's righteousness, in giving what satisfied justice in behalf of Messiah's members, has been manifested gloriously, so that resurrection must follow, and the land of forgetfulness must give up its dead. O morning of surpassing bliss, hasten on! Messiah has risen; when shall all that are his arise? Till that day dawn, they must take up their Head's plaintive expostulations, and remind their God in Heman's strains of what he has yet to accomplish. "Wilt thou show wonders to the dead", etc.


9. His long continued and manifold woes, Ps 88:15-17.


Hengstenberg renders the last clause of this verse more literally—"The dark kingdom of the dead is instead of all my companions." What unutterable gloom! completed by this last dark shade—all sympathy from every quarter totally withdrawn! Forlorn, indeed! Sinking from gloom to gloom, from one deep to another, and every billow sweeping over him, and wrath, like a tremendous mountain, "leaning" or resting its weight on the crushed worm. Not even Ps 22:1-31 is more awfully solemnising, there being in this deeply melancholy Psalm only one cheering glimpse through the intense gloom, namely, that of resurrection hoped for, but still at a distance. At such a price was salvation purchased by him who is the resurrection and the life. He himself wrestled for life and resurrection in our name—and that price so paid is the reason why to us salvation is free. And so we hear in solemn joy the harp of Judah struck by Heman, to overawe our souls not with his own sorrows, but with what Horsley calls "The lamentation of Messiah", or yet more fully, The sorrowful days and nights of the Man of Sorrows.—Andrew A. Bonar.

Whole Psalm. This Psalm stands alone in all the Psalter for the unrelieved gloom, the hopeless sorrow of its tone. Even the very saddest of the others, and the Lamentations themselves, admit some variations of key, some strains of hopefulness; here only all is darkness to the close.—Neale and Littledale.

Whole Psalm. The prophecy in the foregoing Psalm of the conversion of all nations is followed by this Passion Psalm, in order that it may never be forgotten that God has purchased to himself an universal church, by the precious blood of his dear Son.—Christopher Wordsworth.
Whole Psalm. All the misery and sorrow which are described in this Psalm, says Brentius, have been the lot of Christ's people. We may therefore take the Psalm, he adds, to be common to Christ and his church.—W. Wilson.

Verse 1. My That little word "my" opens for a moment a space between the clouds through which the Sun of righteousness casts one solitary beam. Generally speaking, you will find that when the Psalm begins with lamentation, it ends with praise; like the sun, which, rising in clouds and mist, sets brightly, and darts forth its parting rays just before it goes down. But here the first gleam shoots across the sky just as the sun rises, and no sooner has the ray appeared, than thick clouds and darkness gather over it; the sun continues its course throughout the whole day enveloped in clouds; and sets at last in a thicker bank of them than it ever had around it during the day. "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." In what a dark cloud does the sun of Heman set!—J.C. Philpot.

Verse 1. Before thee. He had not recklessly poured forth his complaints, or cast them to the winds, as many are wont to do, who have no hope in their calamities; but he had always mingled with his complaining prayers for obtaining deliverance, and had directed them to God, where faith assured him his prayers would be seen again. This must be attentively noted, since herein is seen of what kind the complaints of the saints are.—Mollerus.

Verse 1. Before thee. Other men seek some hiding place where they may murmur against God, but the Psalmist comes into the Lord's presence and states his grievances. When a man dares to pour out his complaint before the Lord's own face, his woes are real, and not the result of petulance or a rebellious spirit.—C.H.S.

Verses 1-2. Before thee. Not seeking to be seen by human eye, but by God alone, therefore, let my prayer come before thee, that is, let it be acceptable before thee, after the similitude of ambassadors who are admitted to audience; and when my prayer has entered incline thine ear unto my cry, because thou hearest the desire of the afflicted.—Richardus Hampolus.

Verse 2. Incline thine ear, etc. It is necessary that God should incline his ear unto our prayer, else it would be in vain to come before Him. The prodigal did not venture to present his prayer before the father ran and fell upon his neck and kissed him. For then he said, Lu 15:21, "Father, I have sinned against heaven, and in thy sight", etc...and so he obtained mercy. Esther did not present her prayer to Ahasuerus before he descended from his throne and inclined himself to her. Es 5:2, etc.—Le Blanc.
Verse 3. My soul is full of troubles. The Lord Jesus emptied himself of glory, that he might be full of trouble. His soul, which was free from human sin, was full of human troubles, that we who are full of sin might be free from trouble; his life drew nigh to the terrors of the unseen world, that we might not be its spoil and prey.—"Plain Commentary."

Verse 3. My soul is full of troubles. Hear into what a depth of spiritual distress three worthy servants of God in these later times were plunged and pressed down under the sense of God's anger for sin. Blessed Mistress Brettergh upon her last bed was horribly hemmed in with the sorrows of death; the very grief of hell laid hold upon her soul; a roaring wilderness of woe was within her, as she confessed of herself. She said, her sin had made her a prey to Satan; and wished that she had never been born, or that she had been made any other creature rather than a woman. She cried out many times, woe, woe, woe, etc.; a weak, a woeful, a wretched, a forsaken woman; with tears continually trickling from her eyes. Master Peacock, that man of God, in that his dreadful visitation and desertion, recounting some smaller sins, burst out in these words: "And for these", saith he, "I feel now a hell in my conscience." Upon other occasions he cried out, groaning most pitifully, "Oh me, wretch! Oh mine heart is miserable! Oh, oh, miserable and woeful! The burden of my sin lieth so heavy upon me, I doubt it will break my heart. Oh how woeful and miserable is my state that I am hunted by hell hounds!" When bystanders asked if he would pray, he answered, "I cannot". Suffer us, say they, to pray for you. "Take not", replied he, "the name of God in vain, by praying for a reprobate."

What grievous pangs, what sorrowful torments, what boiling heats of the fire of hell that blessed saint of God, John Glover, felt inwardly in his spirit, saith Foxe, no speech outwardly is able to express. Being young, saith he, I remember I was once or twice with him, whom partly by his talk I perceived, and partly by mine own eyes saw to be so worn and consumed by the space of five years, that neither almost any brooking of meat, quietness of sleep, pleasure of life, yea, and almost no kind of senses was left in him. Upon apprehension of some backsliding, he was so perplexed, that if he had been in the deepest pit of hell, he could almost have despaired no more of his salvation; in which intolerable griefs of mind, saith he, although he neither had, nor could have any joy of his meat, yet was he compelled to eat against his appetite, to the end to defer the time of his damnation so long as he might; thinking with himself, but that he must needs be thrown into hell, the breath being once out of his body. I dare not pass out of this point, lest some child of God should be here discouraged, before I tell you that every one of these three was at length
blessedly recovered, and did rise most gloriously out of their several depths of most extreme spiritual misery, before their end.

Hear, therefore, Mistress Brettergh's triumphant songs and ravishments of spirit, after the return of her well beloved: "O Lord Jesus, dost thou pray for me? O blessed and sweet Saviour, how wonderful! How wonderful are thy mercies! Oh thy love is unspeakable, thou hast dealt so graciously with me! O my Lord and my God, blessed be thy name for evermore, which hast showed me the path of life. Thou didst, O Lord, hide thy face from me for a little season, but with everlasting mercy thou hast had compassion on me. And now, blessed Lord, thy comfortable presence is come; yea, Lord, thou hast had respect unto thine handmaid, and art come with fulness of joy, and abundance of consolation. O blessed be thy name, my Lord and my God. O the joys that I feel in my soul! They be wonderful. O Father, how merciful and marvellously gracious art thou unto me! yea, Lord, I feel thy mercy and I am assured of thy love; and so certain am I thereof, as Thou art the God of truth, even so sure do I know myself to be thine, O Lord my God, and this my soul knoweth right well. Blessed be the Lord that hath thus comforted me, and hath brought me now to a place more sweet unto me than the garden of Eden. Oh the joy, the delightful joy that I feel! O praise the Lord for his mercies, and for this joy which my soul feels full well; praise his name forever more."

Hear with what heavenly calmness and sweet comforts Master Peacock's heart was refreshed and ravished when the storm was over: "Truly, my heart and soul", saith he, (when the tempest was something allayed) "have been far led and deeply troubled with temptations, and stings of conscience, but I thank God they are eased in good measure. Wherefore I desire that I be not branded with the note of a castaway or reprobate. Such questions, oppositions, and all tending thereto, I renounce. Concerning mine inconsiderate speeches in my temptation, I humbly and heartily ask mercy of God for them all." Afterward by little, and little, more light did arise in his heart, and he brake out into such speeches as these: "I do, God be praised, feel such comfort from that, what shall I call it?" "Agony", said one that stood by. "Nay", quothe, "that is too little; that had I five hundred worlds, I could not make satisfaction for such an issue. Oh, the sea is not more full of water, nor the sun of light, than the Lord of mercy; yea, his mercies are ten thousand times more. What great cause have I to magnify the great goodness of God, that hath humbled such a wretched miscreant, and of so base condition, to an estate so glorious and stately. The Lord hath honoured me with his goodness! I am sure he hath provided a glorious kingdom for me. The joy that I feel in mine heart is incredible." For the third, (namely, John Glover) hear Mr. Foxe: "Though this good servant of
God suffered many years so sharp temptations, and strong buffeting of Satan; yet the Lord, who graciously preserved him all the while, not only at last did rid him out of all discomfort, but also framed him thereby to such mortification of life, as the like lightly hath not been seen; in such sort, as he being like one placed in heaven already, and dead in this world both in word and meditation, led a life altogether celestial, abhorring in his mind all profane doings."—Robert Bolton (1572-1631), in, "Instructions for a right Comforting afflicted Consciences."

Verse 3. My life. The Hebrew word rendered life is in the plural number, as in Ge 2:7 3:14,17 6:17 7:15 et al. Why the plural was used as applicable to life cannot now be known with certainty. It may have been to accord with the fact, that man has two kinds of life;—the animal life,—or life in common with the inferior creation; and intellectual, or higher life,—the life of the soul. The meaning here is, that he was about to die; or that his life or lives approached that state when the grave closes over us; the extinction of the mere animal life; and the separation of the soul—the immortal part—from the body.—Albert Barnes.

Verse 3. The grave. The word which is rendered "hell" in the Prayer Book translation, and "the grave" in the Bible version, and which is usually translated either as hell or the grave, is in the Hebrew hav and in the Greek "Hades." "Hades" signifies "the unseen world." The word "Sheol" is literally "the Devouring, or the Insatiable." (Compare Hab 2:5) "who enlargeth his desire as hell, and is as death, and cannot be satisfied"; and also (Pr 3:15-16.) "Sheol" seems to have presented itself to the thoughts of the ancient Hebrews as a gloomy, silent, inevitable, and mysterious abode, situated within the earth, whither the souls of the departed were compelled to repair and to dwell, upon their being separated from the body. (Isa 14:9-20). They believed that the spirits of all human kind were contained there in a state of waiting, and there especially dwelt the souls of the giants before the flood (1Pe 3:19-20), and of the great ones of old, the Rephaim, whom they pictured to themselves as fearful and gigantic spectres (Compare Pr 2:18). These ideas became modified and developed with the increasing clearness of divine teaching; and they divided the abode of the dead into different states of hope and comfort, which they called Abraham's bosom and paradise (Lu 16:22-23 23:43); and of misery and suffering, (Pr 3:1). Life and immortality were brought to light by the Saviour, and also judgment and Hell—the Gehenna of everlasting punishment, as distinguished from the Unseen World. (Compare Re 20:13-14). From these speculations of Jewish Rabbis respecting Sheol the church of Rome appears to have developed the doctrine of Purgatory. It should be added that it was a
received opinion among the followers of Rabbinical teaching, that all of the seed of Abraham, though they would be dwellers in Sheol before the general resurrection, would finally escape the Gehenna of everlasting fire. The rich man (Lu 16:23) is in Hades in torments when he calls to Abraham his father.—"Plain Commentary."

Verse 4. I am counted with them that go down into the pit. Not only myself, says he, but others also now despair of my life, and number me with those whose corpses are borne forth to burial. For now all my powers have failed and my vital spirits become quenched. He uses the word rbg which indicates fortitude rather than Mda or wya in order to show how great the severity of these evils was, and the vehemence of his griefs, which had broken even a most robust man.—Mollerus.

Verse 4. I am counted with them that go down into the pit. Next to the troubles of Christ's soul, are mentioned the disgrace and ignominy to which he submitted: He who was the fountain of immortality, from whom no one could take his life, who could in a moment have commanded twelve legions of angels to his aid, or have caused heaven and earth, at a word speaking, to fly away before him, he was counted among them that go down into the pit; he died, to all appearance, like the rest of mankind, nay, he was forcibly put to death, as a malefactor; and seemed, in the hands of his executioners, as a man that had no strength, no power, or might, to help and save himself. His strength went from him; he became weak, and like another man. The people shook their heads at him, saying, "He saved others, himself he cannot save."—Samuel Burder.

Verse 4. There is in the original an antithesis, which cannot be conveyed by mere translation, arising from the fact that the first word for man is one implying strength.—J.A. Alexander.

Verse 5. Free among the dead. In the former verse he had said that he had approached very near to death, now he is plainly dead: there he was about to be buried, here he is laid in the sepulchre: thus had his sufferings increased. Free is to be understood of the affairs of this life, as when it is said, Job 3:19, "And the servant is free from his master."—Martin Bucer, 1491-1551.

Verse 5. Free among the dead. yypx Myym bammethim chophshi, I rather think, means stripped among the dead. Both the fourth and fifth verses seem to allude to a field of battle: the slain and the wounded are found scattered over the plain; the spoilers come among them, and strip, not only the dead, but those also who appear to be mortally wounded and cannot recover, and are so feeble
as not to be able to resist. Hence the Psalmist says, "I am as a man that hath no strength", Ps 88:4.—Adam Clarke.

Verse 5. Free. There is no immunity so long as we are in the flesh, there is no truce, but constant unrest distracts us. Liberty, therefore, is given to us after death, because we rest from our labourers.—Franciscus Vatablus.

Verse 5. Cut off from the hand. Beware how you ever look upon yourself as cut off from life and from enjoyment; you are not cut off, only taken apart, laid aside, it may be but for a season, or it may be for life; but still you are part of the body of which Christ is the Head. Some must suffer and some must serve, but each one is necessary to the other, "the whole body is fitly framed together by that which every joint supplieth", "the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you." Eph 4:16 1Co 12:21. Your feet may be set fast; they may have run with great activity, and you sorrow now, because they can run no more. But do not sorrow thus, do not envy those who are running; you have a work to do; it may be the work of the head, or of the eye, it surely is whatever work God gives to you. It may be the work of lying still, of not stirring hand or foot, of scarcely speaking, scarcely showing life. Fear not: if He your heavenly Master has given it to you to do, it is His work, and He will bless it. Do not repine. Do not say, This is work, and, this is not; how do you know? What work, think you, was Daniel doing in the lion's den? Or Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace? Their work was glorious, "laudable, and honourable", they were glorifying God in suffering.—From "Sickness, its Trials and Blessings." (Anon.) 1868.

Verse 6. Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, etc. He expands his meaning by another similitude. For he compares himself to a captive who has been cast into a deep, foul, dark, and slimy pit, where he is shut up and plunged in filth and darkness, having not a remnant of hope and life; after the manner of Jeremiah's sufferings. Jer 37:1-21. By this simile he means that he was in the greatest anxieties and sorrows of mind, destitute of every hope and sense of consolation, and that the terrors of death continually increased and augmented.—Mollerus.

Verse 6. When a saint is under terrible impressions of Jehovah's infinite wrath, he cannot but be under great horror of conscience, and in perplexing depths of mental trouble. The sense which he hath of avenging wrath, occasions a conflict in his spirit, inexpressibly agonizing and terrible. When his troubled conscience is inflamed, by a sense of the fiery indignation of God Almighty, the more be thinks of him as his infinite enemy, the more he is dismayed: every thought of Him, brings doleful tidings, and pours oil upon the raging flame.
Trouble of conscience for sin, is indeed very disquieting; but, a sense of the vindictive wrath of God, kindled in the conscience, is still more dreadful. No words can express the direful anguish, which the disconsolate soul then feels. The Christian cannot at that time think so much as one quiting, one cheering thought. What he first thinks of is tormenting to his wounded spirit: he changes that thought for another, and that is still more tormenting. He finds himself entangled, as in the midst of a thicket of thorns so that, which way soever he turns himself, he is pierced and grieved afresh. This dismal thought often arises in his troubled mind,—That if death were, in his present condition, to surprise and cut him off, he should sink forever and ever, under the intolerable wrath of the infinite Jehovah. The most exquisite torment of body is almost nothing, in comparison of the anguish of his spirit at such times. Oh! how inconceivable is the anguish, the agony, especially of a holy soul, when it is conflicting with the tremendous wrath of the eternal God! The bodily torture even of crucifixion, could not extort from the holy Jesus the smallest sigh or complaint; but the sense of his Father's wrath in his soul, wrung from him that doleful outcry, "My God, my God, why hast thou forsaken me!"—John Colquhoun, in "A Treatise on Spiritual Comfort." 1814.

Verse 7. Thy wrath lieth hard upon me. Others read, sustains itself, or bears up itself upon me, which is as if a giant should with his whole weight stay himself upon a child.—Thomas Goodwin.

Verse 7. There are some that feel the wrath of God on their souls and consciences, and yet are not under wrath, but are true saints of God. Examples ye have in Paul, that chosen vessel of God to bear the name of Jesus among the Gentiles, he had fightings without and terrors within. Heman the Ezrahite said, 'The waves of the Lord's indignation are gone over my head, so that they are like to drown me; I suffer terrors and doubtings from my very youth, so that I can never be quit of them.' And both these were the dear children of God. Now, if you feel nothing but wrath, and thou dost ask how thou shalt judge of thy state when thou art bearing such a wrath, that put all the sand of the sea in balance with it, it would overweigh it; and when thou hast such a fire in thy conscience, that, put iron and brass in that fire, it would melt them, for they were not able to abide it: how then shalt thou know, in this case, that thou art loved of God, and that he hath chosen thee to eternal life? I tell thee, if thou art the chosen child of God, and a vessel of mercy, under a sense of wrath, in this estate this will be thy disposition. First, Thou wilt hate and detest thy sin, which is the cause of thy misery, and hath brought thee to this pain. Secondly, Thou wilt have some dolour and sorrow for thy sin, and thou wilt lament because thou hast provoked God to anger against thee. Thirdly, Thou wilt have a desire
to be reconciled to God; and thou wouldst gladly be at peace with him, that thy
sins may be taken away out of his sight. Fourthly, There will be hunger and
thirst for the blood of Christ to quench that wrath, and for his righteousness to
cover thy soul. Fifthly, There will be a patient waiting upon the Lord's
deliverance, and when thou canst not get to this persuasion, then there will be a
hope above hope, and thou wilt say with Job, (Job 13:15), `Lord, I will trust in
thee, though thou shouldest slay me.'—John Welch.

Verse 8. There are times when an unspeakable sadness steals upon me, an
immense loneliness takes possession of my soul, a longing perchance for some
vanished hand and voice to comfort me as of old, a desolation without form and
void, that wraps me in its folds, and darkens my inmost being. It was not thus
in the first days of my illness. Then all was so new and strange, that a strange
spiritual strength filled my soul, and seemed to bear me up as with angel hands.
The love and kindness that my sickness called forth, came to me with a sweet
surprise; tender solicitude made my very pain into an occasion of joy to me;
and hope was strong and recovery was near, only a few brief weeks between
me and returning health, with nothing of sickness remaining, but the memory of
all that love and sympathy, like a line of light my Saviour's feet had left, as he
walked with me on the troubled sea. But now that hope is deferred, and
returning health seems to loiter by the way, and recovery is delayed, and the
trial lengthens out like an ever lengthening chain, my soul begins to faint and
tire, and the burden to grow heavier. Even to those who love me most, my pain
and helplessness is now an accustomed thing, while to me it keeps its keen
edge of suffering, but little dulled by use. My ills to them are a tedious oft told
tale which comes with something of a dull reiteration. It has become almost a
matter of course that in the pleasant plan I should be left out, that in the
pleasant walk I should be left behind; a matter of course that the pleasures of
life should pass me by with folded hand and averted face; and sickness, and
monotonous days, and grey shadows should be my portion...

And O my God, my spirit sometimes faints beneath a nameless dread that this
loneliness will grow deeper and deeper, if it be thy will that my sickness should
continue, or recovery be long delayed. I can no longer be the companion of
those I love; shall I be as dear to them as if I could have kept by their side, and
been bound up with all their active interests and pleasures? I have to see others
take my place, and do my work for them; shall I not suffer loss in their eyes,
and others enter into the heritage of love which might have been mine? Will
they not grow weary of me, weary of the same old ills, oft repeated, but ever
new, and turn with an unconscious feeling of relief, to brighter hearts, and more
joyous lives? My God, my God, to whom can I turn for comfort but unto thee,
thou who didst drink the bitter cup of human loneliness to the dregs that thou mightest make thyself a brother to the lonely, a merciful and faithful High Priest to the desolate soul; thou who alone canst pass within, the doors being shut to all human aid, into that secret place of thunder, where the tempest tossed soul suffers and struggles alone; thou who alone canst command the winds and tempests, and say unto the sea "Be still!" and unto the wind, "Blow not!" and there shall be a great calm. As a child alone in the dark, my heart cries out for thee, cries for thine embracing arms, for thy voice of comfort, for thy pierced heart on which to rest my aching head, and feel that Love is near.—From "Christ the Consoler. A Book of Comfort for the Sick." Anon. 1872.

**Verse 8. Thou hast put away mine acquaintance.** This tempest of afflictions is all the heavier, because, First, all my acquaintance departed far from me, like swallows in winter time: Pr 14:20. The poor is hated even of his own neighbour, but, but the rich hath many friends. Seneca wisely admonishes: Flies follow honey, wolves corpses, ants food, the mob follows the pay, not the man. Job said, (Job 19:13), He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me. My kinsfolk have failed, and my familiar friends have forgotten me. Secondly, not only do they often depart from the afflicted, but they themselves add to his trouble, and precipitate his falling fortune. A rich man beginning to fall is held up by his friends; but a poor man being down, is thrust away by those who once pretended to love him.—Le Blanc.

**Verse 8. Thou hast made me an abomination unto them:** lit, "abominations", as if I were one great mass of abominations. (Ge 46:34 43:32). As Israel was an abomination to the Egyptians, so Messiah, the antitypical Israel, was to the world.—A.R. Fausset.

**Verse 8. An abomination.** As one who is unclean,—excluded from social intercourse; Ge 46:34. Compare Job 9:31 19:19 30:10. "I cannot come forth."
The man suspected of leprosy was "shut up seven days"; Le 13:4.—William Kay.

