

# **The Treasury of David**

by

**Charles H. Spurgeon**

**Vol. 3**

**Ps. 90-106 (Book 4)**

**This work is a compilation drawn, with permission, from the best on the web for viewing Spurgeon's sermons ([www.spurgeon.org](http://www.spurgeon.org)). This web site has been graciously prepared by one of Spurgeon's most able students and scholars Phil Johnson. –Thanks!**

**The Treasury of David may also be purchased in various forms:**

Pilgrim Publications, PO Box 66, Pasadena, TX 77501 has reprinted in 1983 (\$110) the 1886 seven volume edition (Funk & Wagnalls).

Hendricksen

Publishers has recently published a 3 volume version (\$60; 2005; vid [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com)). Various condensations are also available.

**This digital version was prepared by Ted Hildebrandt, 2007.**

## Table of Contents

<b>Ch. 90</b>	<b>p. 3</b>
<b>Ch. 91</b>	<b>p. 52</b>
<b>Ch. 92</b>	<b>p. 100</b>
<b>Ch. 93</b>	<b>p. 131</b>
<b>Ch. 94</b>	<b>p. 145</b>
<b>Ch. 95</b>	<b>p. 183</b>
<b>Ch. 96</b>	<b>p. 212</b>
<b>Ch. 97</b>	<b>p. 236</b>
<b>Ch. 98</b>	<b>p. 264</b>
<b>Ch. 99</b>	<b>p. 286</b>
<b>Ch. 100</b>	<b>p. 305</b>
<b>Ch. 101</b>	<b>p. 315</b>
<b>Ch. 102</b>	<b>p. 333</b>
<b>Ch. 103</b>	<b>p. 378</b>
<b>Ch. 104</b>	<b>p. 424</b>
<b>Ch. 105</b>	<b>p. 486</b>
<b>Ch. 106</b>	<b>p. 532</b>

## Psalm 90

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

---

**TITLE.** A Prayer of Moses the man of God. Many attempts have been made to prove that Moses did not write this Psalm, but we remain unmoved in the conviction that he did so. The condition of Israel in the wilderness is so preeminently illustrative of each verse, and the turns, expressions, and words are so similar to many in the Pentateuch, that the difficulties suggested are, to our mind, light as air in comparison with the internal evidence in favour of its Mosaic origin. Moses was mighty in word as well as deed, and this Psalm we believe to be one of his weighty utterances, worthy to stand side by side with his glorious oration recorded in Deuteronomy. Moses was peculiarly a man of God and God's man; chosen of God, inspired of God, honoured of God, and faithful to God in all his house, he well deserved the name which is here given him. The Psalm is called a prayer, for the closing petitions enter into its essence, and the preceding verses are a meditation preparatory to the supplication. Men of God are sure to be men of prayer. This was not the only prayer of Moses, indeed it is but a specimen of the manner in which the seer of Horeb was leant to commune with heaven, and intercede for the good of Israel. This is the oldest of the Psalms, and stands between two books of Psalms as a composition unique in its grandeur, and alone in its sublime antiquity. Many generations of mourners have listened to this Psalm when standing around the open grave, and have been consoled thereby, even when they have not perceived its special application to Israel in the wilderness and have failed to remember the far higher ground upon which believers now stand.

**SUBJECT AND DIVISION.**—Moses sings of the frailty of man, and the shortness of life, contrasting therewith the eternity of God, and founding thereon earnest appeals for compassion. The only division which will be useful separates the contemplation Ps 90:1-11 from the Ps 90:12-17 there is indeed no need to make even this break, for the unity is well preserved throughout.

---

### EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.* We must consider the whole Psalm as written for the tribes in the desert, and then we shall see the primary meaning of each verse. Moses, in effect, says—wanderers though we be in the howling wilderness, yet we find a home in thee, even as our forefathers did when they came out of Ur of the Chaldees and dwelt in tents among the Canaanites. To the saints the Lord Jehovah, the self-existent God, stands instead of mansion and roof-tree; he shelters, comforts, protects, preserves, and cherishes all his own. Foxes have holes and the birds of the air have nests, but the saints dwell in their God, and have always done so in all ages. Not in the tabernacle or the temple do we dwell, but in God himself; and this we have always done since there was a church in the world. We have not shifted our abode. Kings' palaces have vanished beneath the crumbling hand of time—they have been burned with

fire and buried beneath mountains of ruins, but the imperial race of heaven has never lost its regal habitation. Go to the Palatine and see how the Caesars are forgotten of the halls which echoed to their despotic mandates, and resounded with the plaudits of the nations over which they ruled, and then look upward and see in the ever living Jehovah the divine home of the faithful, untouched by so much as the finger of decay. Where dwelt our fathers a hundred generations since, there dwell we still. It is of New Testament saints that the Holy Ghost has said, "He that keepeth his commandments dwelleth in God and God in him!" It was a divine mouth which said, "Abide in me", and then added, "he that abideth in me and I in him the same bringeth forth much fruit." It is most sweet to speak with the Lord as Moses did, saying, "Lord, thou art our dwelling place", and it is wise to draw from the Lord's eternal condescension reasons for expecting present and future mercies, as the Psalmist did in the next Psalm wherein he describes the safety of those who dwell in God.

**Verse 2.** *Before the mountains were brought forth.* Before those elder giants had struggled forth from nature's womb, as her dread firstborn, the Lord was glorious and self sufficient. Mountains to him, though hoar with the snows of ages, are but new born babes, young things whose birth was but yesterday, mere novelties of an hour. Or ever thou hadst formed the earth and the world. Here too the allusion is to a birth. Earth was born but the other day, and her solid land was delivered from the flood but a short while ago. Even from everlasting to everlasting, thou art God, or, "thou art, O God." God was, when nothing else was. He was God when the earth was not a world but a chaos, when mountains were not upheaved, and the generation of the heavens and the earth had not commenced. In this Eternal One there is a safe abode for the successive generations of men. If God himself were of yesterday, he would not be a suitable refuge for mortal men; if he could change and cease to be God he would be but an uncertain dwelling place for his people. The eternal existence of God is here mentioned to set forth, by contrast, the brevity of human life.