**Verse 9. Mine eye mourneth, ...I have called.** Weeping must not hinder praying; we must sow in tears: "Mine eye mourns", but "I cry unto thee daily." Let prayers and tears go together, and they shall be accepted together: "I have heard thy prayers, I have seen thy tears."—Matthew Henry.

**Verse 9. The first clause seems literally to mean the soreness and dimness of sight caused by excessive weeping, and is so taken by many of the
commentators, and Lorinus aptly quotes a Latin poet, *Catullus*, in illustration:—

Moesta neque assiduo tabescere lumina fletu Cessarent.
Nor my sad eyes to pine with constant tears Could cease.
—*Neale's Commentary.*

**Verse 10.** He assures himself God would not fail to comfort him before he died; and again, that the Lord would rather miraculously raise him from the dead, than not glorify himself in his deliverance: and in this also he taketh a safe course, for he seeks for what he might expect, rather in an ordinary way, than by looking for miracles.—*David Dickson.*

**Verse 10.** Shall the dead arise and praise thee? So far from this being an argument against the resurrection, it is Messiah's own most powerful plea for it—that otherwise man would be deprived of salvation, and God of the praise which the redeemed shall give for it to all eternity. Thou canst not show wonders to the dead as such; for "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." (Mt 22:32.) Or even if thou wert to show thy wonders, it is only by their rising to life again that they can duly praise thee for them.—*A.R. Fausset.*

**Verse 10.** The dead. The word comes from a root which expresses what is weak and languid, and at the same time stretched out and long extended, and which can accordingly be employed to describe the shadowy forms of the underworld as well as the giants and heroes of the olden time.—*Carl Bernhard Moll, in Lange's Commentary.*

**Verse 10.** The dead. An attentive consideration seems to leave little room for doubt that the dead were called Rephaim (as Gesenius also hints) from some notion of Scheol being the residence of the fallen spirits or buried giants.—*F.W. Farrar, in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible.*

**Verses 10-11.** Can my soul ever come to think I shall live in thy favour, in thy free grace and lovingkindness, to be justified by it, to apprehend myself a living man, and all my sins forgiven? To do this, saith he, is as great a wonder as to raise a man up from death to life; therefore he useth that expression, *Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?* He calleth it a wonder; for of all works else, you shall find in Scripture the resurrection from the dead counted the greatest wonder. The phrase in Ps 88:10, as the Septuagint translates it, is exceeding emphatic. SAith he, "Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? Shall the physicians arise and praise thee?" So they read it, and so some good Hebrecians read it also; that is, Go send for all the college of physicians, all the angels out of
heaven, all the skilful ministers and prophets that were then upon the earth, Gad and David, for he lived in David's time; send for them all. All these physicians may come with their cordials and balms; they will never cure me, never heal my soul, never raise me up to life again, except thou raise me; for I am "free among the dead", saith he. Now then, to work faith in such a one; for this poor soul, being thus dead, to go out of himself, and by naked and sheer faith to go to Jesus Christ alone, whom God raised from the dead, and to believe on him alone; this is now as great a power as indeed to raise a man up from death to life.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

**Verses 10-12.** In these verses we find mention made of four things on the part of God: "wonders", "lovingkindness", "faithfulness", and "righteousness". These were four attributes of the blessed Jehovah which the eyes of Heman had been opened to see, and which the heart of Heman had been wrought upon to feel. But he comes, by divine teaching, into a spot where these attributes seem to be completely lost to him; and yet, (so mysterious are the ways of God!) that spot was made the very place where those attributes were more powerfully displayed, and made more deeply and experimentally known to his soul. The Lord led the blind by a way that he knew not into these spots of experience, that in them he might more fully open up to him those attributes of which he had already gained a glimpse; but the Lord brought him in such a mysterious way, that all his former knowledge was baffled. He therefore puts up this inquiry to the Lord, how it was possible that in those spots where he now was, these attributes could be displayed or made known? He begins—*Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead?* He is speaking here of his own experience; *he* is that "dead" person to whom those "wonders" are to be shown. And being in that state of experience, he considered that every act of mercy shown to him where he then was, must be a "wonder". *Shall the dead arise and praise thee?* What! the dark, stupid, cold, barren, helpless soul, that cannot lift up one little finger, that cannot utter one spiritual word, that cannot put forth one gracious desire, that cannot lift up itself a hair's breadth out of the mass that presses it down—"Shall it arise?" and more than that, "praise thee?" What! can lamentation ever be turned into praise. Can complaint ever be changed into thanksgiving? Can the mourner ever shout and sing? Oh, it is a wonder of wonders, if "the dead" are to "arise", if "the dead" are to "praise thee"; if the dead are to stand upon their feet, and shout victory through thy blood!—*J.C. Philpot.*

**Verse 11.** *In the grave.* Here is a striking figure of what a living soul feels under the manifestations of the deep corruptions of his heart. All his good words, once so esteemed; and all his good works, once so prized; and all his prayers, and all his faith, and hope, and love, and all the imaginations of his
heart, are not merely paralysed and dead, not merely reduced to a state of utter helplessness, but also in soul feeling turned into rottenness and corruption. When we feel this we are spiritually brought where Heman was, when he said, "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the grave?" What! wilt thou manifest thy love to a stinking corpse? What! is thy love to be shed abroad in a heart full of pollution and putrefaction? Is thy lovingkindness to come forth from thy glorious sanctuary, where thou sittest enthroned in majesty, and holiness, and purity,—is it to leave that eternal abode of ineffable light and glory, and enter into the dark, polluted, and loathsome "grave"? What! is thy lovingkindness to come out of the sanctuary into the charnel house? Shall it be "declared" there—revealed there—spoken there—manifested there—made known there? For nothing else but the declaration of it there will do. He does not say, "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in the Scriptures?" "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in Christ?" ..."Shall thy lovingkindness be declared by the mouth of ministers?" "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared in holy and pure hearts?"—but he says, "Shall thy lovingkindness be declared", uttered, spoken, revealed, manifested, "in the grave?" where everything is contrary to it, where everything is unworthy of it,—the last of all places fit for the lovingkindness of an all pure God to enter.—J.C. Philpot.

Verse 11. Thy faithfulness in destruction. You will see God's faithfulness to have been manifested most,—in destruction. You will see God's faithfulness to his covenant most clearly evidenced in destroying your false religion, in order to set up his own kingdom in your soul; in destroying everything which alienated and drew away your affections from him, that he alone might be enshrined in your hearts; and you will say, when the Lord leads you to look at the path he has led you, in after years, "Of all God's mercies his greatest have been those that seemed at the time to be the greatest miseries; the richest blessings which he has given us, are those which came wrapped up in the outside covering of curses; and his faithfulness has been as much or more manifested in destruction, than in restoration."—J.C. Philpot.

Verse 11.—It is not by leaving man in the "destruction" which sin and death produce, that God will declare his "faithfulness" to his promises which have flowed out of his "lovingkindness"; for instance, his promise that the woman's seed should bruise the serpent's head (Ge 13:15 and Ho 13:14).—A.R. Faussett.

Verse 12. Wilt thou show thy righteousness in the land of forgetfulness? where I have forgotten thee, where I turned aside from thee, where I have let slip out of my memory all thy previous dealings with me—and shall thy righteousness be manifested even there? Wilt thou prove thine equity in showing forth mercy, because for me a sacrifice has been offered, thy righteousness running parallel
with the atoning stream of Christ's blood? When I have forgotten thee and
forsaken thee, and turned my back upon thee, can thy righteousness be there
manifested? What! righteousness running side by side with mercy! and
righteousness still preserving all its unbending strictness, because this very
backsliding of heart, this very forgetfulness of soul, this very alienation of
affection, this very turning my back upon thee, have all been atoned for; and
righteousness can be still shown "in the land of forgetfulness", because all my
sins committed in the land of forgetfulness have been atoned for by redeeming
blood!—J.C. Philpot.

Verse 13. But, etc. That "but" seems to come in as an expression of his
resolution hitherto, that though these were his apprehensions of his condition,
yet he had sought the Lord, and would go on to do the same. Suppose thou
findest no relish in the ordinances, yet use them; thou art desperately sick, yet
eat still take all that is brought thee, some strength will come of it. Say, Be I
dammed or saved, hypocrite or no hypocrite, I resolve to go on.—Thomas
Goodwin.

Verse 13. In the morning shall my prayer prevent thee. The morning prayer is
the best...In the morning God gave various gifts. First, the manna, Ex 16:13,
*And in the morning the dew lay round about the host:* He who is in the camp of
God, and bravely fights, receives from God dew and consolation, if in the
morning, that is, in the beginning of temptation, he prays. In the evening flesh
was given, whence death overtook them, but in another case in the morning the
manna was given, whereby life was sustained, until they came into the land of
promise. Secondly, the law was given in the morning, Ex 19:16, *And it came to
pass on the third day in the morning,* that is, in the middle of the night God
smote all the first born in the land of Egypt, Ex 12:29...In the morning pray,
and you shall conquer your daily and nightly foes; and the Red Sea itself, that is
the place of temptation, shall be to thee a field of glory, of victory and
exultation and all things shall go well with thee.—Le Blanc.

Verse 13. Unto thee have I cried, O Lord. There is something comitant with the
Christian's present darkness of spirit that distinguishes it from the hypocrite's
horror; and that is the lively working of grace, which then commonly is very
visible, when his peace and former comfort are most questioned by him; the
less joy he hath from any present sense of the love of God, the more abounding
you shall find him in sorrow for his sin that clouded his joy; the further Christ
is gone out of his sight, the more he clings in his love to Christ, and vehemently
cries after him in prayer, as we see in Heman here. O the fervent prayers that
then are shot from his troubled spirit to heaven, the pangs of affection which
are springing after God, and his face and favour! Never did a banished child
more desire admittance into his angry father's presence, than he to have the
light of God's countenance shine on him, which is now veiled from him.—
William Gurnall.

Verse 14. Why hidest thou thy face from me? Numerous are the complaints of
good men under this dark cloud; and to a child of light it is indeed a darkness
that may be felt; it beclouds and bewilders the mind; the brightest evidences are
in a great measure hid; the Bible itself is sealed, and fast closed; we see not our
signs, nor our tokens for good; every good thing is at a distance from us, behind
the cloud, and we cannot get at it; there is a dismal gloom upon our path; we
know not where we are, where to step, nor which way to steer; which way God
is gone we know not, but he knoweth the way that we take; and such a prayer
as this suits us well,—Seek thy servants, for we are lost. Christ is hid, and there
is a frowning cloud upon the sweet countenance of God, in which he hides his
blessed face; or, as he did to the disciples, holds our eyes, that we should not
see him. But, though this is often the case with believers, and they cannot see
one beam of light before them; though all evidences are hid, and the light of the
Lord's countenance is withdrawn; though no signs nor love tokens appear; and
though the life giving commandment is hid from them, and he shows them no
wonders out of his law; yet, these Israelites have light in their dwellings—they
have light to see the corruptions of their own hearts; to see the Workings of
unbelief, legal pride, enmity, rebellion, the double diligence of Satan, and the
wretched advantages he takes of them in these dark seasons.—William Huntington.

Verse 15. I am afflicted. (Vulg. Pauper sum ego.) God more readily hears the
poor, and gives himself wholly to them. First, his eyes, to behold them, Ps 11:5,
"His eyes behold the poor." Secondly, his ears, to hear them, Ps 10:17, "Thou
wilt prepare their hearts, thou wilt cause thine ears to hear." Thirdly, his hand,
to help, Ps 107:41, "Yet setteth he the poor on high from his affliction."
Fourthly, his breast and his arms, to receive the fugitives and those in peril, Ps
60:9, "The Lord also will be a refuge for the oppressed." Fifthly, memory to
recollect for them, Ps 9:18, "The needy shall not alway be forgotten." Sixthly,
inel ect, to care for them, and watch over their comfort, Ps 40:17, "But I am
poor and needy; yet the Lord thinketh upon me." Seventhly, goodwill, to love their prayers, Ps 22:24, "For he hath not despised nor abhorred the affliction of the afflicted, neither hath he hid his face from him." Eighthly and lastly, he gives himself wholly to them, to preserve them, Ps 72:13, "He shall save the souls of the needy."—Le Blanc.

Verse 15. I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up. How much some suffer! I have seen a child, who at the age of twenty months had probably suffered more bodily pain than the whole congregation of a thousand souls, where its parents worshipped. Asaph seems to have been of a sad heart. Jeremiah lived and died lamenting. Heman seems to have been of the same lot and of the same turn of mind.—William S. Plumer.

Verse 15. (First clause). We found the heat more oppressive this day than we had yet experienced it. The hillocks of sand between which we were slowly moving at the usual camel's pace, reflected the sun's rays upon us, till our faces were glowing as if we had been by the side of a furnace... Perhaps it was through this part of the desert of Shur that Hagar wandered, intending to go back to her native country; and it may have been by this way that Joseph carried the young child Jesus when they fled into the land of Egypt. Even in tender infancy the sufferings of the Redeemer began, and he complains, "I am afflicted and ready to die from my youth up." Perhaps these scorching beams beat upon his infant brow, and this sand laden breeze dried up his infant lips, while the heat of the curse of God began to melt his heart within. Even in the desert we see the suretyship of Jesus.—R.M. Machyne's "Narrative of a Mission of Inquiry to the Jews."

Verse 15. From my youth up. That is, for a long time;—so long, that the remembrance of it seems to go back to my very childhood. My whole life has been a life of trouble and sorrow, and I have not strength to bear it longer. It may have been literally true that the author of the Psalm had been a man always afflicted; or, this may be the language of strong emotion, meaning that his sufferings had been of so long continuance that they seemed to him to have begun in his very boyhood.—Albert Barnes.

Verse 15. While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. The word doth not signify properly the distraction of a man that is mad, but the distraction of a man that is in doubt. It is the distraction of a man who knows not what to do, not of a man who knows not what he doth, and yet that distraction doth often lead to a degree of this; for a man who is much troubled to know what to do, and cannot know it, grows at last to do he knows not what.—Joseph Caryl.
Verse 15. While I suffer thy terrors I am distracted. The Psalm hath this striking peculiarity in it, namely, that it not only hath reference to the Lord Jesus Christ, and him alone; but that he himself is the sole speaker from the beginning to the end. And although the whole of the Psalms are of him, and concerning him, more or less, and he is the great object and subject of all; yet, secondarily and subordinately we meet with many parts in the Psalms where his church is also noticed, and becomes concerned, from union with him, in what is said. But in this Psalm there is allusion to no other. (We differ from Dr. Hawker in his exclusion of the saints from this Psalm. Where the Head is the members are never far away.—ED.) All is of him and his incommunicable work. All is of the Son of God in our nature. It contains an account of the cries of the Lord Jesus "when in the days of his flesh he offered up prayers and supplications, with strong crying and tears." The soul agonies of Christ even from the moment of his incarnation to his death, may be contemplated, or read, from the sacred records of Scripture, but cannot come within the province of any created power to conceive, much less unfold. It is remarkable that whatever the Lord meant to convey by the phrase, "I am distracted", this is the only place in the whole Bible where the word "distracted" is used. Indeed the inspired writers have varied their terms of expression; when speaking of Christ's sufferings, as if unable to convey any full idea. Matthew renders it that the Lord Jesus said: "My soul is exceeding sorrowful, even unto death!" (Mt 26:38.) Mark describes him as "being sore amazed, and very heavy!" (Mr 14:33.) And Luke: his "being in an agony!" (Lu 22:44.) But here we must rest, in point of apprehension, for we can proceed no further.—Robert Hawker.

Verse 15. O Lord, the monotony of my changeless days oppresses me, the constant weariness of my body weighs me down. I am weary of gazing on the same dull objects: I am tired of going through the same dull round day after day; the very inanimate things about my room, and the patterns on the walls, seem quickened with the waste of my life, and, through the power of association, my own thoughts and my own pain come back upon me from them with a dull reverberation. My heart is too tired to hope; I dare not look forward to the future; I expect nothing from the days to come, and yet my heart sinks at the thought of the grey waste of years before me; and I wonder how I shall endure, whether I shall faint by the way, before I reach my far off home.—From "Christ the Consoler."

Verse 16. Thy fierce wrath goeth over me. Like a sea of liquid fire; (Ps 42:7)—Heb. "Thy hot wrath." LXX (Septuagint) ai orgai sou—William Kay

Verse 16. Thy terrors have cut me off. In the Hebrew verb the last syllable is repeated for the purpose of putting vehemence into the expression. The word
time signifies, to shut up and press into some narrow place, in order that; one may not breathe or escape...In this sense Gregory Nazianzen in his first oration concerning peace, calls grief (the prison of the heart).—Mollerus.

Verse 17. Like water; not merely because it drowns, but because it searches every crevice, goes to the very bottom, and makes its way on all sides when once it obtains an entrance, thus fitly denoting the penetrating force of temptation and trouble.—Hugo Cardinalis.

Verse 18. Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, etc. Next to the joys of religion, those of friendship are most rational, sublime, and satisfactory. But they, like all other earthly joys, have their mixtures and alloys, and are very precarious. We are often called to weep with our friends, and sometimes to weep over them. Grief and tears for their death are the sad tribute we pay for loving and being beloved, and living long in this world. This seems to have been the case with the author of this melancholy Psalm, where our text is. He was exercised with great afflictions of body, and deep distress of mind. "His soul was full of troubles, and his life drew nigh to the grave. He was shut up and confined by weakness and pain, and could not go forth", to his business or pleasure, to the social or solemn assembly, Ps 88:3-8. He adds, that "he had been afflicted and read to die from his youth" in Ps 88:15; which seems to intimate that he was now an old man. Some of his acquaintance and friends had deserted him, and he was "become an abomination to them", Ps 88:8. They would not assist him, nor afford him the comfort of a friendly visit, and the cheap kindness of a soft, compassionate word. Others of them, who would have been faithful and kind to him in his distress, were taken out of the world; and this at a time when, through age and infirmities, he peculiarly needed their company and assistance. To this he refers in the text; and with this he concludes the Psalm, as the heaviest stroke of all, "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance late darkness." This is a common case; and frequently the case of the aged. It is no unusual thing for old people to outlive their nearest relations; the companions of their lives; their children, and sometimes their grandchildren too; and they are, as the Psalmist expresses it, "like a sparrow alone upon the house top." . . .

What chiefly afflicted the Psalmist, and will afflict every generous heart, was, that his friends and lovers were removed into "darkness"; that is, to the grave, which is called in Scripture, "the land of darkness and the shadow of death, without any order or succession; and where the light is as darkness." Job 10:21-22. They were put so far from him, that he could see them no more; were dead and buried out of his sight; neither would one of their friends on earth any more behold them. Thus are our friends put into darkness. The eyes that used to
sparkle with pleasure, when we met after a long absence, are closed in death. The voice that used to delight and edify us is sealed up in everlasting silence. There is no conversing with them personally nor by letters. Not lands and seas divide us from them, but regions of vast, unknown space, which we cannot yet pass over; and which they cannot and indeed would not tread back, as much as they loved us. We have no way of conveying intelligence to them or receiving it from them. Perhaps they were put far away from us in their youth, or in the midst of their days and usefulness; when we promised ourselves many years of pleasure in their friendship and converse, and expected many years of service from them, for their families, for the church, and the world. Alas! one awful, fatal stroke hath broken down all the pleasing fabric of love and happiness.

But these are reflections which must not be dwelt upon. When they begin to grow very painful, as they soon will, it is time to turn our thoughts to that which is the second thing observable in the text; namely, the Psalmist's devout acknowledgment of the hand of God in this affliction. "Thou hast put them far from me." This good man, through the whole Psalm, ascribes all his afflictions, and particularly the death of his friends, to the hand of God. He takes no notice of their diseases; he neither blames them for imprudence and delay, nor those who attended them for neglect or misapplication; but looks beyond all second causes to the great Lord of all; owns him as the supreme sovereign of every life, and disposer of every event. And we shall do well to make this idea of the blessed God familiar to our minds, as it is at once most instructive and most comfortable. The holy Scriptures confirm the dictates of reason upon this subject; assuring us that God "maketh peace and createth evil"; that "out of the mouth of the Lord proceedeth evil and good"; that the most casual events are under his direction, so that "not a sparrow falleth to", nor lighteth on, "the ground without him; "much less do his rational creatures and children die without his notice and appointment. By whatever disease or casualties they die, it is God who "taketh away their breath, changeth their countenance, and sendeth them into darkness." With awful majesty God claims this as his prerogative; "I wound, and I heal: neither is there any that can deliver out of my hand." (De 32:39.) He removeth our friends who hath a right to do it. They were our friends, but they are his creatures; and may he not do what he will with his own? He gave them life of his free goodness, and he hath a right to demand it when he pleaseth. Dear as they were to us, we must acknowledge they were sinners; and as such, had forfeited their lives to the justice of God: and shall not he determine when to take them away? They were our friends; but do we not hope and believe that, by repentance, faith in Christ, and sanctifying grace, they were become his friends too; dear to him by many indissoluble ties? Hath he not then a superior claim to them, and a greater interest in them? Is it
not fit that he should be served first? May he not call home his friends when he pleaseth? Shall he wait for, or ask, our consent first? He doth it, whom we cannot, dare not, gainsay. "Behold, he taketh away, who can hinder him? who will say unto him, what doest thou?" (Job 9:12.) He doth it, who is infinitely good and wise; and doth everything in the best time and manner. His knowledge is perfect and unerring; his goodness boundless and never failing. Though his judgments are a great deep, and his schemes utterly unsearchable by us; yet we may reasonably believe that he consulteth the happiness of his servants in what is most mysterious and most grievous; and his word giveth us the strongest assurance of it. So that whether we exercise the faith of Christians, or the reason of men, we must acknowledge the hand of God, yea, his wisdom and goodness, in removing our acquaintance into darkness.—*Job Orton*, 1717-1783.

**Verse 18.** *Mine acquaintance late darkness.* Rather, *my acquaintance is darkness,* that is, darkness is all I have to converse with; my circle of acquaintance is comprised in blank darkness.—*Ernest Hawkins.*

**Verse 18.** To be discountenanced or coldly treated by Christian friends, is often a consequence of a believer's having forfeited his spiritual comfort. When the Lord is angry with his rebellious child, and is chastening him, he not only giveth Satan leave to trouble him, but permits some of the saints who are acquainted with him, to discountenance him, and by their cold treatment of him, to add to his grief. When the father of a family resolves the more effectually to correct his obstinate child, he will say to the rest of the household, *"Do not be familiar with him; shew him no countenance; put him to shame."* In like manner, when the Lord is smiting, especially with spiritual trouble, his disobedient child, he, as it were, saith to others of his children, *"Have for a season no familiarity with him; treat him with coldness and neglect; in order that he may be ashamed, and humbled for his iniquity."* Job, under his grievous affliction, complained thus, *"He hath put my brethren far from me, and mine acquaintance are verily estranged from me",* & c. (Job 19:13-19). And likewise Heman, *"Thou hast laid me in the lowest pit, in darkness"* When the favour of God to the soul is clouded, the comfort of Christian society is also obscured. When He frowns on one, his children commonly appear to frown likewise: and when he makes himself strange to one, so for the most part do they. If a holy man, then, under trouble of spirit, begins to be treated with disregard, and even with contempt, by some of his Christian brethren, he ought not to be surprised; neither should he take occasion to be angry, or to quarrel with them; but he should look above them, and take the afflictive dispensation, only out of the hand of the Lord, as a necessary part
of the chastisement intended for him. He ought to say with respect to them, as
David concerning Shimei, "The Lord hath bidden them; "or, as Heman did,
"THOU hast put away my acquaintance far from me."—John Colquhoun.

Verse 18. The very rhythm of the last line shows that the piece is not complete.
The ear remains in suspense; until the majestic Ps 89:1-52 shall burst upon it
like a bright Resurrection morning.—William Kay.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1.
1. Confidence in prayer,—"God of my salvation."

2. Earnestness in prayer,—"I have cried."

3. Perseverance in prayer,—"Day and night."—G.R.

Verse 2.—Prayer as an ambassador.
1. An audience sought, or the benefit of access.

2. Attention entreated, or the blessing of success.

3. The Process explained, or prayer comes and God inclines.

Verse 3.
1. A good man is exposed to inward troubles.
   (a) To soul troubles.
   (b) To the soul full of troubles.

2. To outward troubles. "My life", etc.
   (a) From outward persecutions.
   (b) From inward grieves.

3. To both inward and outward troubles at the same time. "Soul full", etc., "and
   my life", etc.—G.R.
Verse 4. *last clause*.—Conscious weakness, painfully felt, at certain times, in various duties. Intended to keep us humble, to drive us to our knees, and to bring greater glory to God.

Verses 4-5.

1. The resemblance of the righteous man to the wicked.
   (a) In natural death.
   (b) In bodily infirmities.

2. His difference from them. He is "counted with them" but is not of them.
   (a) He experiences natural death only.
   (b) His strength is perfected in weakness.
   (c) For him to die is gain.—*G.R.*

Verses 6-7.

1. What the afflictions of the people of God appear to be to themselves.
   (a) Extreme,—"laid me in the lowest pit."
   (b) Inexplicable,—"in darkness."
   (c) Humiliating,—"in the deeps."
   (d) Severe,—"thy wrath lieth hard."
   (e) Exhaustive,—"afflicted with all thy waves."

2. What they are in reality.
   (a) Not extreme but light.
   (b) Not inexplicable, but according to the will of God.
   (c) Not humiliating, but elevating. "Humble yourselves under", etc.
   (d) Not severe but gentle. Not in anger but in love.
   (e) Not exhaustive but partial. Not all thy waves, but a few ripples only. The slight motion in the harbour when there is a boisterous ocean beyond.—*G.R.*

Verse 8. *last clause*.—This may describe us when despondency is chronic, when trouble is overwhelming, when sickness detains us at home, when we feel restrained in Christian labour, or hampered in prayer.
Verse 9.

1. Sorrow before God,—"Mine eye", etc.

2. Prayer to God,—"have called", etc.

3. Waiting for God,—"called daily".

4. Dependence on God,—"I have stretched", etc. These hands can do nothing without thee.—G.R.

Verses 10-12.

1. The supposition.

   (a) That a child of God should be wholly dead.
   (b) That he should remain forever in the grave.
   (c) That he should be destroyed.
   (d) That he should always remain in darkness.
   (e) That he should be entirely forgotten, as though he had never existed.

2. The consequences involved in this supposition.

   (a) God's wonders to them would cease.
   (b) His praise from them would be lost.
   (c) His lovingkindness to them would be unknown.
   (d) His faithfulness destroyed.
   (e) His wonders to them would be lost to others.
   (f) His former righteousness to them would be forgotten.

3. The plea founded upon these consequences,—"Wilt thou", etc. It cannot be that thy praise for grace shown to thy people can be lost, and none can render it but themselves. "Then what wilt thou do unto thy great name?"—G.R.

Verse 13.

1. Blessings delayed to prayer,—"Unto thee", etc.

2. Blessings anticipated by prayer,—"in the morning", etc. Daily mercies anticipated by morning prayers.—G.R.

Verse 13. (last clause).—The advantages of early morning prayer meetings.
Verse 14.

1. Afflictions are mysterious though just.
2. Just though mysterious.—G.R.

Verse 14. Solemn enquiries, to be followed by searching examinations, by sorrowful confessions, stern self denials, and sweet restorations.

Verse 15.

1. The afflictions of the righteous may be long continued though severe. "I am afflicted, etc., from my youth up."
2. Severe though long continued.
   (a) Painful,—"afflicted."
   (b) Threatening,—"ready to die."
   (c) Terrific,—"suffer thy terrors."
   (d) Distracting,—"I am", etc.—G.R.


Verse 16.

1. Good men are often tried men.
2. Tried men frequently misjudge the Lord's dealings.
3. The Lord does not take them at their word, he is better than their fears.—G.R.

Verse 18. The loss of friends intended to remind us of our own mortality, to wean us from earth, to lead us to more complete trust in the Lord, to chasten us for sin, and to draw us away to the great meeting place.

Verse 18. The words of our text will lead us to remark that,

1. The happiness of life greatly depends on intimate friendships.
2. The trial of parting with intimate friends is exceedingly painful.
3. In this, as indeed in every affliction, the best consolation is drawn from a belief in, and meditation upon, God's governing providence.—*Joseph Lathrop*, 1845.
Psalm 89

Exposition
Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings
Hints to the Village Preacher
Other Works

We have now reached the majestic Covenant Psalm, which, according to the Jewish arrangement closes the third book of the Psalms. It is the utterance of a believer, in presence of great national disaster, pleading with his God, urging the grand argument of covenant engagements, and expecting deliverance and help, because of the faithfulness of Jehovah.

TITLE. Maschil. This is most fitly called a Maschil, for it is most instructive. No subject is more important or is so fully the key to all theology as that of the covenant. He who is taught by the Holy Spirit to be clear upon the covenant of grace will be a scribe well instructed in the things of the kingdom; he whose doctrinal theory is a mingle mangle of works and grace is scarcely fit to be teacher of babes. Of Ethan the Ezrahite: perhaps the same person as Jeduthun, who was a musician in David's reign; was noted for his wisdom in Solomon's days, and probably survived till the troubles of Rehoboam's period. If this be the man, he must have written this Psalm in his old age, when troubles were coming thick and heavy upon the dynasty of David and the land of Judah; this is not at all improbable, and there is much in the Psalm which looks that way.

DIVISION. The sacred poet commences by affirming his belief in the faithfulness of the Lord to his covenant with the house of David, and makes his first pause at Ps 89:4. He then praises and magnifies the name of the Lord for his power, justice, and mercy, Ps 89:5-14. This leads him to sing of the happiness of the people who have such a God to be their glory and defence, Ps 89:15-18. He rehearses the terms of the covenant at full length with evident delight, Ps 89:19-37, and then mournfully pours out his complaint and petition, Ps 89:38-51, closing the whole with a hearty benediction and a double Amen. May the Holy Spirit greatly bless to us the reading of this most precious Psalm of instruction.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever. A devout resolve, and very commendable when a man is exercised with great trouble on account of an apparent departure of the Lord from his covenant and promise. Whatever we may observe abroad or experience in our own persons, we ought still to praise God for his mercies, since they most certainly remain the same, whether we can perceive them or not. Sense sings but now and then, but faith is an eternal songster. Whether others sing or not, believers must never give over; in them should be constancy of praise, since God's love to them cannot by any possibility have changed, however providence may seem to frown. We are not only to believe the Lord's goodness, but to rejoice in it evermore; it is the source of all our joy, and as it cannot be dried up, so the stream ought never to fail to flow, or cease to flash in sparkling crystal of song. We have not one, but many mercies to rejoice in, and should therefore multiply the expressions of
our thankfulness. It is Jehovah who deigns to deal out to us our daily benefits, and he is the all sufficient and immutable God; therefore our rejoicing in him must never suffer diminution. By no means let his exchequer of glory be deprived of the continual revenue which we owe to it. Even time itself must not bound our praises—they must leap into eternity; he blesses us with eternal mercies—let us sing unto him forever.

With my mouth will I make known thy faithfulness to all generations. The utterances of the present will instruct future generations. What Ethan sung is now a text book for Christians, and will be so as long as this dispensation shall last. We ought to have an eye to posterity in all that we write, for we are the schoolmasters of succeeding ages. Ethan first spoke with his mouth that which he recorded with his pen—a worthy example of using both means of communication; the mouth has a warmer manner than the pen, but the pen's speech lives longest, and is heard farther and wider. While reading this Psalm, such in the freshness of the style, that one seems to hear it gushing from the poet's mouth; he makes the letters live and talk, or, rather, sing to us. Note, that in this second sentence he speaks of faithfulness, which is the mercy of God's mercies—the brightest jewel in the crown of goodness. The grace of an unfaithful God would be a poor subject for music, but unchangeable love and immutable promises demand everlasting songs. In times of trouble it is the divine faithfulness which the soul hangs upon; this is the bower anchor of the soul, its hold fast, and its stay. Because God is, and ever will be, faithful, we have a theme for song which will not be out of date for future generations; it will never be worn out, never be disproved, never be unnecessary, never be an idle subject, valueless to mankind. It will also be always desirable to make it known, for men are too apt to forget it, or to doubt it, when hard times press upon them. We cannot too much multiply testimonies to the Lord's faithful mercy—if our own generation should not need them others will: sceptics are so ready to repeat old doubts and invent new ones that believers should be equally prompt to bring forth evidences both old and new. Whoever may neglect this duty, those who are highly favoured, as Ethan was, should not be backward.

Verse 2. For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever. His heart was persuaded of it, and he had affirmed it as an indisputable truth. He was certain that upon a sure foundation the Lord intended to pile up a glorious palace of goodness—a house of refuge for all people, wherein the Son of David should for ever be glorified as the dispenser of heavenly grace. Thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens. This divine edifice, he felt assured, would tower into the skies, and would be turreted with divine faithfulness even as its foundations were laid in eternal love. God's faithfulness is no thing of earth,
here nothing is firm, and all things savour of the changes of the moon and the
fickleness of the sea: heaven is the birthplace of truth, and there it dwells in
eternal vigour. As the blue arch above us remains unimpaired by age, so does
the Lord's truth; as in the firmament he hangs his covenant bow, so in the upper
heavens the faithfulness of God is enthroned in immutable glory. This Ethan
said, and this we may say; come what will, mercy and faithfulness are built up
by "the Eternal Builder", and his own nature is the guarantee for their
perpetuity. This is to be called to mind whenever the church is in trouble, or our
own spirits bowed down with grief.

**Verse 3.** *I have made a covenant with my chosen, I have sworn unto David my
servant.* This was the ground of the Psalmist's confidence in God's mercy and
truth, for he knew that the Lord had made a covenant of grace with David and
his seed, and confirmed it by an oath. Here he quotes the very words of God,
which were revealed to him by the Holy Spirit, and are a condensation of the
original covenant in 2Sa 7:1-29. Well might he write in the former verse, "I
have said", when he knew that Jehovah had said, "I have sworn." David was the
Lord's elect, and with him a covenant was made, which ran along in the line of
his seed until it received a final and never ending fulfilment in "the Son of
David." David's house must be royal: as long as there was a sceptre in Judah,
David's seed must be the only rightful dynasty; the great "King of the Jews"
died with that title above his head in the three current languages of the then
known world, and at this day he is owned as king by men of every tongue. The
oath sworn to David has not been broken, though the temporal crown is no
longer worn, for in the covenant itself his kingdom was spoken of as enduring
for ever. In Christ Jesus there is a covenant established with all the Lord's
chosen, and they are by grace led to be the Lord's servants, and then are
ordained kings and priests by Christ Jesus. How sweet it is to see the Lord, not
only making a covenant, but owning to it in after days, and bearing witness to
his own oath; this ought to be solid ground for faith, and Ethan, the Ezrahite,
evidently thought it so. Let the reader and writer both pause over such glorious
lines, and sing of the mercies of the Lord, who thus avows the bonds of the
covenant, and, in so doing, gives a renewed pledge of his faithfulness to it. *"I
have",* says the Lord, and yet again *"I have",* as though he himself was nothing
loath to dwell upon the theme. We also would lovingly linger over the
*ipsissima verba* of the covenant made with David, reading them carefully and
with joy. There are thus recorded in 2Sa 7:12-16: "And when thy days be
fulfilled, and thou shalt sleep with thy fathers, I will set up thy seed after thee,
which shall proceed out of thy bowels, and I will establish his kingdom. He
shall build an house for my name, and I will stablish the throne of his kingdom
for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son. If he commit iniquity, I
will chasten him with the rod of men, and with the stripes of the children of men: But my mercy shall not depart away from him, as I took it from Saul, whom I put away before thee. And thine house and thy kingdom shall be established for ever before thee: thy throne shall be established for ever." After reading this, let us remember that the Lord has said to us by his servant Isaiah, "I will make an everlasting covenant with you, even the sure mercies of David."

Verse 4. Thy seed will I establish for ever. David must always have a seed, and truly in Jesus this is fulfilled beyond his hopes. What a seed David has in the multitude which have sprung from him who was both his Son and his Lord. The Son of David is the Great Progenitor, the second Adam, the Everlasting Father, he sees his seed, and in them beholds of the travail of his soul. And build up thy throne to all generations. David's dynasty never decays, but on the contrary, is evermore consolidated by the great Architect of heaven and earth. Jesus is a king as well as a progenitor and his throne is ever being built up—his kingdom comes—his power extends. Thus runs the covenant; and when the church declines, it is ours to plead it before the ever faithful God, as the Psalmist does in the latter verses of this sacred song. Christ must reign, but why is his name blasphemed and his gospel so despised? The more gracious Christians are, the more will they be moved to jealousy by the sad estate of the Redeemer's cause, and the more will they argue the case with the great Covenant maker, crying day and night before him, "Thy kingdom come." Selah. It would not be meet to hurry on. Rest, O reader, at the bidding of this Selah, and let each syllable of the covenant ring in thine ears; and then lift up the heart and proceed with the sacred poet to tell forth the praises of the Lord.

Verse 5. And the heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord. Looking down upon what God had done, and was about to do, in connection with his covenant of grace, all heaven would be filled with adoring wonder. The sun and moon, which had been made tokens of the covenant, would praise God for such an extraordinary display of mercy, and the angels and redeemed spirits would sing, "as it were, a new song." Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints. By which is probably intended the holy ones on earth. So that the "whole family in heaven and earth" would join in the praise. Earth and heaven are one in admiring and adoring the covenant God. Saints above see most clearly into the heights and depths of divine love, therefore they praise its wonders; and saints below, being conscious of their many sins and multiplied provocations of the Lord, admire his faithfulness. The heavens broke forth with music at the wonders of mercy contained in the glad tidings concerning Bethlehem, and the saints who came together in the temple magnified the
faithfulness of God at the birth of the Son of David. Since that auspicious day, the general assembly on high and the sacred congregation below have not ceased to sing unto Jehovah, the Lord that keepeth covenant with his elect.

Verse 6. For who in the heaven can be compared unto the Lord—therefore all heaven worships him, seeing none can equal him. Who among the sons of the mighty can be likened unto the Lord?—therefore the assemblies of the saints on earth adore him, seeing none can rival him. Until we can find one equally worthy to be praised, we will give unto the Lord alone all the homage of our praise. Neither among the sons of the morning nor the sons of the mighty can any peer be found for Jehovah, yea none that can be mentioned in the same day; therefore he is rightly praised. Since the Lord Jesus, both as God and as man, is far above all creatures, he also is to be devoutly worshipped. How full of poetic fire is this verse! How bold is the challenge! How triumphant the holy boasting! The sweet singer dwells upon the name of Jehovah with evident exultation; to him the God of Israel is God indeed and God alone. He closely follows the language long before rehearsed by Miriam, when she sang, "Who is like unto thee, O Jehovah, among the gods? Who is like thee?" His thoughts are evidently flying back to the days of Moses and the marvels of the Red Sea, when God was gloriously known by his incommunicable name; there is a ring of timbrels in the double question, and a sound as of the twinkling feet of rejoicing maidens. Have we no poets now? Is there not a man among us who can compose hymns flaming with this spirit? O, Spirit of the living God, be thou the inspirer of some master minds among us!

Verse 7. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints. The holiest tremble in the presence of the thrice Holy One: their familiarity is seasoned with the profoundest awe. Perfect love casts out the fear which hath torment, and works in lieu thereof that other fear which is akin to joy unutterable. How reverent should our worship be! Where angels veil their faces, men should surely bow in lowliest fashion. Sin is akin to presumptuous boldness, but holiness is sister to holy fear. "And to be had in reverence of all them that are about him." The nearer they are the more they adore. If mere creatures are struck with awe, the courtiers and favourites of heaven must be yet more reverent in the presence of the Great King. God's children are those who most earnestly pray "hallowed be thy name." Irreverence is rebellion. Thoughts of the covenant of grace tend to create a deeper awe of God, they draw us closer to him, and the more his glories are seen by us in that nearer access, the more humbly we prostrate ourselves before his Majesty.

Verse 8. O Lord God of hosts, who is a strong Lord like unto thee? Or Jehovah, God of Hosts, who is like thee, Mighty Jah. Alexander remarks, that
the infinite superiority of God to men and angels is here expressed, or rather indicated, by an accumulation of descriptive titles. Here we have the name which displays his self existence, the title which denotes his dominion over all his creatures, and an adjective which sets forth the power with which he exercises his sovereignty. Yet this great and terrible God has entered into covenant with men! Who would not reverence him with deepest love? Or to thy faithfulness round about thee. He dwells in faithfulness; it is said to be the girdle of the loins of his only begotten Son, who is the express image of his person. None in all creation is faithful as he is; even his angels might prove faithless if he left them to themselves, but he cannot "lie unto David", or forget to keep his oath. Men often fail in truth because their power is limited, and then they find it easier to break their word than to keep it; but the strong Jehovah is equal to all his engagements, and will assuredly keep them. Unrivalled might and unparalleled truth are wedded in the character of Jehovah. Blessed be his name that it is so.

Verse 9. Thou rulest the raging of the sea. Always, even in the hour of ocean's maddest fury, the Lord controls it. At the Red Sea the foaming billows saw their God and stood upright in awe. When the waves thereof arise, thou stillest them. None else can do this; to attempt it would be madness, but the Lord's "hush" silences the boisterous storm. So did the Lord's Anointed calm the storms of Galilee, for he is Lord of all; so also does the great Ruler of Providence evermore govern the fickle wills of men, and quiet the tumults of the people. As a mother stills her babe to sleep, so the Lord calms the fury of the sea, the anger of men, the tempest of adversity, the despair of the soul, and the rage of hell. "The Lord sitteth upon the floods; yea, the Lord sitteth King for ever", and in all his ruling and over ruling he has respect unto his covenant; therefore, although our house be not so with God as our hearts would wish, yet we will rejoice in his covenant ordered in all things and sure, and delight in him as all our salvation and all our desire.

Verse 10. Thou hast broken Rahab in pieces as one that is slain. Egypt was crushed like a corpse beneath the chariot wheels of the destroyer: its pomp and glory were broken like the limbs of the dead in battle. Egypt was Israel's ancient foe, and its overthrow wits a theme to which devout minds constantly reverted, as to a subject fit for their most exulting songs. We, too, have seen our Rahab broken, our sins overthrown, and we cannot but unite in the ascription of praise unto the Lord. Thou hast scattered thine enemies with thy strong arm. Thy strength has strewn thy foes dead upon the plain, or compelled them to flee hither and thither in dismay. Jehovah has overthrown his enemies with his own
right arm, unaided and alone. Proud Rahab, swelling in her fury like the sea, was utterly broken and scattered before the Lord of Hosts.

Verse 11. *The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine.* All things are alike God's—rebellious earth as well as adoring heaven. Let us not despair of the kingdom of truth; the Lord has not abdicated the throne of earth or handed it over to the sway of Satan. As for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them. The habitable and cultivated earth, with all its produce, owns the Lord to be both its Creator and Sustainer, builder and upholder.

Verse 12. *The north and the south thou hast created them.* North and south, opposite poles, agree in this—that Jehovah fashioned them. Tabor and Hermon shall rejoice in thy name, that is to say, east and west are equally formed by thee, and therefore give thee praise. Turn to all points of the compass, and behold the Lord is there. The regions of snow and the gardens of the sun are his dominions: both the land of the dawning and the home of the setting sun rejoice to own his sway. Tabor was on the west of Jordan and Hermon on the east, and it seems natural to consider these two mountains as representatives of the east and west. Keble paraphrases the passage thus:

"Both Heman moist, and Tabor lone,
They wait on thee with glad acclaim."

Verse 13. *Thou hast a mighty arm,* omnipotence is thine in smiting or uplifting; strong is thy hand, thy power to create and grasp is beyond conception great; and high is thy right hand—thy skill is incomparable, thy favour ennobling, thy working glorious. The power of God so impressed the Psalmist that in many ways he repeated the same thought: and indeed the truth of God's omnipotence is so full of refreshment to gracious hearts that it cannot be too much dwelt upon, especially when viewed in connection with his mercy and truth, as in the following verse.

Verse 14. *Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne.* They are the basis of the divine government, the sphere within which his sovereignty moves. God as a sovereign is never unjust or unwise. He is too holy to be unrighteous, too wise to be mistaken; this is constant matter for joy to the upright in heart. Mercy and truth shall go before thy face. They are the harbingers and heralds of the Lord; he calls these to the front to deal with guilty and changeful man; he makes them, in the person of the Lord Jesus, to be his ambassadors, and so poor, guilty man is enabled to endure the presence of his righteous Lord. If mercy had not paved the way, the coming of God to any man must have been swift destruction. Thus has the poet sung the glories of the covenant God.
was meet that before he poured forth his lament he should record his praise, lest his sorrow should seem to have withered his faith. Before we argue our case before the Lord it is most becoming to acknowledge that we know him to be supremely great and good, whatever may be the appearance of his providence; this is such a course as every wise man will take who desires to have an answer of peace in the day of trouble.