**Verse 3.** *Thou turnest man to destruction, or "to dust."* Man's body is resolved into its elements, and is as though it had been crushed and ground to powder. And sayest, Return, ye children of men, *i.e.*, return even to the dust out of which ye were taken. The frailty of man is thus forcibly set forth; God creates him out of the dust, and back to dust he goes at the word of his Creator. God resolves and man dissolves. A word created and a word destroys. Observe how the action of God is recognised; man is not said to die because of the decree of faith, or the action of inevitable law, but the Lord is

made the agent of all, his hand turns and his voice speaks; without these we should not die, no power on earth or hell could kill us.

"An angel's arm cannot save me from the grave,  
Myriads of angels cannot confine me there."

**Verse 4.** *For a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday when it is past.* A thousand years! This is a long stretch of time. How much may be crowded into it,—the rise and fall of empires, the glory and obliteration of dynasties, the beginning and the end of elaborate systems of human philosophy, and countless events, all important to household and individual, which elude the pens of historians. Yet this period, which might even be called the limit of modern history, and is in human language almost identical with an indefinite length of time, is to the Lord as nothing, even as time already gone. A moment yet to come is longer than "yesterday when it is past", for that no longer exists at all, yet such is a chiliad to the eternal. In comparison with eternity, the most lengthened reaches of time are mere points, there is in fact, no possible comparison between them. And as a watch in the night, a time which is no sooner come than gone. There is scarce time enough in a thousand years for the angels to change watches; when their millennium of service is almost over it seems as though the watch were newly set. We are dreaming through the long night of time, but God is ever keeping watch, and a thousand years are as nothing to him. A host of days and nights must be combined to make up a thousand years to us, but to God, that space of time does not make up a whole night, but only a brief portion of it. If a thousand years be to God as a single night watch, what must be the life time of the Eternal!

**Verse 5.** *Thou carriest them away as with a flood.* As when a torrent rushes down the river bed and bears all before it, so does the Lord bear away by death the succeeding generations of men. As the hurricane sweeps the clouds from the sky, so time removes the children of men. They are as a sleep. Before God men must appear as unreal as the dreams of the night, the phantoms of sleep. Not only are our plans and devices like a sleep, but we ourselves are such. "We are such stuff as dreams are made of." In the morning they are like grass which groweth up. As grass is green in the morning and hay at night, so men are changed from health to corruption in a few hours. We are not cedars, or oaks, but only poor grass, which is vigorous in the spring, but lasts not a summer through. What is there upon earth more frail than we!

**Verse 6.** *In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up.* Blooming with abounding beauty till the meadows are all besprent with gems, the grass has a golden hour, even as man in his youth has a heyday of flowery glory. In the evening it is cut down, and withereth. The scythe ends the blossoming of the field flowers, and the dews at flight weep their fall. Here is the history of the grass—sown, grown, blown, mown, gone; and the history of man is not much more. Natural decay would put an end both to us and the grass in due time; few, however, are left to experience the full result of age, for death comes with his scythe, and removes our life in the midst of its verdure. How great a change in how short a time! The morning saw the blooming, and the evening sees the withering.

**Verse 7.** This mortality is not accidental, neither was it inevitable in the original of our nature, but sin has provoked the Lord to anger, and therefore thus we die. For we are consumed by thine anger. This is the scythe which mows and the scorching heat which withers. This was specially the case in reference to the people in the wilderness, whose lives were cut short by justice on account of their waywardness; they failed, not by a natural decline, but through the blast of the well deserved judgments of God. It must have been a very mournful sight to Moses to see the whole nation melt away during the forty years of their pilgrimage, till none remained of all that came out of Egypt. As God's favour is life, so his anger is death; as well might grass grow in an oven as men flourish when the Lord is wroth with them. "And by thy wrath are we troubled", or terror stricken. A sense of divine anger confounded them, so that they lived as men who knew that they were doomed. This is true of us in a measure, but not altogether, for now that immortality and life are brought to light by the gospel, death has changed its aspect, and, to believers in Jesus, it is no more a judicial execution. Anger and wrath are the sting of death, and in these believers have no share; love and mercy now conduct us to glory by the way of the tomb. It is not seemly to read these words at a Christian's funeral without words of explanation, and a distinct endeavour to shew how little they belong to believers in Jesus, and how far we are privileged beyond those with whom he was not well pleased, "whose carcasses fell in the wilderness." To apply an ode, written by the leader of the legal dispensation under circumstances of peculiar judgment, in reference to a people under penal censure, to those who fall asleep in Jesus, seems to be the height of blundering. We may learn much from it, but we ought not to misapply it by taking to ourselves, as the beloved of the Lord, that which was chiefly true of those to whom God had sworn in his wrath that they should not enter into his rest. When, however, a soul is under conviction of sin, the language of this Psalm is highly appropriate to his

case, and will naturally suggest itself to the distracted mind. No fire consumes like God's anger, and no anguish so troubles the heart as his wrath. Blessed be that dear substitute,

"Who bore that we might never  
His Father's righteous ire."

**Verse 8.** *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee.* Hence these tears! Sin seen by God must work death; it is only by the covering blood of atonement that life comes to any of us. When God was overthrowing the tribes in the wilderness he had their iniquities before him, and therefore dealt with them in severity. He could not have their iniquities before him and not smite them. Our secret sins in the sight of thy countenance. There are no secrets before God; he unearths man's hidden things, and exposes them to the light. There can be no more powerful luminary than the face of God, yet, in that strong light, the Lord set the hidden sins of Israel. Sunlight can never be compared with the light of him who made the sun, of whom it is written, "God is light, and in him is no darkness at all." If by his countenance is here meant his love and favour, it is not possible for the heinousness of sin to be more clearly manifested than when it is seen to involve ingratitude to one so infinitely good and kind. Rebellion in the light of justice is black, but in the light of love it is devilish. How can we grieve so good a God? The children of Israel had been brought out of Egypt with a high hand, fed in the wilderness with a liberal hand, and guided with a tender hand, and their sins were peculiarly atrocious. We, too, having been redeemed by the blood of Jesus, and saved by abounding grace, will be verily guilty if we forsake the Lord. What manner of persons ought we to be? How ought we to pray for cleansing from secret faults? It is to us a wellspring of delights to remember that our sins, as believers are now cast behind the Lord's back, and shall never be brought to light again: therefore we live, because, the guilt being removed, the death penalty is removed also.