Verse 15. *Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound.* It is a blessed God of whom the Psalmist has been singing, and therefore they are a blessed people who partake of his bounty, and know how to exult in his favour. Praise is a peculiarly joyful sound, and blessed are those who are familiar with its strains. The covenant promises have also a sound beyond measure precious, and they are highly favoured who understand their meaning and recognise their own personal interest in them. There may also be a reference here to the blowing of trumpets and other glad noises which attended the worship of Jehovah, who, unlike the gods of the heathen was not adored by the shrieks of wretched victims, or the yells and outcries of terror stricken crowds, but by the joyful shouts of his happy people. They shall walk, O LORD, in the light of thy countenance. For them it is joy enough that Jehovah is favourable to them; all day long this contents them and enables them with rigour to pursue their pilgrimage. Only a covenant God could look with favour upon men, and those who have known him in that relationship learn to rejoice in him, yea, to walk with him in fellowship, and to continue in communion with him. If we give God our ear and hear the joyful sound, he will shew us his face and make us glad. While the sun shines, men walk without stumbling as to their feet, and when the Lord smiles on us we live without grief as to our souls.

Verse 16. *In thy name shall they rejoice all the day.* And good cause they have for so doing, for to the soul which, in Christ Jesus, has entered into covenant with God, every attribute is a fountain of delight. There is no hour in the day, and no day in our life, in which we may not rejoice in the name, person, and character of the Lord. We need no other reason for rejoicing. As philosophers could make merry without music, so can we rejoice without carnal comforts; the Lord All sufficient is an all sufficient source of joy. And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. By the Lord's righteous dealings the saints are uplifted in due time, however great may have been the oppression and the depression from which they may have suffered. In the righteousness which the covenant supplies, which is entirely of the Lord, believers are set on high in a secure and blessed position, so that they are full of sacred happiness. If God were unjust, or if he regarded us as being without righteousness, we must be
filled with misery, but as neither of these things are so, we are exalted indeed, and would extol the name of the Lord.

Verse 17. For thou art the glory of their strength. Surely in the Lord Jehovah have we both righteousness and strength. He is our beauty and glory when we are strong in him, as well as our comfort and sustenance when we tremble because of conscious weakness in ourselves. No man whom the Lord makes strong may dare to glory in himself, he must ascribe all honour to the Lord alone; we have neither strength nor beauty apart from him. And in thy favour our horn shall be exalted. By the use of the word our the Psalmist identifies himself with the blessed people, and this indicates how much sweeter it is to sing in the first person than concerning others. May we have grace to claim a place among those in covenant with God, in Christ Jesus, for then a sense of divine favour will make us also bold and joyous. A creature full of strength and courage lifts up its horn, and so also does a believer become potent, valiant, and daring. The horn was an eastern ornament, worn by men and women, or at least is so at this day, and by the uplifting of this the wearer showed himself to be in good spirits, and in a confident frame of mind: we wear no such outward vanities, but our inward soul is adorned and made bravely triumphant when the favour of God is felt by us. Worldly men need outward prosperity to make them lift up their heads, but the saints find more than enough encouragement in the secret love of God.

Verse 18. For the Lord is our defence. Whoever else may defend us, he is our ultimate Defender and Shield. And the Holy one of Israel is our king. He who protects should govern, our defender should be acknowledged as our king. Kings are called the shields of nations, and the God of Israel is both our Ruler and our Defence. Another sense may be that Israel's defender and king was of the Lord, belonging to him and sent by him; even the protectors of the land being themselves protected by the Lord. The title "the Holy One of Israel" is peculiarly delightful to the renewed heart. God is one, we worship none beside. He is holiness itself, the only being who can be called "the Holy One", and in his perfection of character we see the most excellent reason for our faith. He who is holy cannot break his promises, or act unjustly concerning his oath and covenant. Moreover, he is the Holy One of Israel, being specially the God of his own elect, ours by peculiar ties, ours for ever and ever. Who among the saints will not rejoice in the God of election? Are they not indeed a people greatly blessed who can call this God their God for ever and ever?

Verse 19. Then thou spakest in vision to thy holy one. The Psalmist returns to a consideration of the covenant made with David. The holy one here meant may be either David or Nathan the prophet, but most probably the latter, for it was
to him that the word of the Lord came by night. 2Sa 7:4-5. God condescends to employ his gracious ministers to be the means of communication between himself and his favoured ones,—even to King David the covenant was revealed by Nathan the prophet; thus the Lord puts honour upon his ministers. I have laid help upon one that is mighty. The Lord had made David a mighty man of valour, and now he covenants to make him the helper and defender of the Jewish state. In a far fuller sense the Lord Jesus is essentially and immeasurably mighty, and on him the salvation of his people rests by divine appointment, while his success is secured by divine strength being engaged to be with him. Let us lay our faith where God has laid our help. I have exalted one chosen out of the people. David was God's elect, elect out of the people, as one of themselves, and elect to the highest position in the state. In his extraction, election, and exaltation, he was an eminent type of the Lord Jesus, who is the man of the people, the chosen of God, and the king of his church. Whom God exalts let us exalt. Woe unto those who despise him, they are guilty of contempt of court before the Lord of Hosts, as well as of rejecting the Son of God.

Verse 20. *I have found David my servant.* David was discovered by the Lord among the sheepfolds and recognised as a man of gracious spirit, full of faith and courage, and therefore fit to be leader in Israel. With my holy oil have I anointed him. By the hand of Samuel, David was anointed to be king long before he ascended the throne. The verse must also be expounded of the Prince Emmanuel; he became the servant of the Lord for our sakes, the Father having found for us in his person a mighty deliverer, therefore upon him rested the Spirit without measure, to qualify him for all the offices of love to which he was set apart. We have not a Saviour self appointed and unqualified, but one sent of God and divinely endowed for his work. Our Saviour Jesus is also the Lord's Christ, or anointed. The oil with which he is anointed is God's own oil, and holy oil; he is divinely endowed with the Spirit of holiness.

Verse 21. *With whom my hand shall be established,* or, "with whom my hand shall ever be present." The almightiness of God abides permanently with Jesus in his work as Redeemer and Ruler of his people. Mine arm also shall strengthen him. The fulness of divine power shall attend him. This covenant promise ought to be urged in prayer before the Lord, for the great lack of the church at this time is power. We have everything except the divine energy, and we must never rest content until we see it in full operation among us. Jesus must be among us, and then there will be no lack of force in any of our church agencies.
Verse 22. *The enemy shall not exact upon him:* he shall not be vexed and persecuted as a helpless debtor by an extortionate creditor. Nor the son of wickedness afflict him. Graceless men shall no longer make his life a burden. David had in his earlier history been hunted by Saul like a partridge on the mountains, and though he had striven in all things to act justly towards Saul, because he was the Lord's anointed, yet Saul was never content with his displays of loyalty, but persecuted him relentlessly. The covenant, therefore, engaged that his life of hardship and oppression should come to an end for ever; it did so in David's own person, and more remarkably still in the life of Solomon his son. Who does not in all this see a type of the Lord Jesus, who though he was once seized for our debts, and also evil entreated by the ungodly, is now so exalted that he can never be exacted upon any more, neither can the fiercest of his enemies vex him again. No Judas can now betray him to death, no Pilate can deliver him to be crucified. Satan cannot tempt him, and our sins cannot burden him.

Verse 23. *And I will beat down his foes before his face*—crushing them and their plans. God himself thus fights the battles of his Son, and effectually overturns his foes. And plague them that hate him, or *smite his haters.* May none of us learn the terror of this threatening, which is surely being fulfilled upon all those unbelievers who have rejected the Son of God, and died in the hardness of their hearts. The prophecy is also having another fulfilment in the overthrow of systems of error, and the vexation caused to their promoters. There is no such plague to bad men as the prosperity of the cause of Jesus.

Verse 24. *But my faithfulness and my mercy shall be with him.* These were the two attributes of which the Psalmist began to sing in Ps 89:1, doubtless because he saw them to be most prominent in the covenant which he was about to plead with God. To David and his seed, God was gracious and faithful, and though through their sin the literal kingdom lost all its glory and the dynasty became obscure, yet the line remained unbroken and more than all its former glory was restored by the enthronisation of Him who is Prince of the kings of the earth, with whom the Lord's mercy and faithfulness remain for ever. All who are in Jesus should rejoice, for they shall prove in their own experience the faithful mercy of the Lord. And in my name shall his horn be exalted. Gloriously does the Lord Jesus lift up his head, raised to the highest place of honour by the mandate of the Father. David and Solomon in their dignity were but faint types of the Lord Jesus, who is far above all principalities and powers. The fullest exaltation of the horn of Jesus is yet to come in that millennial period which is hastening on.
Verse 25. *I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers.* He shall reach far beyond the little rivers which stand for boundaries in Palestine; he shall by his power embrace all lands from sea to sea. He shall have his hand in the ocean and his right hand in earth's mightiest streams. As monarchs hold in their hands a globe to set forth their dominion over the earth, he shall grasp the far more unconquerable sea, and be Lord of all. This power is to be given him of the Lord, and is to be abiding; so we understand the words "I will set." The verse has in it a voice of good cheer concerning sailors, and all dwellers on the waters; the hand of Jesus is over them, and as he found his first apostles by the sea, so we trust he still finds earnest disciples there.

Verse 27. *Also I will make him my firstborn.* Among the kings the seed of David were to be most favoured and indulged with most love and paternal regard from God: but in Jesus we see this in the highest degree verified, for he has preeminence in all things, inasmuch as by inheritance he has a more glorious name than any other, and is higher than the kings of the earth. Who can rival heaven's Firstborn? The double portion and the government belong to him. Kings are honoured when they honour him, and those who honour him are kings! In the millennial glory it shall be seen what the covenant stores up for the once despised Son of David, but even now faith sees him exalted as King of kings and Lord of lords. Lo, we bow before thee, thou Heir of all things! Our sheaves do obeisance to thy sheaf. All thy mother's children call thee blessed. Thou art he whom thy brethren shall praise. Jesus is no servant of princes, nor would he have his bride, the church, degrade herself by bowing before kings and eating the bread of a pensioner at their hands. He and his kingdom are higher than the kings of the earth. Let the great ones of the earth be wise and submit to him, for he is Lord, and he is the governor among the nations.

Verse 28. *My mercy will I keep for him for evermore.* The kings of David's line needed mercy, and mercy prevented their house from utterly perishing until the Son of Mary came. He needs no mercy for himself, but he is a representative man, and the mercy of God is required for those who are in him: for such mercy is kept for ever. And my covenant shall stand fast with him. With Jesus the covenant is ratified both by blood of sacrifice and by oath of God, it cannot be cancelled or altered, but is an eternal verity, resting upon the veracity of one who cannot lie. What exultation fills our hearts as we see that the covenant of grace is sure to all the seed, because it stands fast with him with whom we are indissolubly united.

Verse 29. *His seed also will I make to endure for ever.* David's seed lives on in the person of the Lord Jesus, and the seed of Jesus in the persons of believers. Saints are a race that neither death nor life can kill. Rome and its priests, with
their inquisition and other infernal cruelties, have laboured to exterminate the covenant seed, but "vain is their rage, their efforts vain." As long as God lives, his people must live. And his throne, as the days of heaven. Jesus reigns on, and will reign till the skies shall fall, yea, and when the heavens shall pass away with a great noise, and the elements shall melt with fervent heat, his throne shall stand. What a blessed covenant is this! Some commentators talk of conditions, but we fail to see any; the promises are as absolute as they can possibly be, and if any conditions as to the conduct of the favoured individuals can be conceived, they are disposed of in the succeeding verses.

Verse 30. If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments. It was possible, terribly possible, that David's posterity might wander from the Lord; indeed they did so, but what then? Was the mercy of God to pass away from David's seed?—far from it. So, too, the seed of the Son of David are apt to start aside, but are they therefore cast away? Not a single word gives liberty for such an idea, but the very reverse. Expositors in their fear of Calvinistic doctrine shake off the fear of adding to the word of God, or else they would not have spent their time in talking about "the conditions" of this absolutely unconditional covenant.

Verse 31. If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments. The dreadful "if" is suggested again, and the sad case is stated in other forms. But if it should be so, what then? Death and rejection? Ah, no; Blessed be God, No! If their sin be negative or positive, if it be forsaking or profanation; if either judgments or commandments or both be violated, yet there is not a word as to final destruction, but the very reverse. Legalism will import its ifs, but the Lord slays the ifs as fast as they rise. Eternal shalls and wills make glorious havoc among the ifs and buts.

Verse 32. Then will I visit their transgressions with the rod. Not with the sword, not with death and destruction; but still with a smarting, tingling, painful rod. Saints must smart if they sin: God will see to that. He hates sin too much not to visit it, and he loves his saints too well not to chasten them. God never plays with his rod, he lays it well home to his children, he visits them with it in their houses, bodies, and hearts, and makes them know that he is grieved with their ways. He smites home and chastens their iniquity with stripes, which are either many or few in proportion as the heart is properly affected by them. The rod is a covenant blessing, and is meant to be used. As sin is so frequent, the rod never rests long together; in God's family the rod is not spared, or the children would be spoiled.
Verse 33. Nevertheless. And a glorious nevertheless too! Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not utterly take from him. O glorious fear killing sentence! This crowns the covenant with exceeding glory. Mercy may seem to depart from the Lord's chosen, but it shall never altogether do so. Jesus still enjoys the divine favour, and we are in him, and therefore under the most trying circumstances the Lord's lovingkindness to each one of his chosen will endure the strain. If the covenant could be made void by our sins it would have been void long ere this; and if renewed its tenure would not be worth an hour's purchase if it had remained dependent upon us. God may leave his people, and they may thereby suffer much and fall very low, but utterly and altogether he never can remove his love from them; for that would be to cast a reflection upon his own truth, and this he will never allow, for he adds, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail. Man fails in all points, but God in none. To be faithful is one of the eternal characteristics of God, in which he always places a great part of his glory: his truth is one of his peculiar treasures and crown jewels, and he will never endure that it should be tarnished in any degree. This passage sweetly assures us that the heirs of glory shall not be utterly cast off. Let those deny the safety of the saints who choose to do so, we have not so learned Christ. We believe in the gospel rod, but not in the penal sword for the adopted sons.

Verse 34. My covenant will I not break. It is his own covenant. He devised it, drew up the draft of it, and voluntarily entered into it: he therefore thinks much of it. It is not a man's covenant, but the Lord claims it as his own. It is an evil thing among men for one to be a "covenant breaker", and such an opprobrious epithet shall never be applicable to the Most High. Nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. Alterations and afterthoughts belong to short sighted beings who meet with unexpected events which operate upon them to change their minds, but the Lord who sees everything from the beginning has no such reason for shifting his ground. He is besides immutable in his nature and designs, and cannot change in heart, and therefore not in promise. A word once given is sacred; once let a promise pass our lips and honesty forbids that we should recall it,—unless indeed the thing promised be impossible, or wicked, neither of which can happen with the promises of God. How consoling it is to see the Lord thus resolute. He, in the words before us, virtually reasserts his covenant and rehearses his engagements. This he does at such length, and with such reiteration, that it is evident he takes pleasure in that most ancient and solemn contract. If it were conceivable that he had repented of it, he would not be found dwelling upon it, and repeating it with renewed emphasis.
Verse 35. *Once have I sworn by my holiness that I will not lie unto David.*
Because he could swear by no greater he swore by himself, and by that peculiar attribute which is his highest glory, being the subject of threefold adoration by all the hosts of heaven. God here pledges the crown of his kingdom, the excellent beauty of his person, the essence of his nature. He does as good as say that if he ceases to be true to his covenant he will have forfeited his holy character. What more can he say? In what stronger language can he express his unalterable adherence to the truth of his promise? An oath is the end of all strife; it ought to be the end of all doubt on our part. We cannot imagine that God could lie, yet he puts it so—that if the covenant were not kept by him, he would regard it as a lie. Here is ground for strong confidence; may our faith be of such a nature as these assurances will warrant.

Verse 36. *His seed shall endure for ever.* David's line in the person of Jesus is an endless one, and the race of Jesus, as represented in successive generations of believers, shows no sign of failure. No power, human or Satanic, can break the Christian succession; as saints die others shall rise up to fill their places, so that till the last day, the day of doom, Jesus shall have a seed to serve him. And his throne as the sun before me. In our Lord Jesus the dynasty of David remains upon the throne. Jesus has never abdicated, nor gone into banishment. He reigns, and must reign so long as the sun continues to shine upon the earth. A seed and a throne are the two great promises of the covenant, and they are as important to us as to our Lord Jesus himself; for we are the seed who must endure for ever, and we are protected and ennobled by that King whose royalties are to last for ever.

Verse 37. *It shall be established for ever as the moon.* The kingdom may wax and wane to mortal eyes, but it shall still abide as long as the moon walks in her silver beauty. And as a faithful witness in heavens. The most stable part of the universe is selected as a type of Messiah's kingdom, and both sun and moon are made to be symbols of its long endurance. Whatever else there is in the sky which faithfully witnesses to the unbending course of nature is also called upon to be a sign of the Lord's truth. When heaven and earth witness, and the Lord himself swears, there remains no excuse for doubting, and faith joyfully reposes in confident expectation.

Verse 38. *But thou hast cast off and abhorred.* The Lord had promised not to cast off the seed of David, and yet it looked as if he had done so, and that too in the most angry manner, as if he loathed the person of the king. God's actions may appear to us to be the reverse of his promises, and then our best course is to come before him in prayer and put the matter before him just as it strikes our apprehension. We are allowed to do this, for this holy and inspired man did so
unrebuked, but we must do it humbly and in faith. Thou hast been wroth with thine anointed. He deserved the wrath, doubtless, but the Psalmist's point is, that this appeared to him to conflict with the gracious covenant. He puts the matter plainly, and makes bold with the Lord, and the Lord loves to have his servants so do; it shows that they believe his engagements to be matters of fact.

Verse 39. Thou hast made void the covenant of thy servant. The dispensations of providence looked as if there had been a disannulling of the sacred compact, though indeed it was not so. Thou hast profaned his crown by casting it to the ground. The king had been subject to such sorrow and shame that his diadem had been as it were taken from his head, dashed on the earth, and rolled in the mire. He was a theocratic monarch, and the Lord, who gave him his crown, took it from him and treated it with contempt,—at least so it seemed. In these sad days also we may utter the same complaint, for Jesus is not acknowledged in many of the churches, and usurpers have profaned his crown. When we hear of kings and queens set up as "heads of the church", and a priest styled "The Vicar of Christ", while parliaments and courts take upon themselves to legislate for the church of God, we may bitterly lament that things should come to so wretched a pass. Few are there who will acknowledge the crown rights of King Jesus, the very subject is considered to be out of date. O Lord how long!

Verse 40. Thou hast broken down all his hedges. He was no longer sheltered from the slanderous assaults of contemptuous tongues; the awe which should guard the royal name had ceased to separate him from his fellows. The "divinity which doth hedge a king" had departed. Hitherto, the royal family had been like a vine within an enclosure, but the wall was now laid low, and the vine was unprotected. It is sorrowfully true that in many places the enclosures of the church have been destroyed, the line of demarcation between the church and the world has almost vanished, and godless men fill the sacred offices. Alas, O Lord God, shall it be always so? Shall thy true vine be deserted by thee, thou great Husbandman? Set up the boundaries again, and keep thy church as a vineyard reserved for thyself. Thou hast brought his strong holds to ruin. The forts of the land were in the possession of the enemy and were dismantled, the defences of the kingdom were overthrown. Thus has it happened that precious truths, which were the bulwarks of the church, have been assailed by heresy, and the citadels of sound doctrine have been abandoned to the foe. O God, how canst thou suffer this? As the God of truth, wilt thou not arise and tread down falsehood?

Verse 41. All that pass by the way spoil him. Idle passers by, who have nothing else to do, must needs have a pluck at this vine, and they do it without difficulty, since the hedges are gone. Woe is the day when every petty reasoner
has an argument against religion, and men in their cups are fluent with objections against the gospel of Jesus. Although Jesus on the cross is nothing to them, and they pass him by without inquiring into what he has done for them, yet they can loiter as long as you will, if there be but the hope of driving another nail into his hands and helping to crucify the Lord afresh. They will not touch him with the finger of faith, but they pluck at him with the hand of malice. He is a reproach to his neighbours. David's successors had unneighbourly neighbours, who were a reproach to good fellowship, because they were so ready to reproach their neighbour. The Jews were much taunted by the surrounding Gentiles when at any time they fell into trouble. At this time the people of God, who follow the Lord fully, are subject to a thousand reproaches, and some of them of the most bitter kind. These reproaches are really the reproach of Christ, and, at bottom, are meant for him. Shall it always be so? Shall he, who deserves to be universally adored, be subject to general scorn? Where, then, O God, is thy faithfulness to thy covenant?

Verse 42. Thou hast set up the right hand of thy adversaries. Thou hast done it, thou, who hast sworn to give him help and victory, thou hast, instead thereof, sided with his enemies, and lent them thy strength, so that they have gained the supremacy. Thou hast made all his enemies to rejoice. They are boasting over him, and are glorying in his defeat, and this is done by thyself. O God,—how is this? Where is the covenant? Hast thou forgotten thine own pledges and promises?

Verse 43. Also turned the edge of his sword. When he goes to war he is as unsuccessful as though his sword refused to cut, and gave way like a sword of lead. His weapons fail him. And hast not made him to stand in the battle. His heart fails him as well as his sword—he wavers, he falls. This has happened even to naturally brave men—a terrible dread has unmanned them. At this present the church has few swords of true Jerusalem metal; her sons are pliable, her ministers yield to pressure. We need men whose edge cannot be turned, firm for truth, keen against error, sharp towards sin, cutting their way into men's hearts. Courage and decision are more needed now than ever, for charity towards heresy is the fashionable vice, and indifference to all truth, under the name of liberal mindedness, is the crowning virtue of the age. The Lord send us men of the school of Elias, or, at least, of Luther and Knox.

Verse 44. Thou hast made his glory to cease. The brightness of his reign and the prosperity of his house are gone, his fame is tarnished, his honour disgraced. And cast his throne down to the ground. He has lost his power to govern at home or to conquer abroad. This happened to kings of David's line, and, more grievous to tell, it is happening in these days to the visible kingdom
of the Lord Jesus. Where are the glories of Pentecost? Where is the majesty of the Reformation? Where does his kingdom come among the sons of men? Woe is unto us, for the glory has departed, and the gospel throne of Jesus is hidden from our eyes!

Verse 45. *The days of his youth hast thou shortened.* The time of the king's energy was brief, he grew feeble before his time. Thou hast covered him with shame. Shame was heaped upon him because of his premature decay and his failure in arms. This was very grievous to the writer of this Psalm, who was evidently a most loyal adherent of the house of David. In this our day we have to bemoan the lack of vigour in religion—the heroic days of Christianity are over, her raven locks are sprinkled with untimely grey. Is this according to the covenant? Can this be as the Lord has promised? Let us plead with the righteous Judge of all the earth, and beseech him to fulfil his word wherein he has promised that those who wait upon him shall renew their strength. Selah. The interceding poet takes breath amid his lament, and then turns from describing the sorrows of the kingdom to pleading with the Lord.

Verse 46. *How long, Lord?* The appeal is to Jehovah, and the argument is the length of the affliction endured. Chastisement with a rod is not a lengthened matter, therefore he appeals to God to cut short the time of tribulation. Wilt thou hide thyself for ever? Hast thou not promised to appear for thy servant—wilt thou then for ever forsake him? Shall thy wrath burn like fire? Shall it go on and on evermore till it utterly consume its object? Be pleased to set a bound! How far wilt thou go? Wilt thou burn up the throne which thou hast sworn to perpetuate? Even thus we would entreat the Lord to remember the cause of Christ in these days. Can he be so angry with his church as to leave her much longer? How far will he suffer things to go? Shall truth die out, and saints exist no more? How long will he leave matters to take their course? Surely he must interpose soon, for, if he do not, true religion will be utterly consumed, as it were, with fire.

Verse 47. *Remember how short my time is.* If so brief, do not make it altogether bitter. If thine anger burn on it will outlast this mortal life, and then there will be no time for thy mercy to restore me. Some expositors ascribe these words, and all the preceding verses, to the state of the Lord Jesus in the days of his humiliation, and this gives an instructive meaning; but we prefer to continue our reference all through to the church, which is the seed of the Lord Jesus, even as the succeeding kings were the seed of David. We, having transgressed, are made to feel the rod, but we pray the Lord not to continue his stripes lest our whole life be passed in misery. Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? If the Lord do not shine upon his work we live for nothing—we count it no
longer life if his cause does not prosper. We live if the King lives, but not else. Everything is vanity if religion be vanity. If the kingdom of heaven should fail, everything is a failure. Creation is a blot, providence an error, and our own existence a bell, if the faithfulness of God can fail and his covenant of grace can be dissolved. If the gospel system can be disproved, nothing remains for us or any other of the sons of men, which can render existence worth the having.

**Verse 48.** *What man is he that liveth, and shall not see death?* All must die. None of our race can answer to the question here propounded except in the negative; there is none that can claim to elude the arrows of death. Shall he deliver his soul from the hand of the grave? Neither by strength, wisdom, nor virtue can any man escape the common doom, for to the dust return we must. Since then we must all die, do not make this life all wretchedness, by smiting us so long, O Lord. Thy Son our covenant Head died, and so also shall we; let us not be so deserted of thee in this brief span that we shall be quite unable to testify to thy faithfulness: make us not feel that we have lived in vain. Thus the brevity of life and the certainty of death are turned into pleas with the Most High. Selah. Here we rest again, and proceed to further pleadings.

**Verse 49.** *Lord, where are thy former loving kindnesses, which thou swarest unto David in thy truth?* Here he comes to grand pleading, hand to hand work with the covenant angel. We may remind the Lord of his first deeds of love, his former love to his church, his former favour to ourselves. Then may we plead his oath, and beg him to remember that he has sworn to bless his chosen: and we may wrestle hard also, by urging upon him his own character, and laying hold upon his inviolable truth. When things look black we may bring forth our strong reasons, and debate the case with our condescending God, who has himself said, "Come now, and let us reason together."

**Verse 50.** *Remember, Lord, the reproach of thy servants.* By reason of their great troubles they were made a mock of by ungodly men, and hence the Lord's pity is entreated. Will a father stand by and see his children insulted? The Psalmist entreats the Lord to compassionately the wretchedness brought upon his servants by the taunts of their adversaries, who jested at them on account of their sufferings. How I do bear in my bosom the reproach of all the mighty people. The Psalmist himself laid the scorn of the great and the proud to heart. He felt as if all the reproaches which vexed his nation were centred in himself, and therefore in sacred sympathy with the people he poured out his heart. We ought to weep with those that weep; reproach brought upon the saints and their cause ought to burden us: if we can hear Christ blasphemed, and see his servants insulted, and remain unmoved, we have not the true Israelite's spirit. Our grief at the griefs of the Lord's people may be pleaded in prayer, and it will
be acceptable argument. There is one interpretation of this verse which must not be passed over; the original is, Remember my bearing in my bosom all the many nations; and this may be understood as a pleading of the church that the Lord would remember her because she was yet to be the mother of many nations, according to the prophecy of Ps 77:1-20. She was as it were ready to give birth to nations, but how could they be born if she herself died in the meanwhile? The church is the hope of the world; should she expire, the nations would never come to the birth of regeneration, but must abide in death.

**Verse 51.** *Wherewith thine enemies have reproached, O Lord.* Here is another forcible point; the scoffers are the Lord's enemies as well as ours, and their reproach falls upon him as well as upon us; therefore we cry for the Lord's interposition. When Jehovah's own name is in the quarrel, surely he will arise. Wherewith they have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed. Tracking him and finding occasion to blaspheme at every turn; not only watching his words and actions, but even his harmless steps. Neither Christ nor his church can please the world, whichever way we turn scoffers will rail. Does this verse refer to the oft repeated sarcasm—"Where is the promise of his coming?" Is the reproach aimed at the delays of the Messiah, those long expected footfalls which as yet are unheard? O Lord, how long shall this threadbare taunt continue? How long? How long?

"Come, for creation groans
Impatient of thy stay,
Worn out with these long years of ill,
These ages of delay."

"Come, in thy glorious might,
Come with the iron rod,
Scattering thy foes before thy face,
Most Mighty Son of God."

**Verse 52.** *Blessed be the Lord for evermore.* He ends where he began; he has sailed round the world and reached port again. Let us bless God before we pray, and while we pray, and when we have done praying, for he always deserves it of us. If we cannot understand him, we will not distrust him. When his ways are beyond our judgment we will not be so foolish as to judge; yet we shall do so if we consider his dealings to be unkind or unfaithful. He is, he must be, he shall be, for ever, our blessed God. Amen, and Amen. All our hearts say so. So be it, Lord, we wish it over and over again. Be thou blessed evermore.
Whole Psalm. The present Psalm makes a pair with the preceding one. It is a spiritual Allegro to that Penseroso...That Psalm was a dirge of Passion Tide, this Psalm is a carol of Christmas.—Christopher Wordsworth.

Whole Psalm. There are many passages in this Psalm which do clearly evidence that it is to be interpreted of Christ; yea, there are many things in this Psalm that can never be clearly, pertinently, and appositely applied to any but Jesus Christ. For a taste, see Ps 89:19 "I have laid help upon one that is mighty", mighty to pardon, reconcile, to justify, to save, to bring to glory; suitable to that of the Apostle, Heb 7:25, "He is able to save to the uttermost"—that is, to all ends and purposes, perfectly, completely, fully, continually, perpetually. Christ is a thorough Saviour, a mighty Saviour: Isa 63:1, "Mighty to save." There needs none to come after him to finish the work which he hath begun: Ps 89:19, I have exalted one chosen out of the people, which is the very title given to our Lord Jesus: Isa 62:1, "Behold my servant, whom I uphold; mine elect", or chosen one, "in whom my soul delighteth": Ps 89:20, I have fouled David my servant. Christ is very frequently called by that name, as being most dearly beloved of God, and most highly esteemed and valued by God, and as being typified by him both as king and prophet of his church: Ps 89:20, With my holy oil have I anointed him; suitable to that of Christ; Lu 4:18, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor"; and therefore we need not doubt of the excellency, authority, certainty, and sufficiency of the gospel: Ps 89:27, I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the earth. Christ is the firstborn of every creature, and in all things hath the preeminence: Ps 89:29, His seed also will I make to endure for ever, and his throne as the days of heaven. This is chiefly spoken of Christ and his kingdom. The aspectable heaven is corruptible, but the kingdom of heaven is eternal; and such shall be Christ's seed, throne and kingdom: Ps 89:36, His seed shall endure for ever, and his throne as the sun before me. "Christ shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand", Isa 53:10. And his throne as the sun before me; that is, perpetual and glorious, as the Chaldee explains it, shall shine as the sun. Other kingdoms and thrones have their times and their turns, their rise and their ruins, but so hath not the kingdom and throne of Jesus Christ. Christ's dominion is "an everlasting dominion", which shall not pass away; "and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed", Da 7:13-14. I might give further instances out of this Psalm, but enough is as good as a feast. New saith God, "I have made a covenant with him; "so then there is a covenant that God the Father hath made with Christ the Mediator; which covenant, the Father engages to the Son, shall stand fast, there shall be no cancelling or disannulling of it. God the Father hath not only made a covenant of grace with the saints in Christ, but he has also
made a covenant of redemption, as we call it for distinction sake, with Jesus Christ himself: "My covenant shall stand fast with him; " that is, with Christ, as we have fully demonstrated.—*Thomas Brooks.*

**Verse 1.** This one short verse contains the summary, pith, and argument of the whole long Psalm; wherein observe *The Song's Ditty, the lovingkindness and truth of the Lord,* manifested unto the whole world generally, to David's house (that is, the church) especially. *The Singer's Duty, magnifying the mercies of God always, even from one generation to another.* And by all means; with his *mouth,* for that is expressed in this verse; with his *mind,* for that is implied in the next—*I have said,* etc., that is, believed in my heart, and therefore spake it with my tongue, Ps 116:10. "For out of the heart's abundance the mouth speaketh", Mt 12:34.—*John Boys.*

**Verse 1.** *I will sing.* It is to be observed that he does not say, *I will speak* of the goodness of the Lord; but, *I will sing.* The celebration of the divine goodness has joined with itself the joy and exultation of a pious mind, which cannot be poured forth better than in song. That pleasantness and exuberance of a happy spirit, which by singing is instilled into the ears of the listeners, has a certain wonderful power of moving the affections; so that not in vain were pious minds taught by the Holy Spirit to inculcate the wonderful work of God in songs composed for this purpose, to commit them to memory and to appoint them to be sung.—*Musculus.*

**Verse 1.** *I will sing.* The Psalmist has a very sad complaint to make of the deplorable condition of the family of David at this time, and yet he begins the Psalm with songs of praise; for we must in every thing, in every state, give thanks. We think when we are in trouble we get ease by complaining: but we do more, we get joy, by praising. Let our complaints therefore be turned into thanksgiving; and in these verses we find that which will be in matter of praise and thanksgiving for us in the worst of times, whether upon a personal or public account.—*Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 1.** *Sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever.* S. Gregory the Great raises the question here as to how a perpetual singing of the mercies of God is compatible with unalloyed bliss in heaven, inasmuch as the thought of mercy connotes the memory of sin and sorrow, which needed mercy, whereas Isaiah saith that "the former troubles are forgotten", and "the former things shall not be remembered, nor come upon the heart" (Isa 65:16-17). And he replies that it will be like the memory of past sickness in time of health, without stain, without grief, and serving only to heighten the felicity of the redeemed, by the
contrast with the past, and to increase their love and gratitude towards God.
And so sings the Cluniac: (Bernard of Clairvaux.)

"Their breasts are filled with gladness,
Their mouths are tuned to praise,
What time, now safe for ever,
On former sins they gaze:
The fouler was the error,
The sadder was the fall,
The ampler are the praises
Of him who pardoned all."

Note, too, that he says, "with my mouth", not with that of any deputy; *I will make known*, not secretly or timidly, not in a whisper, but boldly preach, *Thy faithfulness*, or *truth*, not my own opinion, far less my own falsehood, but Thy Truth, which is, Thine Only begotten Son.—*Gregory, Bernard, Hugo, and Augustine: quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

**Verse 1. Mercies.** The word may be rendered *graces, kindnesses, goodnesses,* and designs the abundance of grace.—*John Gill.*

**Verse 1. The mercies.** His manifold and sundry mercies: as if he should say, we have tasted of more than one, yea, we have felt all his mercies; I will therefore praise the same for ever. I will sing his mercy for creating this universe, which is *macrocosmos*, a great world; and for making man, which is *microcosmos*, a little world.

1. My song shall set forth his kindness, for that he gave me being.

2. For adding to my being, life, which he denieth unto stones.

3. To life, sense, which he denieth unto plants.

4. To sense, speech and understanding, which he denieth unto brute beasts...

I am exceeding much bound unto God for creating me when I was not; and for preserving me under his wings ever since I was: yet I am more bound to his mercy for redeeming me, for blessing me with all spiritual blessings in heavenly things in Christ his Son (Eph 1:1-23 3:1-21), for his electing of me, for his calling of me, for his justifying of me, for his sanctifying of me. These graces are the riches of his goodness and glory, *misericordioe in oeternum,* everlasting mercies, as reaching from everlasting predestination to everlasting
glorification. O Lord, I will always sing thy mercies in promising, and ever shew thy truth in performing thy promise made to David, thy chosen servant, concerning thy Son, my Saviour, saying, "Thy seed will I establish for ever." So the fathers expound our text: I will ever sing thy mercies, in vouchsafing to send thy Son to visit thy servants, sick to death in sin. First, I will ever sing of thy mercifulness, and then will ever be shewing thy faithfulness. Neque enim exhiberetur veritas in impletione promissorum nisi proecedet misericordia in remissione peccatorum. (For truth, in the fulfilment of the promises, would not be shown forth; unless mercy, in the forgiveness of sins, should precede it.) And what is God's mercy set up for ever, and his truth established in the heavens, but that which Isaiah terms, "the sure mercies of David": that is, as Paul construes Isaiah, the holy promise made to David and the promise made to David, is briefly this, "Thy seed will I establish for ever, and set up thy throne from generation to generation."—John Boys.

Verse 1. For ever. I know some join in oeternum to the noun misercordias, and not to the verb cantabo, making the sense to be this: I will always sing thy mercies which endure for ever. But always is referred as well, if not better, unto the verb, I will sing: as who would say, Lord, thy mercies are so manifest, and so manifold, so great in their number, and so good in their nature, that I will alway, so long as I have any being, sing praises unto thee Haply some will object, "All flesh is grass, and the goodliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth", (Isa 40:6-7). David being persecuted by Saul, said, "There is but a step between me and death", (1Sa 20:3). Nay, David, thy life is shorter than a stride, but "a span long", as thyself witnesseth, Ps 39:5. How can he then that begs his bread but for a day promise to spend his breath in magnifying the Lord for ever? Answer is made, that the prophet will not only commend the mercies of the Lord in word, but also commit them unto writing. Ut sciat hoc etas, posteritasque legat (Eobanus Hessus.) (that this age may know, and that posterity may read.) As the tongue of the prophet is termed elsewhere "the pen of a writer"; so the writing of the Prophet is here termed his mouth, as Euthymeus upon the place (Ac 4:25), Liber Psalmorum os David (The Book of Psalms is the mouth of David). He doth intend to note the mercies of God, and to set forth his truth in a book, the which he will leave behind him (as an instrument) to convey the same from generation to generations, from the generation of Jews to the generation of Christians. Or from the Old Testament to the New: for the blessed Apostles in their sermons usually cite sentences out of the Psalms. S. Peter telleth us that the gospel was preached unto the dead (1Pe 4:6); so may we say, that the gospel is preached by the dead. For the most ancient fathers, and other judicious authors, who have spent their days in writing learned expositions and
godly meditations upon the Holy Scriptures, although they be dead, yet they "sing all the mercies of the Lord, and shew the truth of his word from one generation to another." It is reported in our chronicles of Athelstan, *parum oetati vixit, multum glorioe* (he lived but little of time, but much of glory). So many zealous and industrious doctors have lived (in respect of their age) but a little, yet in respect of their acts, a great while, shining still in their works and writings, as lights of the world. Or the prophet may be said to *sing ever* intentionally, though not actually. For as the wicked, if he could live alway, would sin alway, so the good man (if God should suffer him alway to breathe on earth) would sing alway the mercies of the Lord.—*John Boys.*

**Verse 1.** *With my mouth.* The author has heard continual praises from a tongue half eaten away with cancer. What use, beloved reader, are you making of your tongue?—*Philip Bennett Power.*

**Verse 2.** *I have said.* The word ytrma, "*I have said*", is used, in the Book of Psalms, to express two things; either a fixed purpose, or a settled opinion of the person speaking. The Psalmist, therefore, delivers the whole of this second verse in his own person, and introduces not God speaking till the next verse.—*Samuel Horsley.*

**Verse 2.** *I have said*, etc. The perpetuity of mercy is one eminent piece of this Psalm, for with that he begins: *Mercy shall be built up for ever*, etc. And they are the sure mercies of our spiritual David (Christ), he means. Now, to set forth the perpetuity hereof, he first useth words that express firmitude, as *established, built up for ever*, Ps 89:2,4. Then he uses such similitudes as are taken from things which are held most firm and inviolable amongst men, as Ps 89:4, *foedus incidi*, I have cut or engraven my covenant (so in the Hebrew), alluding to what was then in use, when covenants were mutually to be made, such as they intended to be inviolate, and never to be broken; to signify so much, they did engrave and cut them into the most durable lasting matter, as marble, or brass, or the like. You may see this to have been the way of writing in use, as what was to last for ever: as Job 19:23-24. "Oh, that my words were now written! oh that they were printed in a book! That they were graven with an iron pen and lead in the rock for ever!" And what is that rock or marble here? No other than the heart itself of our gracious and most merciful Jehovah, and his most unalterable and immovable purposes, truth and faithfulness. This is that foundation *in the heavens*, whereon mercy is built up for ever, as Ps 89:2, which (as the Apostle says) "remains for ever"; and so they become "the sure mercies of David", Isa 60:3. Again, solemn oaths amongst men serve to ratify and make things sworn to perpetual. This also is there specified as having been taken by God: "Once have I sworn by my holiness", etc., and sworn by him that
cannot lie, and sworn to that end, "to show the immutability of his counsel", Heb 6:17. And not only is the immutability of his mercy illustrated by these things taken from what is firm on earth, but he ascends up to the heavens, and first into the very highest heavens: Ps 89:2, For I have said, Mercy shall be built up for ever; thy faithfulness shalt thou establish in the very heavens: comparing them to an house built not on earth, or upon a foundation of earth, which thieves break through, and violence destroys, but in heaven, whither they cannot reach.—Thomas Goodwin.

**Verse 2.** Mercy shall be built up for ever. What is this "mercy" that is "built up for ever"? but the glorious and the gracious scheme, the glorious and the gracious fabric, of our salvation, founded in the eternal purpose of God—carried into execution by the labours and the death of Jesus Christ—and then applied and brought home to the heart by the illuminating and converting power of the Holy Ghost? This is that "mercy" which is "built up for ever." It was planned from everlasting, and will know no ruin or decay, through the illimitable line of eternity itself. Who is the builder of this fabric? Not man's free will. Not man's own righteousness or wisdom. Not human power nor human skill. Every true believer will here join issue with David, that it is God, and God alone, who builds up the temple of his Church; and who, as the builder of it, is alone entitled to all the glory. The elect constitute and form one grand house of mercy: an house, erected to display and to perpetuate the riches of the Father's free grace, of the Son's atoning merit, and of the Holy Ghost's efficacious agency. This house, contrary to the fate of all sublunary buildings, will never fall down, nor ever be taken down. As nothing can be added to it, so nothing can be diminished from it. Fire cannot injure it; storms cannot overthrow it; age cannot impair it. It stands on a rock, and is immovable as the rock on which it stands—the threefold rock of God's inviolable decree, of Christ's finished redemption, and of the Spirit's never failing faithfulness.—Augustus Montague Toplady, 1740-1778.

**Verse 2.** Built up. Mention of a building of mercy, presupposes miserable ruins, and denotes that this building is intended for the benefit of an elect world ruined by Adam's fall. Free grace and love set on foot this building for them, every stone in which, from the lowest to the highest, is mercy to them; from top to bottom, from the foundation stone to the top stone, all is free and rich mercy to thrum. And the ground of this glorious building is God's covenant with his chosen: I have made a covenant with my chosen.—Thomas Boston.

**Verse 2.** Built up. Former mercies are fundamental to later ones. The mercies that we enjoy this day are founded upon the mercies of former days, such as we
ought joyfully and thankfully to recount with delight and praise; remembering the years of the right hand of the Most High.—*John Howe.*

**Verse 2.** (*last clause.*) The meaning of this passage appears to be, that the constancy of the celestial motions, the regular vicissitudes of day and night, and alternations of the seasons, were emblems of God's own immutability.—*R. Warner,* 1828.