**Verse 9.** *For all our days are passed away in thy wrath.* Justice shortened the days of rebellious Israel; each halting place became a graveyard; they marked their march by the tombs they left behind them. Because of the penal sentence their days were dried up, and their lives wasted away. We spend our years as a tale that is told. Yea, not their days only, but their years flew by them like a thought, swift as a meditation, rapid and idle as a gossip's story. Sin had cast a shadow over all things, and made the lives of the dying wanderers to be both vain and brief. The first sentence is not intended for believers to quote, as though it applied to themselves, for our days are all passed amid the lovingkindness of the Lord, even as David says in the Ps

23:6 "Surely goodness and mercy shall follow me all the days of my life." Neither is the life of the gracious man unsubstantial as a story teller's tale; he lives in Jesus, he has the divine Spirit within him, and to him "life is real, life is earnest"—the simile only holds good if we consider that a holy life is rich in interest, full of wonders, chequered with many changes, yet as easily ordered by providence as the improvisatore arranges the details of the story with which he beguiles the hour. Our lives are illustrations of heavenly goodness, parables of divine wisdom, poems of sacred thought, and records of infinite love; happy are we whose lives are such tales.

**Verse 10.** *The days of our years are threescore years and ten.* Moses himself lived longer than this, but his was the exception not the rule: in his day life had come to be very much the same in duration as it is with us. This is brevity itself compared with the men of the elder time; it is nothing when contrasted with eternity. Yet is life long enough for virtue and piety, and all too long for vice and blasphemy. Moses here in the original writes in a disconnected manner, as if he would set forth the utter insignificance of man's hurried existence. His words may be rendered, "The days of our years! In them seventy years": as much as to say, "The days of our years? What about them? Are they worth mentioning? The account is utterly insignificant, their full tale is but seventy." And if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their *strength labour and sorrow*. The unusual strength which overleaps the bound of threescore and ten only lands the aged man in a region where life is a weariness and a woe. The strength of old age, its very prime and pride, are but labour and sorrow; what must its weakness be? What panting for breath! What toiling to move! What a failing of the senses! What a crushing sense of weakness! The evil days are come and the years wherein a man cries, "I have no pleasure in them." The grasshopper has become a burden and desire faileth. Such is old age. Yet mellowed by hallowed experience, and solaced by immortal hopes, the latter days of aged Christians are not so much to be pitied as envied. The sun is setting and the heat of the day is over, but sweet is the calm and cool of the eventide: and the fair day melts away, not into a dark and dreary night, but into a glorious, unclouded, eternal day. The mortal fades to make room for the immortal; the old man falls asleep to wake up in the region of perennial youth. For it is soon cut off, and we fly away. The cable is broken and the vessel sails upon the sea of eternity; the chain is snapped and the eagle mounts to its native air above the clouds. Moses mourned for men as he thus sung: and well he might, as all his comrades fell at his side. His words are more nearly rendered, "He drives us fast and we fly away; "as the quails were blown along by the strong west wind, so are men hurried before the tempests of



death. To us, however, as believers, the winds are favourable; they bear us as the gales bear the swallows away from the wintry realms, to lands

"Where everlasting spring abides  
And never withering flowers."

Who wishes it to be otherwise? Wherefore should we linger here? What has this poor world to offer us that we should tarry on its shores? Away, away! This is not our rest. Heavenward, Ho! Let the Lord's winds drive fast if so he ordains, for they waft us the more swiftly to himself, and our own dear country.

**Verse 11.** *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* Moses saw men dying all around him: he lived among funerals, and was overwhelmed at the terrible results of the divine displeasure. He felt that none could measure the might of the Lord's wrath. Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath. Good men dread that wrath beyond conception, but they never ascribe too much terror to it: bad men are dreadfully convulsed when they awake to a sense of it, but their horror is not greater than it had need be, for it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of an angry God. Holy Scripture when it depicts God's wrath against sin never uses an hyperbole; it would be impossible to exaggerate it. Whatever feelings of pious awe and holy trembling may move the tender heart, it is never too much moved; apart from other considerations the great truth of the divine anger, when most powerfully felt, never impresses the mind with a solemnity in excess of the legitimate result of such a contemplation. What the power of God's anger is in hell, and what it would be on earth, were it not in mercy restrained, no man living can rightly conceive. Modern thinkers rail at Milton and Dante, Bunyan and Baxter, for their terrible imagery; but the truth is that no vision of poet, or denunciation of holy seer, can ever reach to the dread height of this great argument, much less go beyond it. The wrath to come has its horrors rather diminished than enhanced in description by the dark lines of human fancy; it baffles words, it leaves imagination far behind. Beware ye that forget God lest he tear you in pieces and there be none to deliver. God is terrible out of his holy places. Remember Sodom and Gomorrah! Remember Korah and his company! Mark well the graves of lust in the wilderness! Nay, rather bethink ye of the place where their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Who is able to stand against this justly angry God? Who will dare to rush upon the bosses of his buckler, or tempt the edge of his sword? Be it ours to submit ourselves as dying sinners to this eternal God, who can, even at this moment, command us to the dust, and thence to hell.

**Verse 12.** *So teach us to number our days.* Instruct us to set store by time, mourning for that time past wherein we have wrought the will of the flesh, using diligently the time present, which is the accepted hour and the day of salvation, and reckoning the time which lieth in the future to be too uncertain to allow us safely to delay any gracious work or prayer. Numeration is a child's exercise in arithmetic, but in order to number their days aright the best of men need the Lord's teaching. We are more anxious to count the stars than our days, and yet the latter is by far more practical. That we may apply our hearts unto wisdom. Men are led by reflections upon the brevity of time to give their earnest attention to eternal things; they become humble as they look into the grave which is so soon to be their bed, their passions cool in the presence of mortality, and they yield themselves up to the dictates of unerring wisdom; but this is only the case when the Lord himself is the teacher; he alone can teach to real and lasting profit. Thus Moses prayed that the dispensations of justice might be sanctified in mercy. "The law is our school master to bring us to Christ", when the Lord himself speaks by the law. It is most meet that the heart which will so soon cease to beat should while it moves be regulated by wisdom's hand. A short life should be wisely spent. We have not enough time at our disposal to justify us in misspending a single quarter of an hour. Neither are we sure of enough life to justify us in procrastinating for a moment. If we were wise in heart we should see this, but mere head wisdom will not guide us aright.