**Verse 2.**

For I have said, Thy mercies rise,  
A deathless structure, to the skies:  
The heavens were planted by thy hand,  
And, as the heavens, Thy truth shall stand.—*Richard Mant.*

**Verse 3.** *I have made a covenant with my chosen.* We must ponder here with pious wonder how God has deigned to enter into a covenant with man, the immortal with the mortal, the most powerful with the weakest, the most just with the most unjust, the richest with the poorest, the most blessed with the most wretched. The prophet wonders that God is mindful of man, and visits the son of man. Of how much greater admiration, I say is it worthy, that they are also joined together, and that not after a simple fashion, but by the ties of a covenant? If man had affirmed this of himself, that God was united and bound to him by a covenant, who is there that would not have condemned him of temerity? Now God himself is introduced affirming this very thing of himself, that he had made a covenant with man. What saint does not see in this thing, how great the filanyrwpa of God is!—*Musculus.*

**Verse 3.** *I have made a covenant with my chosen.* On heaven's side is God himself, the party proposer. Though he was the party offended, yet the motion for a covenant comes from him...The Father of mercies saith, "The lost creatures cannot contract for themselves; and if another undertake not for them, they must perish; they cannot choose an undertaker for themselves. I will choose one for them, and I will make a covenant with my chosen." On man's side is God's chosen, or chosen One, for the word of God is singular; the Son, *the last Adam.* Who else as fit to be undertaker on man's side? Who else could have been the Father's choice for this vast undertaking? No angel nor man was capable of it, but *the Mighty One* (Ps 89:19) whom the Father points out to us as his chosen, Isa 13:1.—*Thomas Boston.*

**Verses 3-4.** I made a covenant with my chosen, etc. Do you suppose that this was spoken to David, in his own person only? No, indeed; but to David as the
antitype, figure, and forerunner of Jesus Christ. Hence, the Septuagint version renders it, *I have covenanted* tois eklektois mou *with my elect people*, or with my chosen ones: *i.e.* with them in Christ, and with Christ in their name. *I have sworn unto David my servant*, unto the Messiah, who was typified by David; unto my coeternal Son, who stipulated to take on himself "the form of a servant"; thy seed, *i.e.* all those whom I have given to thee in the decree of election, all those whom thou shalt live and die to redeem, these will I establish for ever, so as to render their salvation irreversible and inadmissible: and build up thy throne, thy mediatorial throne, as King of saints and covenant Head of the elect, to all generations: there shall always be a succession of favoured sinners to be called and sanctified, in consequence of thy federal obedience unto death; and every period of time shall recompense thy covenant sufferings with an increasing revenue of converted souls, until as many as are ordained to eternal life are gathered in. Observe, here, that when Christ received the promise from the Father concerning the establishment of his (*i.e.* of Christ's) throne to all generations, the plain meaning is, that his people shall be thus established; for, consider Christ in his divine capacity as the Son of God, and his throne was already established, and had been from everlasting, and would have continued to be established without end, even if he had never been incarnate at all. Therefore, the promise imports that Christ shall reign, not simply as a person in the Godhead (which he ever did, ever will, and ever must); but relatively, mediatorially, and in his office character, as the deliverer and king of Zion. Hence it follows, that his people cannot be lost: for he would be a poor sort of a king who had or might have no subjects to reign over. Consequently, that "throne" of glory on which Christ sits is already encircled in part, and will at last be completely surrounded and made still more glorious, by that innumerable company, that general assembly and church of the firstborn who are written in heaven.—*Augustus Montague Toplady.*

**Verse 5. The Heavens**, etc. Now, for this kingdom of his, the heavens are said to praise his wonders, which is spoken of the *angels*, who are often called the heavens, from their place; as in Job it is said, "The heavens are not clean in his sight." And these knowing the wonders of that covenant of grace, they, even they are said to praise; "The heavens shall praise thy wonders, O Lord" In the Hebrew it is "thy wonder", or "thy miracle", in the singular number, which, in Eph 3:10, the angels are said to adore: and in Lu 2:14, to "sing glory to the Highest"; for his grace to man is that miracle. Now the material heavens do not praise the mercy of God, or the grace of God, or the covenant of grace, or the throne of grace that is established in the heavens. They understand nothing of Christ; no, they do not so much as materially give occasion to man to praise God for these: and therefore this is meant of the angels; and most interpreters
understand the next words of them: *Thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints,* angels, and the holy ones made perfect, for there the great congregation is. For even in the heavens, who can be compared to the Lord, where all his angels thus do praise him? *Who among the sons of the mighty,* of all the powers of the earth, *can be likened unto the Lord?* for he is the "King of kings, and he is the Lord of lords; "a God above all gods, even angels themselves, as elsewhere the Psalmist hath it. And he says not only, *There is none like thee;* but, *Who is like unto thee?* his excellency so exceeds. And in Ps 89:7, he is there presented with all his saints and angels round about him, as one that is greatly to be feared, or that is terrible in himself, by reason of his greatness, in this his council and assembly of his saints, and to be had in reverence of all that are about him. For saints and angels, they are of his council in heaven (as might be shewn), and encompass the manifestation of his glory there round about.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

**Verse 5.** Thy wonders, etc. As the heavens are a proof of God's power, in respect of his first framing them out of nothing; so are they a pattern of God's faithfulness, in their constant and orderly motion according to his word since their framing: *The heavens shall praise thy faithfulness also.* However the power and faithfulness of God may be seen and heard in the work and speech of the heavens by all men, yet are they not observed and hearkened unto except in the Church by God's children: therefore saith he, *They shall praise thy faithfulness also in the congregation of the saints.*—*David Dickson.*

**Verse 5.** *Thy wonders.* Thy wondrousness (literally, wonder), not "Thy wondrous works", but "Thy wonderful mysterious nature and being", as separate and distinct from all created beings.—*J.J.S. Perowne.*

**Verse 5.** *Thy wonders,* etc. It is a wonderful salvation, it is such a salvation as the angels desire to pry into it; and it is such a salvation, that all the prophets desire to pry into it; it is almost six thousand years since all the angels in heaven fell into a sea of wonder at this great salvation; it is almost six thousand years since Abel fell into a sea of wonder at this great salvation; and what think ye is his exercise this day? He is even wondering at this great salvation.—*Andrew Gray,* 1616.

**Verse 6.** *Who in the heaven?* Who in the sky? Ainsworth reads it. In the clouds, *in nubibus,* *sequitur,* is to be equalled, saith Calvin, to Jehovah, *Quis enim in superiore nube par oestimetur Jehovah.* Who in the higher clouds is equal to Jehovah, so Tremellius reads it. *Who in the heavens?* i.e., say some, in the starry heavens, among the celestial bodies, sun, moon, or stars; which were adored as gods, not only by the Persians, but also by some idolatrous Jews,
because of their brightness and beauty, their lustre and glory. Which of all those famous lamps, and heavenly luminaries, is to be compared to the Father of lights, and Sun of righteousness? They may glisten like glowworms in the night of Paganism, among them who are covered with the mantle of darkness, but when this Sun ariseth, and day appeareth, they all vanish and disappear. "Who in the heavens?" i.e., say others, in the heaven of heavens, the highest, the third heavens, among the celestial spirits, cherubims and seraphims, angels and archangels, principalities and powers, thrones and dominions? Who among the innumerable company of angels? Who among those pure, those perfect spirits, who are the most ancient, the most honourable house of the creation, is to be compared to the Father of Spirits.—George Swinnock.

Verse 6. Who can be compared? The Dutch have translated these words, Who can be shadowed with him? that is, they are not worthy to be accounted shadows unto such a comparison with him.—Thomas Goodwin.

Verse 6. Who among the sons of the mighty. Literally, "Who is he among the sons of" Alim (or of Gods, as in Ps 29:1,) i.e., according to Suicer, the powerful, the princes of the earth.—Daniel Cresswell.

Verse 7. God is greatly to be feared. Ainsworth reads, "God is daunting terrible." The original word is Uren, from Ure arats, he was broken, bruised, terrified. "An epithet of God", says Bythner, "as though breaking all things."—Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.

Verse 7. God is greatly to be feared. The worship of God is to be performed with great fear and reverence: "God is greatly to be feared." Piscator translates it, Vehementer formidandus, to be vehemently feared; and opposes it to that formal, careless, trifling, vain spirit, which too often is found in those that approach the Lord in the duties of his worship.—John Flavel.

Verse 7. God is greatly to be feared in the assembly of the saints. Those saints of his who walk close with him, have a daunting power in their appearance. I appeal to guilty consciences, to apostates, to professors who have secret haunts of wickedness: sometime when you come but into the presence of one who is a truly gracious godly man or woman whom your conscience tells you walks close with God, doth not even the very sight of such an one terrify you? The very lustre of that holiness you see in such an one strikes upon your conscience. Then you think, such an one walks close with God indeed, but I have basely forsaken the Lord, and have had such a haunt of wickedness, I have brought dreadful guilt upon my soul since I saw him last. Ecclesiastical stories tell us of Basil, when the officers came to apprehend him, he being then exercised in
holy duties, that there was such a majesty and lustre came from his countenance, that the officers fell down backward (as they did who came to apprehend Christ), they were not able to lay hold of him. Surely, when the saints shall be raised in their holiness, when every one of them shall have their hearts filled with holiness, it will cause abundance of fear even in all hearts of those that converse with them.—Jeremiah Burrows.

**Verse 8.** Thy faithfulness round about thee. For just as the tyrants of this world move abroad surrounded by impiety, avarice, contempt of God, and, pride, as with a bodyguard, so God sits on his exalted throne, surrounded with majesty, faithfulness, mercy and equal love to all his people, as with a vesture of gold.—J. Baptista Folengius.

**Verse 8.** Thy faithfulness round about thee. Whatever he doth, he is mindful of his faithfulness and covenant, before and behind, and on each side; he can look no way, but that is in his eye. And though he employ angels, and send them down into the world, and they stand round about him; yet he hath better harbingers than these—mercy, and truth, and faithfulness, that wait round about him.—Thomas Goodwin.

**Verse 9.** Thou rulest the raging of the sea. Surely the Spirit of God would have us to take notice, that though the sea be indeed such a giant, such a monster, as will make a heart of oak shake, or a heart of brass melt, yet what is it to God, but an infant? He can bind it and lay it to sleep, even as a little child. And if the great sea be in the hand of God as a little child, what is great to God! and how great is God! What is strong to God! and how strong is God! What or who is too great, or too strong for God to deal with?—Joseph Caryl.

**Verse 9.** Thou rulest. Here under a figure taken from God's providential government, we have an exhibition of the power of God in defeating the efforts of the enemies of his Church. An instance of this, in the literal sense, we have in the appeasing of the storm by our Lord. "And he arose, and rebuked the wind, and said unto the sea, Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." Here we see that God reigns over the sea immediately, and alters or modifies the arrangements of nature according to his sovereign pleasure. That which Jesus did on one occasion is constantly done by the God of providence. He has not left the ocean to be disturbed at random by the winds, nor to be kept in peace by the laws of nature. He rules the raging of the sea. He raises the waves, and he stilleth them. This exhibits a continually working providence. And what he does in providence he does also in his kingdom of grace. He suffers the fury of the enemy to swell against his cause, but he stills it at his pleasure.—Alexander Carson.
Verse 10. *Broken; scattered.* God has more ways than one to deal with his and his church's enemies.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 10. *Rahab.* The reason why *Egypt* is expressed in Scripture under this word, ariseth from the two significations of it; first, it signifies *strength,* for Egypt was a very strong nation, and therefore the Israelites were reproved for going to them for help, and relying upon their strength, which though great in itself, yet should be to them but a broken reed; secondly, it signifieth pride, or the proud; men are usually proud of strength, and *Egypt* being a strong nation, was also a very proud nation.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 11. *The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine.* Therefore we praise thee, therefore we trust in thee, therefore we will not fear what man can do against us.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 12. *The north and the south thou hast created them.* etc. The heights of Huttin, commonly fixed on by tradition as the Mount of Beatitudes, appear a little to the west of Tiberias. Over these the graceful top of Mount Tabor is seen, and beyond it the little Hermon, famous for its dews; and still farther, and apparently higher, the bleak mountains of Gilboa, on which David prayed that there might fall no dew nor rain. A view of the position of Tabor and Hermon from such a situation as that which we now occupied, shewed us how accurately they might be reckoned the *"umbilicus terroe"*—the central point of the land, and led us to infer that this is the true explanation of the manner in which they are referred to in the Ps 89:12. It is as if the Psalmist had said North, South, and *all that is between*—or in other words, the whole land from North to South, to its very centre and throughout its very marrow—shall rejoice in thy name.—*R.M. Macheyne.*

Verse 12. *Tabor and Hermon.* These hills, the one to the east and the other to the west, in Canaan, were much frequented by the saints of God. David speaks of the sacred hill of *Hermon,* and compares brotherly love to the dew of it. Ps 42:6 133:3. And *Tabor,* yet more eminent for the memorable spot of Christ's transfiguration, and from whence God the Father proclaimed his perfect love and approbation of Jesus as his dear Son. Well might this hymn, therefore, in allusion to those glorious events, call even the holy hills to rejoice in Jehovah's name, Mt 17:1-5.—*Robert Hawker.*

Verse 13. *Strong is thy hand; even thy left hand;* as much as to say, *tu polles utraque manu,* thou hast both hands alike powerful.—*John Trapp.*
Verse 14. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne. As if the Psalmist had said, "The ornaments with which God is invested, instead of being a robe of purple, a diadem, or a sceptre, are, that he is the righteous and impartial judge of the world, a merciful father, and a faithful protector of his people." Earthly kings, from their having nothing in themselves to procure for them authority, and to give them dignity, are under the necessity of borrowing elsewhere what will invest them therewith; but God, having in himself all sufficiency, and standing in no need of any other helps, exhibits to us the splendour of his own image in his righteousness, mercy, and truth.—John Calvin.

Verse 14. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne. The Holy Ghost alludes to the thrones of earthly princes, which were underpropped with pillars, as Solomon's throne with lions, 1Ki 19:20, that were both a support and an ornament to it. Now, saith the Psalmist, justice and judgment are the pillars upon which God's throne standeth, as Calvin expounds it, the robe and diadem, the purple and sceptre, the regalia with which God's throne is adorned.—George Swinnock.

Verse 14. Justice and judgment are the habitation of thy throne. Jehovah is here exhibited, by the sacred poet, under the character of a Sovereign, and of a Judge, he being presented to our adoring regard as on his throne; the throne of universal empire, and absolute dominion; as exercising his authority, and executing his laws, with an omnipotent but impartial hand. For "Justice and judgment are the habitation", the preparation, the establishment, or the basis, of this throne. Our textual translation is, habitation; the marginal, establishment; the Septuagint, preparation; and, if I mistake not, our best modern interpreters render the original term, basis or foundation; which, on the whole, seems most agreeable. The basis, then, of Jehovah's government, or that on which it rests, is "justice and judgment." By "justice", I conceive we are to understand the attribute so called; and, by "judgment", the impartial exercise of that attribute in the Divine administration. So that were not the Most High to administer impartial justice in his moral government, he might be considered, if it be lawful to use the expression, as abdicating his throne.—Abraham Booth, 1734-1806.

Verse 14. Justice, which defends his subjects, and does every one right. Judgment, which restrains rebels, and keeps off injuries. Mercy, which shows compassion, pardons, supports the weak. Truth, that performs whatsoever he promises.—William Nicholson.

Verse 14. Mercy and truth shall go before thy face. Note—
1. Mercy is said to go before the face of God, because God sends mercy before judgment, that he might find less to punish: so Bellarmine.

2. That God permits not his face to be seen before He has forgiven our sins through mercy: so Rickelius.

3. That no one comes to the knowledge of God, but he who has obtained mercy beforehand.

4. That God comes to no one unless His grace go before Him. ...Truth goes before the face of God, because God keeps it ever before his eyes, to mould his actions thereby. Pindar calls truth yugatera Dios the daughter of God. Epaminoudas the Theban general, cultivated truth so studiously, that he is reported never to have spoken a falsehood even in jest. In the courts of kings this is a rare virtue.—Le Blanc.

Verse 14. Mercy and truth. Mercy in promising; truth in performing. Truth, in being as good as thy word; mercy, in being better.—Matthew Henry.

Verse 14. Shall go. In his active going forth, tender mercy and goodness announce him, and faithful truth will tell his people he is there when he comes forth. His activities are mercy and faithfulness, because his will is at work and his nature is love. Yet his throne still maintains justice and judgment.—J.N. Darby.

Verse 15. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound. Not that hear, for then the blessing were cheap indeed. Thousands hear the Gospel sound, but sometimes not ten of a thousand know it.—Thomas James Judkin, 1841.

Verse 15. Blessed is the people that know the joyful sound—viz., of the trumpets sounded in token of joy at the great festivals, and chiefly on the first day of the seventh month, the feast of trumpets (Le 23:24), and on extraordinary occasions, especially after the yearly atonement, on the day of jubilee, the tenth day of the seventh month of the fiftieth year, proclaiming liberty to bondmen, and restoration of their inheritance to them that had forfeited it (Le 25:8-10). As the jubilee joy did not come till after the atonement, so no Gospel joy and liberty are ours till first we know Christ as our atonement. "In the day of the people's gladness" they blew the trumpets over their sacrifices, "that they might be to them for a memorial before God" (Nu 10:10). David and Israel brought up the ark of the Lord to Zion "with shouting, and with the sound of the trumpet" (2Sa 6:15). In Nu 23:21, Balaam makes it
the distinguishing glory of Israel, "The Lord his God is with him, and the shout of a king is among them", (Compare Ps 98:6 27:6 margin)—A.R. Fausset.

**Verse 15.** *People that know the joyful sound.* Here it is supposed that we have intelligence in respect of "the joyful sound." For there is knowledge not merely of the utterances and intonations, but of the sense and substance, of the thought and feeling, which they convey. And I suppose this to be the meaning of Christ when he says, "My sheep hear my voice, and they follow me; and a stranger will they not follow, for they know not the voice of strangers." And I have often been surprised, to note the accuracy with which persons otherwise not very intelligent, not largely informed, not of critical acumen, will yet, when they hear a discourse, judge, discriminate, determine; will be able to say at once—"Truth, clear, unmixed, without a cloud upon it; "or—"Doctrine clouded, statements confused, not the lucid Gospel." or be able to say, if it be so—"No Gospel at all; contradiction to the truth of Christ." They *Know the joyful sound*, as it rolls from the plenitude of God's own voice and bosom in his august and blessed revelations; as it is confirmed, authenticated and sealed by the precious blood of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ; as it is witnessed to by the eternal Spirit: "the joyful sound", that there is salvation for lost and ruined men by faith in the blood and in the obedience of him who died upon the tree, and is now enthroned in the highest place in heaven.—James Stratten, 1845.

**Verse 15.** *They shall walk in the light of thy countenance.* Surely, next to the love of God's heart, believers value the smiles of his face; from which, as from the agency of the sun, arise the budding of conscious joy, the leaves of unsullied profession, the variegated blossom of holy tempers, and the beneficent fruits of moral righteousness. They are totally mistaken who suppose that the light of God's countenance, and the privileges of the gospel, and the comforts of the Spirit, conduce to make us indolent and inactive in the way of duty. The text cuts up this surmise by the roots. For, it does not say, they shall *sit down* in the light of thy countenance; or, they shall *lie down* in the light of thy countenance; but "they shall WALK in the light of thy countenance." What is walking? It is a progressive motion from one point of space to another. And what is that holy walking which God's Spirit enables all his people to observe? It is a continued, progressive motion from sin to holiness; from all that is evil, to every good word and work. And the self same "light of God's countenance" in which you, O believer, are enabled to walk, and which at first gave you spiritual feet wherewith to walk, will keep you in a walking and in a working state, to the end of your warfare.—Augustus Montague Toplady.
Verse 15.—There is the dreadful and there is the joyful sound. The dreadful sound was at Mount Sinai. The joyful sound is from Mount Sion. When the people heard the former they were far from beholding the glory of God's face. Moses only was admitted to see His "back parts"; the people were kept at a distance, and the light of God's glory that they saw was so terrible to them, that they could not abide it. But they that know the "joyful sound." they shall be admitted near, nearer than Moses, so as to see the glory of God's face or brightness of his countenance, and that not only transiently, as Moses saw God's back parts, but continually. The light of God's glory shall not be terrible to them, but easy and sweet, so that they may dwell in it and walk in it; and it shall be to them instead of the light of the sun; for the sun shall no more be their light by day, nor the moon by night, but God shall be their everlasting light, Compare this with Isa 2:5 Re 21:23-24 Re 22:4-5—Jonathan Edwards

Verse 16. And in thy righteousness shall they be exalted. In these words briefly we may notice,

1. The believer's promotion; he is *exalted*. In the first Adam we were debased unto the lowest hell, the crown having fallen from our heads; but in Christ, the second Adam, we are again exalted; yea, exalted as high as heaven, for we "sit together with him in heavenly places", says the apostle. This is an incredible paradox to a blind world, that the believer who is sitting at this moment upon the dunghill of this earth, should at the same time be sitting in heaven in Christ, his glorious Head and representative, Eph 2:6.

2. We have the ground of the believer's preferment and exaltation; it is *in thy righteousness*. It is not in any righteousness of his own; no, this he utterly disclaims, reckoning it but "dung and loss", "filthy rags", dogs' meat: but it is in *thy* righteousness; that is, the righteousness of God, as the apostle calls it: Ro 1:17 Php 3:9. The righteousness of God is variously taken in Scripture. Sometimes for the infinite rectitude and equity of his nature: Ps 11:7, "The righteous Lord loveth righteousness." Sometimes for his rectorial equity, or distributive justice which he exerciseth in the government of the world, rewarding the good and punishing evil doers: Ps 97:2, "Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne." Sometimes it is put for his veracity and faithfulness in accomplishing his word of promise, or in executing his word of threatening: Ps 36:5-6, "Thy faithfulness reacheth unto the clouds: thy righteousness is like the great mountains." Sometimes it is put for the perfect righteousness which Christ the Son of God, as our Surety and Mediator, brought in, by his obedience to the law, and death on the cross, for the justification of guilty sinners: and this as I said, is frequently called the
righteousness of God; and in this sense I understand it here in the text: "In thy righteousness shall they be exalted."—Ebenezer Erskine.

Verse 17. In thy favour our horn shall be exalted. A man of lofty bearing is said to carry his horn very high. To him who is proudly interfering with the affairs of another it will be said, "Why show your komba", "horn", "here?" "See that fellow, what a fine horn he has; he will make the people run." "Truly, my lord, you have a great horn." "Chinnan has lost his money; aye, and his hornship too." "Alas, alas! I am like the deer, whose horns have fallen off."—Joseph Roberts "Oriental Illustrations."

Verse 19 (second clause).—(New Translation) A mighty chief have I supplied with help. Literally, "I have equalized help", that is, I have laid or given sufficient help, "upon a mighty one". The verb denotes "to equalize", or "make one thing equal or equiponderant to another", as a means to the end, or vice versa.—Richard Mant.

Verse 19. Chosen has here its strict sense, but not without allusion to its specific use as signifying a young warrior.—J. A. Alexander.

Verse 20. With my holy oil have I appointed him. As the literal David was thrice anointed king, once by Samuel in Jesse's house at Bethlehem: once at Hebron after the death of Saul, as king over Judah; and again at seven years' end, as ruler over all Israel: so also "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Ghost and with power" in his nativity at Bethlehem; a second time over his Church at his resurrection, when the tyrant who sought his life was overcome, and then only over the small "confederation" (which Hebron means) of his Jewish disciples; but a third time in his ascension to the heavenly Jerusalem, the Vision of Peace, where he, now crowned as King of Glory, was anointed over all heaven and earth, supreme over all the princes of God. He was thrice anointed in another sense also, once as Prophet, once as Priest, and once as King.—Neale and Littledale.

Verse 20-24. I have FOUND David, God exclaims. When sin brought death into the world, and annihilated the hopes of mankind from the first covenant, I—the Almighty—in my care for them, sought out a Redeemer. I sought for him in the Divine Nature; and I "found" him in My Only Son. I endowed him with ample powers, and I covenanted that, in the weakness of his Incarnation, my hand and arm should strengthen him. I declared that Satan the enemy should not exact upon him; nor should Judas—the son of wickedness—be enabled to afflict him. The Jews, his foes, shall fall before him; they shall be smitten down in their rejection of him; they shall perish from off their land, and
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be dispersed abroad among the nations. My truth shall be ever with him; and acting in my name and power, he shall be exalted and glorified amongst men.—William Hill Tucker.

Verse 22. The enemy shall not exact upon him. The allusion appears to us to be made to a cruel and unjust creditor, who exacts not only his just debts, but some exaggerated demand, with usurious interest, which was not permitted.—Williams, quoted by Ed. of Calvin.

Verse 25. I will set his hand also in the sea, and his right hand in the rivers. That is, he should reign from the Mediterranean to the Euphrates; figuratively expressed by his left hand being extended to the sea, and his right hand to the rivers. A similar expression is used, according to Curtius, by the Scythian ambassadors to Alexander. "If", said they, "the gods had given thee a body as great as thy mind, the whole world would not be able to contain thee. Thou wouldst reach with one hand to the east, and with the other to the west."—Kitto's Pictorial Bible.

Verse 25. I will set his hand also in the sea and his right hand in the rivers. A certain artist was in the habit of saying that he should represent Alexander in such a manner, that in one hand he should hold a city and from the other pour a river. Christ is represented here as of immense stature, higher than all mountains, with one hand holding the earth, and the other the sea, while from Eastern sea to Western he extends his arms.—Le Blanc.

Verse 26. He shall cry unto me, thou art my father. When did David call God his Father? It is striking that we do not find anywhere in the Old Testament that the patriarchs or prophets called God their Father. You do not find them addressing Him as Father: they did not know him as such. This verse is unintelligible in reference to David; but in regard to the True David it is exactly what he did say,—"My Father, and your Father; my God, and your God." Never until Christ uttered these words, never until he appeared on earth in humanity as the Son of God, did any man or any child of humanity address God in this endearing character. It was after Christ said, "I ascend unto my Father, and your Father", that believers were enabled to look up to God and to say, "Abba, Father". Here you see distinctly that this applies to Christ. He was the first to say this: David did not say it. If there were no other proof in the whole Psalm, that one clause would be a demonstration to me that no other man than the Lord Jesus Christ can be here spoken of.—Capel Molyneux, 1855.

Verse 26. My Father. Christ commenced his labours by referring to his Father, for in Lu 2:49 he says, "Wist ye not that I must be about my Father's business?"
and his last words were, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit"; and through his whole life he most constantly addressed God as his Father. *He shall cry unto me: Thou art my Father,* as far as my divinity is concerned. *My God,* as far as my humanity is concerned; *the support of my salvation,* as regards my mortality.—Bellarmine.

**Verse 26-28.** Christ had a command to be a sufferer, and a body prepared him for that purpose; so he had likewise a command to be an advocate, and a life given him, and a throne prepared for him at the right hand of God to that end. This commission is contained in the words before us; and this after his exaltation, Ps 89:24-25. Yet for the full completing of it, Ps 89:27 the matter of the plea is here mentioned, *Thou art the rock of my salvation,* the foundation, the first cause, of all thy salvation I have wrought in the world, being the first mover of it, and promising the acceptance of me in the performance of what was necessary for it. As he hath authority to cry to God, so he hath an assurance of the prevalence of his cry, in regard of the stability of the covenant of mediation, which shall stand fast with him, or be faithful to him: *my mercy will I keep for him for evermore,* Ps 89:28. The treasures of my mercy are reserved only to be opened and dispensed by him: and the enjoying of his spiritual seed for ever, and the establishing of his own throne thereby, is the promised fruit of this cry, Ps 89:28.—Stephen Charnock.

**Verse 27.** *I will make him my firstborn.* First, because he is first in the order of predestination; for it is through him, as through the head, that we are predestinated, as we read in Eph 1:1-23. Secondly, because he is first in the second generation to life everlasting, whence he is called (Col 1:18.) *the firstborn from the dead,* and in Re 1:5, *the first begotten of the dead;* and, thirdly, because he had the rights of the firstborn; for *he was appointed heir of all things;* and he was made not only firstborn, but also, *high above the kings of the earth;* that is, Prince of the kings of the earth, and King of kings.—Bellarmine.

**Verse 27.** *Also I will make him my firstborn, higher than the kings of the, earth.* This promise plainly implies superiority of a nature similar to what was enjoyed of old by the eldest son of a family—the birthright privileges and blessings, which consisted principally in three important particulars: First, A double portion of the parent's earthly possessions, De 21:17. Secondly. Rule or authority over the younger branches of the family, 2Ch 21:3; and Thirdly, The exercise of the priesthood, because God claimed all the firstborn as his, and in their stead he appointed the Levites to do the priest's office, Nu 8:14-17. But, whilst it is literally true that Jesus was the firstborn son of his virgin mother, and on that account entitled to the customary privileges, the promise in the 89th
Psalm (Ps 89:1-52) gives intimation of something specific and unusual. David was the youngest son of Jesse, the lowest on the list of a numerous family,—the very last individual among them who could have expected exaltation over all others. But, notwithstanding these natural disadvantages, he was God's choice; and by referring to the Scripture history it would be easy to show in a variety of particulars, how the promise made to David, *I will make him my firstborn*, was literally and remarkably fulfilled in the son of Jesse. In like manner Jesse, to all human appearance, entering the world as heir apparent only to the poverty of Mary and her espoused husband, was far removed from every prospect of realizing that combination of royal and sacerdotal prerogative, which nevertheless was made stare to him by the promise of his heavenly Father: "I will make him *my* firstborn." The pronoun "*my"* gives great emphasis to the promise, but this word is interpolated; and however truly it conveys an idea of the unspeakable superiority which belongs to Jesus Christ as the result of his relationship with God, still we shall find that, even without this important pronoun, the promise simply of being "firstborn" has a sublimity and grandeur about it which needs neither ornament nor addition. The great Jehovah, the Maker and the Owner and the Ruler of the universe, hath said respecting his Christ, "I will make him my firstborn"; that is, I will constitute him the chief of all creatures, and the depository of all power, and the possessor of all privileges, and the heir of all creation. By way of excellence, he is the firstborn, "higher than all the kings of the earth,"—enjoying priority in point of time, and precedence in point of place.—*David Pitcairn, in "The Anointed Saviour", 1846.*

**Verse 27.** *My firstborn.* In the Hebrew idiom all kings were *the sons of God:* but David is the chief of these, God's *firstborn.* The Greeks had a similar mode of expressing themselves. Kings were the nurslings of Jupiter.—*Alexander Geddes.*

**Verse 28.** *My mercy will I keep for him for evermore.* How will he keep his mercy for Christ for evermore? Very simply, I think. Is not Christ the Fountain of all mercy to us? Is it not the mercy of God the Father flowing to us through Christ that we enjoy? Is he not the Depository of it all? God says, then, I will keep it for him; for ever and ever shall it be lodged in Christ, and Isis people shall enjoy it throughout eternity.—*Capel Molyneux, 1855.*

**Verse 28-30.** Here is comfort to those who are true branches, and continue to bring forth fruit in the midst of all the trials that befall them, that God will not suffer them to be cut off by their corruption. If anything in them should provoke God to do it, it must be sin. Now for that, you see how Christ promises that God will take order therewith, and will purge it out of them. This is the
covenant made with David, (as he was a type of Christ, with whom the same covenant is made sure and firm,) that *if his seed forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments*,—What! presently turn them out of doors, and cut them off, as those he meant to have no more to do with? What! nothing but utter rejection? Is there no means of reclaiming them? Never a rod in the house? Yes—*then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes, whip out their stubbornness and sinfulness; but my loving kindness will I not utterly take from him* as I did from Saul, as it is in 1Ch 17:13. Let the saints consider this, that they may return when they are fallen, and submit to him and his nature, and suffer him to do what he will with them, and endure cutting, and lancing, and burning, so long as he cuts them not off; endure chastening, and all his dealings else, knowing that all the fruit is but to take away the sin, to make them "partakers of his holiness"; and "if by any means", as Paul speaks of himself, (Php 3:11), be the means what it will, it is no matter. And God, if at any time he seems to cut thee off, yet it is but as the incestuous Corinthian was cut off, `that the flesh might be destroyed, and the spirit saved.'—*Thomas Goodwin.*

**Verse 29.** "His seed" and "throne" are coupled together, as if his throne could not stand if his seed did fail. If his subjects should perish, what would he be king of? If his members should consume, what would he be head of?—*Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 30.** *If his children forsake my law.* An objection is supposed: `Suppose this seed who are included in the covenant fall into transgression, how shall the covenant stand fast then?' The covenant, with the seed, shall stand for ever, but the seed must be a holy seed. Then the objector supposes—`Suppose the seed become unholy?' Well, God explains—"If his children forsake my law, and walk not in my judgments"—that is, if the seed practically fall away—"If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments; then will I visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes. Nevertheless my lovingkindness will I not take from him, nor suffer my faithfulness to fail." Mark the case. What is it that God will do? The case supposed is that the seed of Christ forsakes the law and breaks his statutes. I need not say to you that that is realized every day. These are not the ungodly or the unconverted that are spoken of, but God's own children. Do you say, `Can they be guilty of breaking God's statutes, and forsaking God's law?' We do it every day. There is no single day of our lives that we do not do it. . . .

How astonished many would be, if they knew what the real case was of those perhaps whom they admire, and think highly advanced and exalted in the Divine life, if they were to know the falls, the wretched falls, falls in heart, in
word and in practice; if they were to know the deep distress that the children of God, who are far advanced as they suppose in the Divine life, are continually suffering from the effect of such transgression! That is exactly what God says; he comes and contemplates such a case, and he says, "If they break my statutes, and keep not my commandments, then"—what? What will God do? Some people say, "Then God will leave them." Those who object to the doctrine of final perseverance say this: "It is true he will preserve the believer from the toils of the Devil and the temptations of the world, but not from the breaking forth of his own natural evil." He may be betrayed by that, and finally lost. God exactly meets that case; he contemplates the worst case—actual transgression. He says, "If a child of mine breaks my law". He does not say anything about the Devil, or the outward temptations of the world; but he says, "If they forsake my law and break my statutes." Let us be instructed by God. He does not say he will leave them and forsake them. Mark what he will do! He say—"I will visit their transgressions with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes." That is the provision which God has made in his covenant: and it is delightful to see how God has contemplated our case to the uttermost. There is nothing in our history that God has not met in the covenant with Christ. If you are in union with Christ, and a partaker of the covenant, your case is met in every conceivable emergency. Nothing can befall you which is not contemplated—nothing which God has not provided for. Even if you fall, God has provided for it; but take heed; the provision involves much that will be terrible and desperately painful to your mind. There is nothing to encourage sin about it; there is nothing to give us license, nothing to lead a man to boast, "I am safe at last." Be it so: but safe how? How will God secure their safety? "I will visit their transgression with the rod, and their iniquity with stripes."—Capel Molyneux.

**Verse 30.** *If his children forsake my law.* If they fall into sins of commission; if they shoot beyond the mark. *And walk not in my judgements.* If they fall into sins of omission, and shoot short. Where note that every transgression and disobedience (that is, every commission and omission) receiveth a just recompense of reward, Heb 2:2.—John Trapp.

**Verse 30.** *His children.* wynb, his sons, i.e. Christians, born through the griefs of Christ on the cross, like the pangs of one in travail.—Geier.

**Verse 30.** A man may forsake the doctrines of the Gospel. He may fall into great errors, great aberrations from Truth; he may forsake the ordinances of the Lord's house, though he sees God's word is clear upon the point. He esteems those things as nothing worth, which the Lord esteems so well, that he has given them to his church as a sacred deposit, which she is to convey down to the last posterity till time shall be no more. And what is still more—a man may
forsake for a time the principles of the precious Gospel of the living God. But I can imagine a state still more solemnly affecting than even this. It is a part of God's wisdom, (and it is for our good that it is so—all God's wisdom is for his people's good)—it is a part of the wisdom of God, that sin should lead to sin; that one neglect shall pave the way to another; that that which is bad shall lead to that which is worse, and that which is worse shall prepare the way for that which is worst...The longer I live, the more I am brought to this—to know that there is not a sin that ever was committed, but I need the grace of God to keep me from it.—James Harrington Evans.

Verses 30-34. God here says two things: first, that he will chastise them, next, that he will not, on that account, cast them out of his covenant. O wonderful tempering of the kindness and severity of God! In which he finds his own glory, and believers their safety! The heavenly Father loves the blood and marks of his Christ which he sees upon them, and the remains of faith and godliness which are preserved hidden in the depth of their heart, this is why he will not cast them off. On the other hand, he considers that it accords neither with his wisdom nor his holiness to bestow his grace and salvation upon those who do not relent for having cast off his law and given themselves up to iniquity. In order to harmonize these opposite desires, he takes the rod, and chastises them, to arouse their conscience, and to excite their faith; to restore them, by the repentance which his discipline produces, to such a state, as that he may be able to bestow upon them, without shame, the blessings he has promised to the children of his Son; just as a wise parent, by moderate and judicious correction gradually draws back his son from those irregularities of life into which he has plunged; and thereby preserves his honour, and himself the pleasure of being able to love and please him without misgiving. Or, as a skilful surgeon, by the pain which his knife, or cautery, or bitter potions, cause his patient, saves his life, and wards off death.—Jean Daille.

Verses 30-34. When our heavenly Father is, as it were, forced to put forth his anger, he then makes use of a father's rod, not an executioner's axe. He will neither break his children's bones, nor his own covenant. He lashes in love, in measure, in pity, and compassion.—Thomas Lye, 1621-1684.

Verse 32. Then will I visit their transgression with the rod, etc. He does not simply say, I will smite them; but, I will visit with the rod. It is one thing merely to smite, it is another thing to smite by visiting. For visitation implies oversight and paternal care. The metaphor is taken from those who undertake to watch over the sick, or train up children, or tend sheep. He does not say, I will visit them with the rod; but, I will visit their transgression with the rod. We
ought to think perpetually, what it is the rod of God visits in us, that we may confess our transgressions, and amend our lives.—*Musculus*.

**Verse 33.** *Nevertheless my lovingkindness*, etc. Except the covenant of grace had this article in it for remission of sin and for fatherly correction, to drive unto repentance, that the penitent person coming to God by faith might have sin forgiven him and lovingkindness shown to him; this covenant should fail us no less than the covenant of works.—*David Dickson*.

**Verse 33.** *I will not utterly take from him.* Why "from him?" Because all God's lovingkindness to his people is centred in Christ. Does God love you? it is because he loves Christ; you are one with Christ. Your transgressions are your own; they are separate from Christ; but God's love is not your own; it is Christ's: you receive it because you are one with him. How beautifully that is distinguished here—"If they transgress, I will punish *them*; but my lovingkindness will I not take from *him*"—in whom alone they find it; and in union with whom alone they enjoy it.—*Capel Molyneux*.

**Verse 33.** From him. The words, "*Nevertheless my lovingkindness will not utterly take from him*", are worthy of consideration; for the question being about those who are chastised, it would appear that he should have written, from them, and not from him. But the prophet has thus worded it, because, being the children and members of his Christ, the favours which God bestows upon us belong to him in some manner; and it seems that the Psalmist wishes to show us hereby, that it is in Jesus Christ, and for love of him alone, that God bestows favours on us. And that which follows, in Ps 89:34 verse, agrees herewith,—"*My covenant will I not break*"—for it is properly to Jesus Christ, on account of his admirable obedience, that God the Father has promised to be merciful to our iniquities, and never to leave one of those to perish who are in covenant with him.—*Jean Daille*.

**Verse 33.** *Nor suffer my faithfulness to fail.* Man's faith may fail him sometimes, but God's faithfulness never fails him: God will not suffer his faithfulness to fail. God's operations may have an aspect that way; the devil's temptations, and our unbelieving hearts, may not only make us think so, but persuade us it is so, whereas it cannot be so, for the Lord will not suffer it, he will not make a lie in his truth or faithfulness; so the Hebrew is: he is a God that cannot lie, he is Truth, speaks truth, and not one of his promises can or shall fail; which may afford strong consolation unto all that are under any promise of God.—*William Greenhill*. 
Verse 34. *My covenant will I not break.* He had said above, *If the children of David break my statutes;* and now, alluding to that breach, he declares that he will not requite them as they requite him, *My covenant will I not break,* implying, that although his people may not altogether act in a manner corresponding to their vocation, as they ought to do, he will not suffer his covenant to be broken and disannulled on account of their fault, because he will promptly and effectually prevent this in the way of blotting out their sins by a gratuitous pardon.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 35. *Once have I sworn by my holiness.* He lays here his holiness to pledge for the assurance of his promise, as the attribute most dear to him, most valued by him, as though no other could give an assurance parallel to it, in this concern of an everlasting redemption, which is there spoken of. He that swears, swears by a greater than himself. God having no greater than himself, swears by himself; and swearing here by his holiness seems to equal that single to all his other attributes, as if he were more concerned in the honour of it than of all the rest. It is as if he should have said, Since I have not a more excellent perfection to swear by than that of my holiness, I lay this to pawn for your security, and bind myself by that which I will never part with, were it possible for me to be stripped of all the rest. It is a tacit imprecation of himself, If I lie unto David, let me never be counted holy, or thought righteous enough to be trusted by angels or men. This attribute he makes most of.—*Stephen Charnock.*

Verse 36. *His seed shall endure for ever.* They shall continue for ever in three senses. *First.* In the succession of their race to the end of the world. It will never be cut off.—"The Church is in danger!" *What Church?* "Upon this rock", says he, "I will build my Church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it." Yea, his people shall continue to increase in number and excellency. We shall leave the world better than we entered it: and so will our *children;* till Jerusalem shall be established, and be made a praise in the whole earth. *Secondly.* In their religious character to the end of their own life. If left to themselves, we could not be sure of their persevering to the end of a day or an hour. But they are kept by the power of God, through faith, unto salvation. He upholdeth them with his hand. They shall hold on their way. In all their dangers they shall be more than conquerors. *Thirdly.* In their glorified state, through eternal ages. The world passeth away, and the lusts thereof; but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever. All other greatness is only for life: it is frequently less durable—at death it *ends.* But *then,* the Christian's greatness—I will not say, begins; for it began the moment he prayed—but then it continues, increases, and is perfected.—*William Jay.*
Verse 37. *It shall be established for ever as the moon.* This clause Kimchi expounds not only of the perpetuity, but of the quality and condition of David's Kingdom, after this fashion: If his children be good, they shall be like the moon, when full and shining; if bad, like the moon waning and obscure. Nevertheless the kingdom itself shall not cease, just as the moon does not go out of existence, whilst it is obscure, but lasts perpetually.—*Musculus.*

Verse 37. *And as a faithful witness in heaven.* (New Translation) *And as the rainbow's faithful sign.* The rainbow is not expressly mentioned in the original, which speaks only of "the faithful witness in heaven." Some commentators understand the "witness" thus mentioned to be no other than the moon itself. I prefer, however, the interpretation that fixes it on the rainbow, which God after the deluge appointed as a "sign" or "witness" of his mercy in Christ. Ge 9:12-17. Conformably to this appointment, the Jews, when they behold the rainbow, are said to bless God, who remembers his covenant and is faithful to his promise. And the tradition of this its designation to proclaim comfort to mankind was strong among the heathens: for, according to the mythology of the Greeks, the "rainbow" was the daughter of "wonder", "a sign to mortal men", and regarded, upon its appearance, as a messenger of the celestial deities. Thus Homer with remarkable conformity to the Scripture account speaks of the "rainbow", which "Jove hath set in the cloud, a sign to men."—*Richard Mant.*

Verse 38. *But thou hast cast off,* etc. The complaining of the saints meanwhile is so exaggerated, that carnal feeling makes itself more apparent in them, than faith...Yet such is the goodness of God, He is not offended with these complaints, provided faith is not altogether extinguished, or succumbs.—*Mollerus.*

Verse 39. *Thou hast profaned his crown,* etc. The crown of a king, (like that of the high priest, on which was inscribed "holiness to the Lord") (Ex 28:36) was a sacred thing, and therefore to cast it in the dust was to profane it.—*A.R. Fausset.*

Verse 40. *Hedges* and *strong holds.* Both of these may refer to the appointments of a vineyard in which the king was the vine. It was usually fenced around with a stone wall, and in it was a small house or tower, wherein a keeper was set to keep away intruders. When the wall, or hedge, was thrown down, every passer by plucked at the fruit, and when the tower was gone the vineyard was left open to the neighbours who could do as they would with the vines. When the church is no longer separated from the world, and her divine Keeper has no more a dwelling place within her, her plight is wretched indeed.—*C.H.S.*
Verse 43. Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, etc. The arms and military prowess of thy people are no longer of any use to them; Thou art against them, and therefore they are fallen. In what a perilous and hopeless situation must that soldier be who, defending his life against his mortal foe, has his sword broken, or its edge turned; or, in modern warfare, whose gun misses fire! The Gauls, when invaded by the Romans, had no method of hardening iron; at every blow their swords bent, so that they were obliged, before they could strike again, to put them under their foot or over their knee, to straighten them; and in most cases, before this could be done, their better armed foe had taken away their life! The edge of their sword was turned, so that they could not stand in battle; and hence the Gauls were conquered by the Romans.—Adam Clarke.

Verse 43. Thou hast also turned the edge of his sword, that it cannot do execution as it has done; and what is worse, thou hast "turned the edge" of his spirit, and taken off his courage, and hast not made him to stand, as he used to do, in the day of battle. The spirit of men is what the Father and Former of spirits makes them; nor can we stand with any strength or resolution, farther than God is pleased to uphold us. If men's hearts fail them, it is God that dispirits them; but it is sad with the church when those cannot stand that should stand up for it.—Matthew Henry.

Verse 45. The days of his youth hast thou shortened. Our kings have not reigned half their days, nor lived out half their lives. The four last kings of Judea reigned but a short time, and either died by the sword or in captivity. Jehoahaz reigned only three months, and was led captive to Egypt, where he died. Jehoiakim reigned only eleven years, and was tributary to the Chaldeans, who put him to death, and cast his body into the common sewer. Jehoiachim, reigned three months and ten days, and was led captive to Babylon, where he continued in prison to the time of Evil merodach, who, though he loosed him from prison, never invested him with any power. Zedekiah, the last of all, had reigned only eleven years when he was taken, his eyes put out, was loaded with chains, and thus carried to Babylon. Most of these kings died a violent and premature death. Thus the "days of their youth"—of their power, dignity, and life, "were shortened", and they themselves covered with shame. Selah; so it most incontestably is.—Adam Clarke.

Verse 45. Thou hast covered them with shame. Selah. Thou hast wrapped him up in the winding sheet of shame. Lord, this is true.—John Trapp.

Verses 46-47. This undoubtedly sounds like the voice of one who knows no hereafter. The Psalmist speaks as if all his hopes were bound by the grave; as if
the overthrow of the united kingdom of Judah and Ephraim had bereft him of all his joy; and as if he knew no future kingdom to compensate him with its hopes. But it would be doing cruel injustice to take him thus at his word. What we hear is the language of passion, not of sedate conviction. This is well expressed by John Howe in a famous sermon. "The expostulation (he observes) was somewhat passionate, and did proceed upon the sudden view of this disconsolate case, very abstractly considered, and by itself only; and the Psalmist did not, at that instant, look beyond it to a better and more comfortable scene of things. An eye bleared with present sorrow sees not far, nor comprehends so much at one view, as it would at another time, or as it doth presently when the tear is wiped out and its own beams have cleared it up." It would be unwarrantable, therefore, to infer from Ethan's expostulation, that the saints who lived under the early kings were strangers to the hope of everlasting life. I am inclined to go further, and to point to this very complaint as affording a presumption that there was in their hearts an irrepressible sentiment of immortality. The bird that frets and wounds itself on the bars of its cage shows thereby that its proper home is the free air. When inveterate sensuality has succeeded in quenching in a man's heart the hope of a life beyond the grave, the dreary void which succeeds utters itself, not in solemn complaints like Ethan's, but in songs of forced mirth—dismal Anacreontic songs: "Let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die."