**Verse 13.** *Return, O LORD, how long?* Come in mercy, to us again. Do not leave us to perish. Suffer not our lives to be both brief and bitter. Thou hast said to us, "Return, ye children of men", and now we humbly cry to thee, "Return, thou preserver of men." Thy presence alone can reconcile us to this transient existence; turn thou unto us. As sin drives God from us, so repentance cries to the Lord to return to us. When men are under chastisement they are allowed to expostulate, and ask "how long?" Our faith in these times is not too great boldness with God, but too much backwardness in pleading with him. And let it repent thee concerning thy servants. Thus Moses acknowledges the Israelites to be God's servants still. They had rebelled, but they had not utterly forsaken the Lord; they owned their obligations to obey his will, and pleaded them as a reason for pity. Will not a man spare his own servants? Though God smote Israel, yet they were his people, and he had never disowned them, therefore is he entreated to deal favourably with them. If they might not see the promised land, yet he is begged to cheer them on the road with his mercy, and to turn his frown into a smile. The prayer is like others which came from the meek lawgiver when he

boldly pleaded with God for the nation; it is Moses like. He here speaks with the Lord as a man speaketh with his friend.

**Verse 14.** *O satisfy us early with thy mercy.* Since they must die, and die so soon, the psalmist pleads for speedy mercy upon himself and his brethren. Good men know how to turn the darkest trials into arguments at the throne of grace. He who has but the heart to pray need never be without pleas in prayer. The only satisfying food for the Lord's people is the favour of God; this Moses earnestly seeks for, and as the manna fell in the morning he beseeches the Lord to send at once his satisfying favour, that all through the little day of life they might be filled therewith. Are we so soon to die? Then, Lord, do not starve us while we live. Satisfy us at once, we pray thee. Our day is short and the night hastens on, O give us in the early morning of our days to be satisfied with thy favour, that all through our little day we may be happy. That we may rejoice and be glad all our days. Being filled with divine love, their brief life on earth would become a joyful festival, and would continue so as long as it lasted. When the Lord refreshes us with his presence, our joy is such that no man can take it from us. Apprehensions of speedy death are not able to distress those who enjoy the present favour of God; though they know that the night cometh they see nothing to fear in it, but continue to live while they live, triumphing in the present favour of God and leaving the future in his loving hands. Since the whole generation which came out of Egypt had been doomed to die in the wilderness, they would naturally feel despondent, and therefore their great leader seeks for them that blessing which, beyond all others, consoles the heart, namely, the presence and favour of the Lord.

**Verse 15.** *Make us glad according to the days wherein thou hast afflicted us, and the years wherein we have seen evil.* None can gladden the heart as thou canst, O Lord, therefore as thou hast made us sad be pleased to make us glad. Fill the other scale. Proportion thy dispensations. Give us the lamb, since thou has sent us the bitter herbs. Make our days as long as our nights. The prayer is original, childlike, and full of meaning; it is moreover based upon a great principle in providential goodness, by which the Lord puts the good over against the evil in due measure. Great trial enables us to bear great joy, and may be regarded as the herald of extraordinary grace. God's dealings are according to scale; small lives are small throughout; and great histories are great both in sorrow and happiness. Where there are high hills there are also deep valleys. As God provides the sea for leviathan, so does he find a pool for the minnow; in the sea all things are in fit proportion for the mighty monster, while in the little brook all things befit the tiny fish. If we

have fierce afflictions we may look for overflowing delights, and our faith may boldly ask for them. God who is great in justice when he chastens will not be little in mercy when he blesses, he will be great all through: let us appeal to him with unstaggering faith.

**Verse 16.** *Let thy work appear unto thy servants.* See how he dwells upon that word servants. It is as far as the law can go, and Moses goes to the full length permitted him henceforth Jesus calls us not servants but friends, and if we are wise we shall make full use of our wider liberty. Moses asks for displays of divine power and providence conspicuously wrought, that all the people might be cheered thereby. They could find no solace in their own faulty works, but in the work of God they would find comfort. And thy glory unto their children. While their sons were growing up around them, they desired to see some outshinings of the promised glory gleaming upon them. Their Sons were to inherit the land which had been given them by covenant, and therefore they sought on their behalf some tokens of the coming good, some morning dawns of the approaching noonday. How eagerly do good men plead for their children. They can bear very much personal affliction if they may but be sure that their children will know the glory of God, and thereby be led to serve him. We are content with the work if our children may but see the glory which will result from it: we sow joyfully if they may reap.

**Verse 17.** *And let the beauty of the Lord our God be upon us.* Even upon us who must not see thy glory in the land of Canaan; it shall suffice us if in our characters the holiness of God is reflected, and if over all our camp the lovely excellences of our God shall cast a sacred beauty. Sanctification should be the daily object of our petitions. And establish thou the work of our hands upon us; yea, the work of *our hands establish thou it*. Let what we do be done in truth, and last when we are in the grave; may the work of the present generation minister permanently to the building tip of the nation. Good men are anxious not to work in vain. They know that without the Lord they can do nothing, and therefore they cry to him for help in the work, for acceptance of their efforts, and for the establishment of their designs. The church as a whole earnestly desires that the hand of the Lord may so work with the hand of his people, that a substantial, yea, an eternal edifice to the praise and glory of God may be the result. We come and go, but the Lord's work abides. We are content to die so long as Jesus lives and his kingdom grows. Since the Lord abides for ever the same, we trust our work in his hands, and feel that since it is far more his work than ours he will secure it

immortality. When we have withered like grass our holy service, like gold, silver, and precious stones, will survive the fire.

---

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**TITLE.** The correctness of the title which ascribes the Psalm to Moses is confirmed by its unique simplicity and grandeur; its appropriateness to his times and circumstances; its resemblance to the Law in urging the connection between sin and death; its similarity of diction to the poetical portions of the Pentateuch, without the slightest trace of imitation or quotation; its marked unlikeness to the Psalms of David, and still more to those of later date; and finally, the proved impossibility of plausibly assigning it to any other age or author.—*J.A. Alexander.*

**Title.** A prayer of Moses. Moses may be considered as the first composer of sacred hymns.—*Samuel Burder.*

**Title.** The Psalm is described in the title as a *prayer*. This description shows, as Amyraldus saw, that the kernel of the Psalm in the *second* part, and that the design of the first is to prepare the way for the second, and lay down a basis on which it may rest.—*E.W. Hengstenberg.*

**Title.** A prayer of Moses. Moses was an old and much tried man, but age and experience had taught him that, amidst the perpetual changes which are taking place in the universe, one thing at least remains immutable, even the faithfulness of him who is "from everlasting to everlasting God." How far back into the past may the patriarch have been looking when he spake these words? The burning bush, the fiery furnace of Egypt, the Red Sea, Pharaoh with his chariots of war, and the weary march of Israel through the wilderness, were all before him; and in all of them he had experienced that "God is the Rock, his work perfect, all his ways judgment" (De 32:4). But Moses was looking beyond these scenes of his personal history when he said, "Remember the days of old, consider the years of many generations." (De 32:7), and we may be sure that he was also looking beyond them when he indited the song, *Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations.* Yes; he was casting in his mind how God had been the refuge of Jacob and Isaac, of Abraham, Noah, and all the patriarchs. Moses could take a retrospect of above a thousand years, which had all confirmed the truth. I can do no more. At this point of time I can look back to the days of Moses and Joshua and David, and descending thence to the days of the Son of God upon earth, and of Paul and Peter, and all the saints of the Church down to the

present hour; and what a thousand years avouched to Moses, three thousand now avouch to me: the Lord is the dwelling place of those that trust in him from generation to generation. Yes; and to him who was the refuge of a Moses and an Abraham, I too in the day of trouble can lift my hands. Delightful thought! That great Being who, during the lapse of three thousand years, amidst the countless changes of the universe, has to this day remained unchanged, is MY God.—*Augustus F. Theluck, in "Hours of Christian Devotion", 1870.*

**Whole Psalm.** Although some difficulties have been started, there seems no reason to doubt that this Psalm is the composition of Moses. From the remotest period his name has been attached to it, and almost every Biblical scholar, from Jerome down to Hengstenberg, has agreed to accept it as a prayer of that "man of God" whose name it has always carried. If so, it is one of the oldest poems in the world. Compared with it Homer and Pindar are (so to speak) modern, and even King David is of recent date. That is to say, compared with this ancient hymn the other Psalms are as much more modern as Tennyson and Longfellow are more modern than Chaucer. In either case there are nearly five centuries between.—*James Hamilton.*

**Whole Psalm.** The 90th Psalm might be cited as perhaps the most sublime of human compositions—the deepest in feeling—the loftiest in theologic conception—the most magnificent in its imagery. True is it in its report of human life—as troubled, transitory, and sinful. True in its conception of the Eternal—the Sovereign and the Judge; and yet the refuge and hope of men, who, notwithstanding, the most severe trials of their faith, lose not their confidence in him; but who, in the firmness of faith, pray for, as if they were predicting, a near at hand season of refreshment. Wrapped, one might say, in mystery, until the distant day of revelation should come, there is here conveyed the doctrine of Immortality; for in the very complaint of the brevity of the life of man, and of the sadness of these, his few years of trouble, and their brevity, and their gloom, there is brought into contrast the Divine immutability; and yet it is in terms of a submissive piety: the thought of a life eternal is here in embryo. No taint is there in this Psalm of the pride and petulance—the half uttered blasphemy—the malign disputing or arraignment of the justice or goodness of God, which have so often shed a venomous colour upon the language of those who have writhed in anguish, personal or relative. There are few probably among those who have passed through times of bitter and distracting woe, or who have stood—the helpless spectators of the miseries of others, that have not fallen into moods of mind violently in contrast with the devout and hopeful melancholy which breathes

throughout this ode. Rightly attributed to the Hebrew Lawgiver or not, it bespeaks its remote antiquity, not merely by the majestic simplicity of its style, but negatively, by the entire avoidance of those sophisticated turns of thought which belong to a late—a lost age in a people's intellectual and moral history. This Psalm, undoubtedly, is centuries older than the moralizing of that time when the Jewish mind had listened to what it could never bring into a true assimilation with its own mind—the abstractions of the Greek Philosophy.

With this one Psalm only in view—if it were required of us to say, in brief, what we mean by the phrase—"The Spirit of the Hebrew Poetry"—we find our answer well condensed in this sample. This magnificent composition gives evidence, not merely as to the mental qualities of the writer, but as to the tastes and habits of the writer's contemporaries, his hearers, and his readers; on these several points—*first*, the free and customary command of a poetic diction, and its facile imagery, so that whatever the poetic soul would utter, the poet's material is near at hand for his use. There is then that depth of feeling—mournful, reflective, and yet hopeful and trustful, apart from which poetry can win for itself no higher esteem than what we bestow upon other decorative arts, which minister to the demands of luxurious *sloth*. There is, moreover, as we might say, underlying this poem, from the first line to the last, the substance of philosophic thought, apart from which, expressed or understood, poetry is frivolous, and is not in harmony with the seriousness of human life: this Psalm is of a sort which Plato would have written, or Sophocles—if only the one or the other of these minds had possessed a heaven descended Theology.—*Isaac Taylor*.

**Verse 1.** *Lord*. Observe the change of the divine names in this Psalm. Moses begins with the declaration of the Majesty of the Lord (*Adonai*) but when he arrives at Ps 90:13, he opens his prayer with the Name of grace and covenanted mercy to Israel—JEHOVAH; and he sums up all in Ps 90:17, with a supplication for the manifestation of the *beauty* Men of "the Lord our God" (JEHOVAH, ELOHIM).—*Christopher Wordsworth*.

**Verse 1.** *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place*. Many seem to beg God's help in prayer, but are not protected by him: they seek it only in a storm, and when all other means and refuges fail them. But a Christian must maintain constant communication with God; must dwell in God, not run to him now and then.—*Thomas Manton*.