"It is time to live if I grow old,
It is time short pleasures now to take,
Of little life the best to make,
And manage wisely the last stake."
(Anacreon's Age, as translated by Cowley.)—William Binnie.


Verse 47. Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? If I should demand of any, for what cause especially man came into the world; he would answer with the Psalmist, God did not create man in vain. Did He create man to heap up wealth together? no, for the apostle saith. "We brought nothing into this world, and it is certain that we can carry nothing out. And, having food and raiment, let us be therewith content." 1Ti 6:6-8. Did he create him to hawk after power and principality? no, for Nebuchadnezzar lusting after these, lost no less than a kingdom. Did He create him to eat, drink and play? no, for Seneca, though an heathen saith, major sum, etc., I am greater, and born to greater things, than that I should be a vile slave of my senses. What then is the proper end of man? That
we should live to the praise of the glory of his grace wherewith he hath made us freely accepted in his Beloved. Eph 1:6.—William Pulley.

Verse 47. Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? If we think that God hath made man "in vain", because so many have short lives, and long afflictions in this world, it is true that God "hath made" them so; but it is not true, that therefore they are "made in vain". For those whose days are few and full of trouble, yet may glorify God, and do some good, may keep their communion with God, and go to heaven, and then they are not made in vain. If we think that God has made men in vain, because the most of men neither serve him nor enjoy him, it is true, that as to themselves, they were made in vain, better for them they had not been born, than not be "born again"; but it was not owing to God, that they were made in vain, it was owing to themselves; nor are they made in vain as to him; for he has "made all things for himself, even the wicked for the day of evil", and those whom he is not glorified by he will be glorified upon.—Matthew Henry.

Verse 47. Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? When I add to the consideration of my short time, that of dying mankind, and behold a dark and deadly shade universally overspreading the world, the whole species of human creatures vanishing, quitting the stage round about me, and disappearing almost as soon as they show themselves; have I not a fair and plausible ground for that (seemingly rude) challenge? Why is there so unaccountable a phenomenon? Such a creature made to no purpose; the noblest part of this inferior creation brought forth into being without any imaginable design? I know not how to untie the knot, upon this only view of the case, or avoid the absurdity. It is hard sure to design the supposal, (or what it may yet seem hard to suppose), "that all men were made in vain."—John Howe.

Verse 47. Wherefore hast thou made all men in vain? Two thoughts crush us—Man was made to mourn, and man was made in vain. Yes, this thought is painfully pressed upon us,—man is "made in vain!" In how many particulars, especially when we survey that large range of characters to which we may give the denomination of wasted lives; there to behold peerless genius frittering itself away upon unworthy attainments, upon worthless performances; imagination that might adorn truth, if that were possible; wit, that might select and discriminate the true from the false; and eloquence that might enforce the true;—where do we find these? Unsatisfactory and miserable world, may we well exclaim, where nothing is real, and nothing is realised: when I consider how our lives are passed in the struggle for existence; when I consider the worry of life, where it is not a woe—the woe, where it is not a worry; when I consider how the millions pass their time in a mere toil for sensual objects, and
that those to whom the sad contradiction of life never comes, are the most wretched of all; did they but know it; when I consider the millions of distorted existences; and the many millions!—the greater number of the world by far—who wander Christless, loveless, hopeless, over the broad highway of it; when I consider life in many of the awakened as a restless dream, as children beating the curtain and crying in the night; when I consider how many questions recur for ever to us; and will not be silenced, and cannot be answered; when I consider the vanity of the philosopher's inquisitiveness, and the end of Royalty in the tomb; when I look round on the region of my own joys, and know how short their lease is, and that their very ineffableness is a blight upon them; when I consider how little the best can do, and that none can do anything well; and, finally, when I consider the immeasurable immensity of thought within, unfulfilled, and the goading restlessness, I can almost exclaim with our unhappy poet Byron—

"Count all the joys thine hours have seen,
Count all thy days from anguish free,
And know, whatever thou last been,
It were something better not to be."
—E. Paxton Hood, in "Dark Sayings on a Harp", 1865.

Verses 47-48. In these verses, the fundamental condition of Israel's blessedness is found to be an acknowledgment of the total unprofitableness of the flesh. Resurrection is the basis upon which the sure mercies of David rest availably for faith (Ac 13:34). This is rather implied than directly stated in the present Psalm.—Arthur Pridham.

Verse 48. What man. Mi gheber, says the original; it is not Is he, which is the first name of man, in the Scriptures, and signifies nothing but a sound, a voice, a word, a musical air which dies, and evaporates; what wonder if man, that is but Ishe, a sound, should die too? It is not Adam, which is another name of man, and signifies nothing but red earth; let it be earth red with blood, (with that murder which we have done upon ourselves,) let it be earth red with blushing, (so the word is used in the original), with a conscience of our own infirmity, what wonder if man, that is but earth, that is a burden to his neighbours, to his friends, to his kindred, to himself, to whom all others, and to whom myself desires death, what wonder if he die? But this question is framed upon more of these names; not Ishe, not Adam, not Enos; but it is Mi gheber, Quis vir; which is the word always signifying a man accomplished in all
excellencies, a man accompanied with all advantages; fame, and a good opinion justly conceived, keeps him from being Ishe, a mere sound, standing only upon popular acclamation; innocency and integrity keeps him from being Adam, red earth, from bleeding, or blushing at anything he hath done; that holy and religious art of arts, which St. Paul professed. *That he knew how to want, and how to abound,* keeps him from being Enos, miserable or wretched in any fortune; he is gheber, a great man, and a good man, a happy man, and a holy man, and yet *Mi gheber, Quis homo,* this man must see death.—*John Donne.*

**Verse 48.** This Psalm is one of those twelve that are marked in the forehead with *Maschil;* that is, *a Psalm giving instruction.* It consisteth of as many verses as the year doth of weeks, and hath like the year, its summer and winter. The summer part is the former; wherein, the church having reaped a most rich crop (the best blessings of Heaven and earth) the Psalmist breaketh forth into the praises of their gracious Benefactor, *I will sing of the mercies of the Lord for ever:* so it begins, and so he goeth on a great way. Who now would expect anything but mercies, and singing, and summer all the way? But summer ceaseth, and winter commences, at Ps 89:38: *But thou hast cast off and abhorred, thou hast been wroth, with thine anointed.* Mercies and singing are now turned into troubles and mourning. But nothing shall you hear but bitter querimonies and expostulations till you come to the last verse. There the good man's come to himself again. Though God were angry with his people, he cannot part with God in discontent. Though God had laden them with crosses, he lifts up his head, and presents God with blessing; *Blessed be the Lord forevermore. Amen, and Amen.* He blesseth him as well for winter as for summer, for troubles as for mercies. And thus the last verse of Psalm having as much affinity with the first in matter, as the last day of the year hath with the first in season; if we circle the Psalm, and bring both ends together, we find a fit resemblance between the year and it. The text is one of the Psalmist's winter drops; a black line from that pen, which erstwhile was so filled with joy, and wrote nothing but rubrics. He complains in the next precedent verse, of the brevity of his own life (it was like a winter's day, very short); in this, of the instability of man's life; as though he had said, I am not the only mortal. Other men's lives, though haply clothed with more comforts than mine, are altogether as mortal as mine; for his interrogations are equivalent to strong negations. As to *see sleep* is to sleep; so to *see* or *taste death,* is to die. There is no surviving such a sight Death says, as God once to Moses, "There shall no man *see me and live."* Ex 33:20.—*Thomas Du-gard, in a Funeral Sermon, 1648.*

**Verse 48.** Death spares no rank, no condition of men. Kings as well as subjects, princes as well as the meanest rustics are liable to this fatal stroke. The lofty
cedars and low shrubs; palaces and cottages are alike here. Indeed, we read that Julius Caesar bid the master of the ship wherein he was sailing, take courage notwithstanding the boisterous tempest, because he had Caesar and his fortunes embarked in his vessel, as much as to say, the element on which they then were could not prove fatal to an emperor, to so great a one as he was. Our William surnamed Rufus said, he never heard of a king that was drowned. And Charles the Fifth, at the Battle of Tunis, being advised to retire when the great ordnance began to play, told them that it was never known that an emperor was slain with great shot, and so rushed into the battle. But this we are sure of, it was never known or heard that any king or crowned head escaped the blow of death at last. The sceptre cannot keep off ‘the arrows that fly by day, and the sickness which wastes at noonday; ‘it is no screen, no guard against the shafts of death. We have heard of great tyrants and usurpers who vaunted that they had the power of life and death, and as absolutely disposed of men as Domitian did of flies; but we have heard likewise that in a short time (and generally the shorter the more furious they have been) their sceptres are fallen out of their hands; their crowns are toppled off their heads, and they are themselves snatched away by the King of Terrors. Or, if we speak of those royal personages that are mild and gentle, and like Vespasian are the darlings and delight of the people, yet these no less than others have their fatal hour, and their regal honour and majesty are laid in the dust. The King doth not die, may be a Common law maxim, but it is a falsehood according to the laws of God and Nature, and the established constitution of heaven. For God himself who hath said, Ye are gods, hath also added, Ye shall die like men. In the Escurial the palace of the Kings of Spain, is their cemetery too; there their royal ashes lie. So in the place where the kings and queens of England are crowned, their predecessors are entombed: to tell them, as it were, that their crowns exempt them not from the grave, and that there is no greatness and splendour that can guard them from the arrest of death. He regards the rich and wealthy no more than the poor and necessitous: he snatches persons out of their mansion houses and hereditary seats, as well as out of almshouses and hospitals. His dominion is over masters as well as servants, parents as well as children, superiors as well as inferiors.—John Edwards.

Verse 48.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,  
And all that beauty, all that wealth ever gave, Await alike the inevitable hour—  
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.  
Can storied urn, or animated bust,  
Back to its mansions call the fleeting breath? Can Honour's voice provoke the
silent dust,
Or Flattery soothe the dull cold ear of Death?—Thomas Gray, 1716-1771.

 Verse 50. *How I do bear in my bosom the reproach*, etc. I take the reproaches of thy servants and thine anointed, (1) as if they reproached me in mine own particular; or, (2) in that they lie so heavy upon my heart; or, (3) in that I am resolved quietly to endure them, and to swallow them down in silence, as not being indeed able to shake them off; because in the eye of reason our condition is at present so contrary to what we waited for; or, (4) in that their reproaches came not to his ears by hear say only, but were openly to his face cast as it were into his bosom.—Arthur Jackson.

 Verse 50. I do bear in, my bosom the reproach, etc. The reproach of religion and of the godly doth lie near, and should lie near, the heart of every lively member of the church.—David Dickson.

 Verse 51. *They have reproached the footsteps of thine anointed*. This phrase is obscure in diction, and therefore variously interpreted

1. Some by the *footsteps of Christ*, judge that his advent in the flesh is meant: others refer the words to David, and take the meaning to be, imitation of him. The first exposition yields this sense: Be mindful, O Lord, of the reproach of thy enemies wherewith they insult our expectation of thy Anointed, and scoff at his advent as if it would never come.

2. The second interpretation is this: Recollect, O Lord, what contempt thy enemies heap upon us on account of thy servant David, because we fondly cherish his memory and his example, and nourish the hope of thy covenant with him, clinging tenaciously thereto...Thirdly, this clause may be so interpreted that by twbqe, that is, the heel, we may understand the extremities of the Kingdom of Christ, of David. Thus we may imagine the enemies of God threw this in the teeth of the people of Israel, that they had already come to the end and extremity of the Kingdom of David.—Musculus.

 Verse 51 (second clause). The *Chaldee* has: "They have scoffed at the tardiness of Thy Messiah's footsteps." So *Kimchi*: "He delays so long, they say He will never come." Compare 2Pe 3:4,9. The Arabic *aqaba* is used in the sense of "delaying."—William Kay.

 Verse 51. *The footsteps*, or foot soles, that is, the ways, life, actions, and sufferings, Ps 56:6 Ps 49:5. This referred to Christ, respecteth the oracle, Ge 3:15, that the Serpent should bruise the foot sole of the woman's seed; referred
to Christians which follow his footsteps, in suffering and dying with him, that we may be glorified with him (1Pe 2:21 Ro 8:17); it notes the scandal of the Cross of Christ, "to the Jews a stumbling block, and to the Greeks foolishness." (1Co 1:23 1Pe 4:13-14.) The Chaldee understands it of the slackness of the footsteps.—Henry Ainsworth.

Verse 52. Blessed be the Lord for evermore. Amen, and Amen. Victory begins to shine in the phrase, Blessed be Jehovah for evermore. Amen, and Amen. Some think that these words are not the words of the Psalmist, because they are of opinion that they do not agree with the preceding, but were written by another, or added by the Collector of the Psalms as a concluding doxology; or if the Psalmist wrote them, he did so merely in finishing his prayer. But it is a matter of the greatest moment; for it indicates the victory of faith, since he observes that after that grief, the reproach of the heel is gloriously removed that the Messiah may remain a victor for ever, having bruised the serpent's head, and taken away from him in perpetuity all his power of hurting. That this should certainly take place, he adds the seal of faith again and again: "Amen, and Amen."—James Alting, 1618-1679.

Verse 52. This doxology belongs alike to all the Psalms of the Third Book, and ought not to be treated as if it were merely the last verse of the Psalm to which it adjoins. It ought to be set forth in such a shape as would enable and invite God's people to sing it as a separate formula of praise, or in connection with any other Psalm.—William Binnie.

Verse 52. As to the words Amen and Amen, I readily grant that they are here employed to mark the end of the third book of the Psalms.—John Calvin.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1.

1. Mercies celebrated. When?—"for ever."

2. By whom?—by those who are the subjects of them.

3. Therefore they must live for ever to celebrate them.

4. Faithfulness declared. (a) To our own generation. (b) To succeeding generations by its influence upon others.
Verse 2.—

1. The Testimony.

(a) To the constancy of Mercy: (1.) builds up its trophies every moment. (2.) It preserves them for ever.

(b) To the constancy of Faithfulness. It remains as the ordinances of heaven.

2. Its Confirmation. "I have said", etc., said it,

(a) Upon the ground of Scripture.
(b) of experience.
(c) of reason.
(d) of observation of others.

Verses 3-4.

1. The Covenant made. With whom?—with David and in him with David's Lord and Son. The true David—the chosen one—the servant of the Father in redemption.

2. For what?—

(a) for his seed. He should have a seed and that seed should be established.

(b) for himself, "his throne", etc.

3. The Covenant confirmed.

(a) By decree. "I have made", etc.
(b) By promise. "I will establish."
(c) By oath. "I have sworn."

Verse 6.—We have a comparison between God and the most excellent in heaven and earth—challenge both worlds.

1. The true God, sovereign of heaven and earth is incomparably great in his BEING and EXISTENCE;

(a) because his being is of himself eternal;
(b) because he is a perfect being;
(c) because he is independent;
(d) because he is unchangeable.

2. God is incomparably great in his ATTRIBUTES and PERFECTIONS.

(a) In his holiness;
(b) in his wisdom and knowledge;
(c) in his power;
(d) in his justice;
(e) in his patience;
(f) in his love and goodness.

3. God is incomparably great in his WORKS—creation; providence; redemption, and human salvation.—Theophilus Jones, 1830.


Verses 6-7.

1. In creation God is far above other beings. Ps 89:6.

2. In Redemption he is far above himself in creation. Ps 89:7.

Verses 9-10. God's present rule in the midst of confusion, and rebellion; and his ultimate overthrow of all adverse forces.

Verse 11.

1. God's possession of heaven, the model of his possession of earth.

2. God's possession of earth most certain, and its manifestation in the future most sure.

3. The course of action suggested to his people by the two facts.

Verse 12. The joy of creation in its Creator.

Verse 14.
1. The Equity of the divine government—"justice", etc. No creature can eventually be unjustly dealt with under his dominion, and his kingdom ruleth over all.

2. The Sovereignty of the divine government. Truth before mercy. Mercy founded upon truth. "Thou wilt perform the truth to Jacob and the mercy to Abraham." The covenant made in mercy to Abraham is fulfilled in truth to Jacob.

Verse 15.

1. The gospel is a joyful sound. Good tidings, etc.

2. It is a joyful sound to those who know it, hear it, believe it, love it, obey it.

3. They to whom it is a joyful sound are blessed. "They shall walk", etc.

Verse 15.

1. There is a theoretical knowledge of the gospel.

2. An experimental knowledge, and,

3. A practical knowledge
   —W. Drasfield, 1859.

Verse 16.—

1. Exultation.
   (a) "In thy name", etc., as rich in mercy as the God of salvation—of all grace—of all consolation.

   (b) At what season—"all the day", morning, noon, and night.

2. Exaltation. "In thy righteousness", etc.
   (a) How not exalted. Not in their own righteousness.

   (b) How exalted. "In thy", etc. Procured for them—by a divine person (thy)—imputed to them. Ours, though thine. The righteousness of God as God could not exalt us, but his righteousness as God man can. Exalted above hell, above earth, above Paradise, above angels. Exalted to friends of God—children of God—one with God, to heaven.
**Verse 16.** (second clause).—Consider,

1. What the believer is exalted *above or from*, by God's righteousness.

(a) It exalts him above the law.
(b) Above the world.
(c) Above the power and malice of Satan.
(d) Above death.
(e) Above all accusations (Ro 8:33-34.)

2. *To* what happiness or dignity the believer is exalted by virtue of that righteousness.

a) To a state of peace and reconciliation with God.
(b) To sonship.
(c) To fellowship and familiarity with God, and access to him.
(d) And finally, to a state of endless glory.

—E. Erskine.

**Verse 17.**

1. The blessedness of the righteous.

(a) Their internal glory. Reliance upon divine strength.
(b) Their internal honour. "In thy favour", etc.

2. The participation in that blessedness. The *their* of the people of God becomes *our*. Their strength our horn. Happy they, who, with respect to all the privileges of the saints, can thus turn *their* into *our*.

**Verse 17.**

1. Consider our natural weakness.
2. Consider our strength in God.
3. Give God the glory of it.

**Verse 18.**

1. Jehovah—his power, self existence, and majesty—our defence.

2. The Holy One of Israel—his character, covenant character, and unity—our government.
Verse 19.

1. The work required. "Help."
   
   (a) By whom? By God himself.
   (b) For what? To reconcile God to man, and man to God.

2. The persons selected for this work.
   
   (a) Human. "Chosen out of the people."
   (b) Divine. "Thy Holy One."

3. His qualifications for the work.
   
   (a) His own ability for the office. "One that is mighty."
   (b) His appointment to it by God. "I have laid." etc. "I have chosen", etc.

Verse 19. (last clause). Election, extraction, exaltation.

Verses 20-21.

1. The Messiah would be of the seed of David. The true David.
2. He would be a servant of the Father. "My servant."
3. He would be consecrated to his office by God. "With my holy oil", etc.
4. He would perfectly fulfil it. "With whom my hand", etc.
5. He would be sustained in it by the Father. "Mine arm", etc.

Verse 22-23.

1. A prophecy of the conflict of the Messiah with Satan. Satan could not exact any debt or homage for him.

2. Of his refutation of his enemies. "I will beat down", etc. The Scribes and Pharisees were beaten down before his face.

3. Of the destruction of their city and nation. "And plague them", etc.

Verse 26. Our Lord's filial spirit, and how it was displayed.

Verse 29.

1. The subjects of Messiah's reign. "His seed."
(a) For union—his seed.
(b) For resemblance.
(c) For multitude.

2. The duration of his reign.

(a) They for ever one with him.
(b) He for ever on the throne.

Verses 30-34.

1. The persons referred to. "His children." "Ye are all the children", etc.

2. The supposition concerning them. "If his children forsake", etc.

(a) They may possibly—may fall, though not fall away.
(b) They will probably, because they are far from being perfect.
(c) They have actually: as David himself and others.

3. The threatening founded upon that supposition.

(a) Specified—"the rod—stripes." They shall smart for it sooner or later.
(b) Certified. "Then will I."

4. The qualification of the threatening. "Nevertheless", etc.

(a) The nevertheless characterized. Lovingkindness not removed, etc.
(b) Emphasised. The rod may seem to be in anger, nevertheless, etc.

There is,

1. An if.
2. A then.
3. A nevertheless.

Verse 39.

1. Providence may often seem to be at variance with promises.

2. Promises are never at variance with providence. It is the covenant of thy servant and his crown still.

Verse 39. How the throne of King Jesus may be profaned.
**Verse 40.**

1. What God had done. "Broken down", etc.

2. What he had not done. Not taken away sorrow for his departure and desire for his return.

**Verse 43.** Cases in which the sword of the gospel appears to have its edge turned.

**Verse 44-45.**

1. A prophecy that the Messiah would be meek and lowly. "Made his glory to cease."

2. Would become a servant to the Father. "Cast his throne down", etc.

3. Would be cut off in the midst of his days. "The days of his youth", etc.

4. That he would die an ignominious death. "Hast covered him", etc.

**Verse 45.** The excellence of the first days of Christianity, and in what respect their glory has departed from us.

**Verse 46.** The hand of God is to be acknowledged.

1. In the nature of affliction. "Wilt thou hide thyself", etc.

2. In the duration of affliction. "How long, Lord?"

3. In the severity of affliction. Wrath burning like fire.

4. In the issue of affliction. How long? for ever? In all these respects the words are applicable both to Christ and to his people.

**Verse 46. Remember.** The prayer of the dying thief, the troubled believer, the persecuted Christian.

**Verse 47.**

1. An appeal to divine goodness. "Remember", etc. Let not my life be all trouble and sorrow.
2. To divine wisdom. "Wherefore", etc. Was man made only to be miserable? Will not man have been made in vain if his life be but short, and that short life be nothing but sorrow?

**Verse 52.**

1. The voice. "Blessed", etc. In himself in all his works and ways—in his judgments as well as in his mercies—as the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ—"for evermore."

2. The echo, "Amen and amen." Amen, says the church on earth—says the church in heaven—say the angels of God—says the whole holy and happy universe—says eternity past and eternity to come.

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**WORK UPON THE EIGHTY-NINTH PSALM**

In the Works of John Boys, folio, pp. 805-9, there is an Exposition of a portion of this Psalm.

**HERE ENDETH THE THIRD BOOK OF THE PSALMS.**