**Verse 1.** This exordium breathes life, and pertains to a certain hope of the resurrection and of eternal life. Since he calls God, who is eternal, our

habitation, or to speak more clearly, our place of refuge, to whom fleeing we may be in safety. For if God is our dwelling place, and God is life, and we dwellers in him, it necessarily follows, that we are in life, and shall live for ever... For who will call God the dwelling place of the dead? Who shall regard him as a sepulchre? He is life; and therefore they also live to whom he is a dwelling place. After this fashion Moses, in the very introduction, before he lets loose his horrible thunderings and lightnings, fortifies the trembling, that they may firmly hold God to be the living dwelling place of the living, of those that pray to him, and put their trust in him. It is a remarkable expression, the like of which is nowhere in Sacred Scripture, that God is a *dwelling place*. Scripture in other places says the very opposite, it calls men temples of God, in whom God dwells; "the temple of God is holy", says Paul, "which temple ye are." Moses inverts this, and affirms, we are inhabitants and masters in this house. For the Hebrew word *Nwem* properly signifies a dwelling place, as when the Scripture says, "In Zion is his dwelling place", where this word (*Maon*) is used. But because a house is for the purpose of safety, it results, that this word has the meaning of a refuge or place of refuge. But Moses wishes to speak with such great care that he may shew that all our hopes have been placed most securely in God, and that they who are about to pray to this God may be assured that they are not afflicted in this work in vain, nor die, since they have God as a place of refuge, and the divine Majesty as a dwelling place, in which they may rest secure for ever. Almost in the same strain Paul speaks, when he says to the Colossians, "Your life is hid with Christ in God." For it is a much clearer and more luminous expression to say, Believers dwell in God, than that God dwells in them. He dwelt also visibly in Zion, but the place is changed. But because he (the believer), is in God, it is manifest, that he cannot be moved nor transferred, for God is a habitation of a kind that cannot perish. Moses therefore wished to exhibit the most certain life, when he said, God is our dwelling place, not the earth, not heaven, not paradise, but simply God himself. If after this manner you take this Psalm it will become sweet, and seem in all respects most useful. When a monk, it often happened to me when I read this Psalm, that I was compelled to lay the book out of my hand. But I knew not that these terrors were not addressed to an awakened mind. I knew not that Moses was speaking to a most obdurate and proud multitude, which neither understood nor cared for the anger of God, nor were humbled by their calamities, or even in prospect of death.—*Martin Luther*.

**Verse 1.** *Lord, thou hast been our dwelling place*, etc. In this first part the prophet acknowledgeth that God in all times, and in all ages hath had a special care of his saints and servants, to provide for them all things



necessary for this life; for under the name of "*dwelling place*", or *mansion house*, the prophet understandeth all helps and comforts necessary for this life, both for maintenance and protection. For the use of such houses was wont to be not only to defend men from the injury of the weather, and to keep safely, within the walls and under the roof all other things necessary for this life, and to be a place of abode, wherein men might the more commodiously provide for all other things necessary, and walk in some calling profitable to their neighbour and to the glory of God; but also to protect them from the violence of brute beasts and rage of enemies. Now the prophet herein seems to note a special and more immediate providence of God: (for of all kind of people they seemed to be most forsaken and forlorn); that whereas the rest of the world seemed to have their habitations and mansions rooted in the earth, and so to dwell upon the earth; to live in cities and walled towns in all wealth and state; God's people were as it were without house and home. Abraham was called out of his own country, from his father's house, where no doubt he had goodly buildings, and large revenues, and was commanded by God to live as a foreigner in a strange country, amongst savage people, that he knew not; and to abide in tents, booths, and cabins, having little hope to live a settled and comfortable life in any place. In like manner lived his posterity, Isaac, Jacob, and the twelve patriarchs, wandering from place to place in the land of Canaan; from thence translated into the land of Egypt, there living at courtesy, and as it were tenants at will, and in such slavery and bondage, that it had been better for them to have been without house and home. After this for forty years together (at which time this Psalm was penned) they wandered up and down in a desolate wilderness, removing from place to place, and wandering, as it were in a maze. So that of all the people of the earth, God's own people had hitherto lived as pilgrims and banished persons, without house or home; and therefore the prophet here professes that God himself more immediately by his extraordinary providence, for many ages together had protected them, and been as it were a mansion house unto them; that is, the more they were deprived of these ordinary comforts of this life, the more was God present with them, supplying by his extraordinary and immediate providence what they wanted in regard of ordinary means. The due consideration of this point may minister matter of great joy and comfort to such children of God as are thoroughly humbled with the consideration of man's mortality in general, or of theirs whom they rely and depend upon in special.—*William Bradshaw*, 1621.

**Verse 1.** *Our dwelling place.* God created the earth for beasts to inhabit, the sea for fishes, the air for fowls, and heaven for angels and stars, so that man

hath no place to dwell and abide in but God alone.—*Giovanni della Mirandola Pico*, 1463-1494.

**Verses 1-2.** The comfort of the believer against the miseries of this short life is taken from the decree of their election, and the eternal covenant of redemption settled in the purpose and counsel of the blessed Trinity for their behoof, wherein it was agreed before the world was, that the Word to be incarnate, should be the Saviour of the elect: for here the asserting of the eternity of God is with relation to his own chosen people; for *Thou hast been our dwelling place in all generations*, and *thou art God from everlasting to everlasting*, is in substance thus much:—Thou art from everlasting to everlasting the same unchangeable God in purpose and affection toward us thy people, and so thou art *our God* from everlasting, in regard of thy eternal purpose of love, electing us, and in regard of thy appointing redemption for us by the Redeemer.—*David Dickson*.

**Verses 1-2.** If man be ephemeral, God is eternal.—*James Hamilton*.

**Verses 1-6.**

O Lord, thou art our home, to whom we fly,  
and so hast always been, from age to age;  
Before the hills did intercept the eye,  
Or that the frame was up of earthly stage,  
One God thou wert, and art, and still shall be;  
The line of time, it doth not measure thee.

Both death and life obey thy holy lore,  
And visit in their turns as they are sent;  
A thousand years with thee they are no more  
Than yesterday, which, ere it is, is spent:  
Or as a watch by night, that course doth keep,  
And goes and comes, unawares to them that sleep.

Thou carriest man away as with a tide:  
Then down swim all his thoughts that mounted high;  
Much like a mocking dream, that will not bide,  
But flies before the sight of waking eye;  
Or as the grass, that cannot term obtain,  
To see the summer come about again.

At morning, fair it musters on the ground;  
 At even it is cut down and laid along:  
 And though it shared were and favour found,  
 The weather would perform the mower's wrong:  
 Thus hast thou hanged our life on brittle pins,  
 To let us know it will not bear our sins.—*Francis Bacon*.

**Verse 2.** *The earth and the world.* The word *earth* here is used to denote the world as distinguished either from heaven (Ge 1:1), or from the sea (Ge 1:10). The term "*world*" in the original is commonly employed to denote the earth considered as *inhabited*, or as capable of being inhabited, a dwelling place for living beings.—*Albert Barnes*.

**Verse 2.** *From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God.* The everlastingness of which Moses speaks is to be referred not only to the essence of God, but also to his providence, by which he governs the world. He intends not merely that he is, but that he is God.—*John Calvin*.

**Verse 2.** Such a God (he says) have we, such a God do we worship, to such a God do we pray, at whose command all created things sprang into being. Why then should we fear if this God favours us? Why should we tremble at the anger of the whole world? If He is our dwelling place, shall we not be safe though the heavens should go to wrack? For we have a Lord greater than all the world. We have a Lord so mighty that at his word all things sprang into being. And yet we are so fainthearted that if the anger of a single prince or king, nay, even of a single neighbour, is to be borne, we tremble and droop in spirit. Yet in comparison with this King, all things beside in the whole world are but as the lightest dust which a slight breath moves from its place, and suffers not to be still. In this way this description of God is consolatory, and trembling spirits ought to look to this consolation in their temptations and dangers.—*Martin Luther*.

**Verse 3.** *Thou turnest man to destruction*, etc. The prophet conceives of God as of a potter, that having of dust tempered a mass, and framed it into a vessel, and dried it, doth presently, within a minute or an hour after, dash it again in pieces, and beat it to dust, in passion as it were speaking unto it, "Get thee to dust again." The word here translated "*destruction*", signifies a beating, or grinding, or pounding of a thing to powder. And the prophet seems to allude to the third of Genesis, where God speaks of Adam, "Dust thou art, and to dust thou shalt return", as if he should say, O Lord, thou that hast made and framed man of the dust of the earth, thou beatest him to dust again; and as thou madest him by thy word alone, so with thy word thou

suddenly turnest, and beatest him against to dust; as a man that makes a thing, and presently mars it again...He doth it with a word, against which is no resistance, when that word is once come out of his mouth; it is not all the diet, physic, and help, and prayers in the world that can save the life. And this he can do suddenly, in the twinkling of an eye. And therefore we should, as we love our lives, fear him, and take heed how we offend and displease him that can with a word turn the strongest man into dust.—*William Bradshaw*.

**Verse 3.** *Thou turnest man to destruction*, etc. The first word for "*man*", signifies a man full of misery, full of sickness and infirmities, a miserable man, vwna. And the other word here used in the end of the verse, signifies a man made of *clay*, or of the very slime of the earth. From hence we learn what is the nature of all men, of all the sons of *Adam*, viz., a piece of living *clay*, a little piece of red earth. And besides that man is subject to *breaking* and *crushing*, every way a miserable man; so is he of a brittle mould, a piece of red clay, that hath in it for a time a living soul, which must return to God that gave it; and the body, this piece of earth, return to the earth from whence it came: and if we had no Scripture at all to prove this, daily experience before our eyes makes it clear how all men, even the wisest, the strongest, the greatest and the mightiest monarchs and princes in the world, be but miserable men, made of red earth, and quickly turn again to dust.—*Samuel Smith*, in "*Moses his Prayer*", 1656.

**Verse 3.** *Thou turnest man to destruction*. Augustine says, We walk amid perils. If we were glass vases we might fear less dangers. What is there more fragile than a vase of glass? And yet it is preserved, and lasts for centuries: we therefore are more frail and infirm.—*Le Blanc*.

**Verse 3.** *Return ye*. One being asked what life was? made an answer answerless, for he presently turned his back and went his way.—*John Trapp*.

**Verse 4.** *A thousand years*, etc. As to a very rich man a thousand sovereigns are as one penny; so, to the eternal God, a thousand years are as one day.—*John Albert Bengel*, 1687-1752.

**Verse 4.** The Holy Ghost expresses himself according to the manner of men, to give us some notion of an infinite duration, by a resemblance suited to our capacity. If a thousand years be but as a day to the life of God, then as a year is to the life of man, so are three hundred and sixty-five thousand years to the life of God; and as seventy years are to the life of man, so are twenty-five millions five hundred and fifty thousand years to the life of God. Yet still,

since there is no proportion between time and eternity, we must dart our thoughts beyond all these, for years and days measure only the duration of created things, and of those only that are material and corporeal, subject to the motion of the heavens, which makes days and years.—*Stephen Charnock*.

**Verse 4.** *As yesterday when it is past, and as a watch in the night.* He corrects the previous clause with an extraordinary abbreviation. For he says that the whole space of human life, although it may be very long, and reach a thousand years, yet with God it is esteemed not only as one day, which has already gone, but is scarcely equal to the fourth part of a night. For the nights were divided into four watches, which lasted three hours each. And indeed by the word *night*, it is meant that human affairs in this life are involved in much darkness, many errors, dangers, terrors, and sorrows.—*Mollerus*.

**Verse 4.** *As a watch in the night.* The night is wont to appear shorter than the day, and to pass more swiftly, because those who sleep, says Euthymius, notice not the lapse of time. On account of the darkness also, it is less observed; and to those at work the time seems longer, than to those who have their work done.—*Lorinus*.

**Verse 4.** *A watch in the night.* Sir John Chardin observes in a note on this verse, that as the people of the East have no clocks, the several parts of the day and of the night, which are eight in all, are given notice of. In the Indies, the parts of the night are made known as well by instruments of music in great cities, as by the rounds of the watchmen, who with cries, and small drums, give them notice that a fourth part of the night is passed. Now as these cries awaked those who had slept, all that quarter part of the night, it appeared to them but as a moment.—*Harmer's Observations*.

**Verse 4.**—The ages and the dispensations, the promise to Adam, the engagement with Noah, the oath to Abraham, the covenant with Moses—these were but watches, through which the children of men had to wait amid the darkness of things created, until the morning should dawn of things uncreated. Now is "the right far spent, and the day at hand."—*Plain Commentary*.

**Verse 5.** *Thou carriest them away as with a flood.* Mtmrz (*zera-m-tam*) thou hast inundated them, namely, the years of man, i.e., thou hast hurried them away with a flood, thou hast made them to glide away as water, *they will be sleep*.—*Bythner's "Lyre of David."*

**Verse 5.** *Thou carriest them away as with a flood.* Let us meditate seriously upon the swift passage of our days, how our life runs away like a stream of waters, and carrieth us with it. Our condition in the eyes of God in regard of our life in this world is as if a man that knows not how to swim, should be cast into a great stream of water, and be carried down with it, so that he may sometimes lift up his head or his hands, and cry for help, or catch hold of this thing and that, for a time, but his end will be drowning, and it is but a small time that he can hold out, for the flood which carries him away will soon swallow him up. And surely our life here if it be rightly considered, is but like the life of a person thus violently carried down a stream. All the actions and motions of our life are but like unto the strivings and struggles of a man in that case: our eating, our drinking, our physic, our sports, and all other actions are but like the motions of the sinking man. When we have done all that we can, die we must, and be drowned in this deluge.—*William Bradshaw.*

**Verse 5.** *Away as with a flood.* "A man is a bubble", said the Greek proverb, which Lucian represents to this purpose, saying, "All the world is a storm, and men rise up in their several generations like bubbles. Some of these instantly sink into the deluge of their first parent, and are hidden in a sheet of water, having no other business in the world but to be born, that they might be able to die; others float up and down two or three turns, and suddenly disappear, and give their place to others: and they that live longest upon the face of the waters are in perpetual motion, restless and uneasy, and being crushed in by a great drop from a cloud, sink into flatness and a froth; the change not being great; it being hardly possible that a bubble should be more a nothing than it was before."—*Jeremy Taylor.*

**Verse 5.** (*first clause*). The most ancient mode of measuring small portions of time was by water flowing out of a vessel the clepsydra of the Greeks and Romans; and Ovid has compared the lapse of time to the flowing of a river (Metam. 15, 180.)—*Stephen Street.*

**Verse 5.** *They are as a sleep.* For as in the visions of sleep, we seeing, see not, hearing we hear not, tasting or touching we neither taste nor touch, speaking we speak not, walking we walk not; but when we seem to employ movements and gestures, in no respect do we employ them, since the mind vainly forms without any real objects images of things that exist not, as if they existed. In this very way, the imaginations of those who are awake closely resemble dreams; they come, they go, they confront us and flee from us; before they are seized, they fly away.—*Philo, in Le Blanc.*

**Verse 5.** *They are as a sleep.* Our life may be compared to sleep in four respects.

1. In regard of the shortness of it.
2. In regard of the easiness of being put out of it.
3. In regard of the many means to disquiet and break it off.
4. With regard to the many errors in it.

For the first three. Sleep is but short, and the sweeter it is, the shorter it seems to be. And as it is but short of itself, though it should last the full swing of nature; so the soundest sleep is easily broken; the least knock, the lowest call puts men out of it; and a number of means and occasions there be to interrupt and break it off. And is it not so with the life of man? Is not the longest life short? Is it not the shorter, the sweeter and fuller of contents it is? And is it not easily taken away? Are there not many means to bring us unto our end? even as many as there are to waken us out of sleep. For the fourth. How many errors are we subject to in sleep? In sleep the prisoner many times dreams that he is at liberty; he that is at liberty, that he is in prison; he that is hungry, that he is feeding daintily; he that is in want, that he is in great abundance; he that abounds, that he is in great want. How many in their sleep have thought they have gotten that which they shall be better for for ever, and when they are even in the hope of present possessing some such goodly matter, or beginning to enjoy it, or in the midst of their joy, they are suddenly awaked, and then all is gone with them, and their golden fancies vanish away in an instant. So for evil and sorrow as well. And is it not just so in the life of man?—*William Bradshaw.*

**Verse 5.** *They are like grass.* In this last similitude, the prophet compares men to grass, that as grass hath a time of growing and a time of withering, even so has man. *In the morning it flourisheth, and groweth up.* In which words Moses compares the former part of man's life, which is the space of thirty-three years, to the time of growing of grass, and that is accounted the time of the perfection of man's strength and age; at which age, according to the course of nature, man flourisheth as grass doth; that is the time of a man's prime and flourishing estate. But *in the evening*; that is, when the grass is ripe, and ready to be cut down, *it withereth.* Even so man, being once at his strength, and ripest age, doth not stand at a stay, nor continueth long so; but presently begins to decay, and to wither away, till old age comes, and he is cut down by the scythe of death. Now, in that Moses useth so many similitudes, and all to show how frail this life of man is, we are taught, that the frailty, vanity, and shortness of man's life is such, that examples will scarcely shew it. Death comes as a *flood*, violently and suddenly; we are as a

*sleep; we are as grass; our life is like a dream; we spend our days as a tale that is told, Ps 90:9. All these similitudes Moses hath in this Psalm, as if he wanted words and examples, how to express the vanity, frailty, and shortness thereof.—Samuel Smith.*

**Verse 6.** *In the morning.* This can hardly mean "in early youth", as some of the Rabbis explain. The words, strictly speaking, are a part of the comparison ("they are as grass which springeth afresh in the morning"), and are only thus placed first to give emphasis to the figure. In the East, one night's rain works a change as if by magic. The field at evening was brown, parched, arid as a desert; in the morning it is green with the blades of grass. The scorching hot wind (Jas 1:11) blows upon it, and again before evening it is withered.—*J.J.S. Perowne.*

**Verse 6.** *Cut down.*

Stout and strong today,  
Tomorrow turned to clay.  
This day in his bloom,  
The next, in the tomb.

It is true that to some Death sends his grey harbingers before, and gives them timely warning of his approach. But in how many cases does he arrive unannounced, and, lifting up his scythe, mows down the lofty! On shipboard there is but a plank between us and death; on horseback, but a fall. As we walk along the streets, death stretches a threatening finger from every tile upon the roofs! "He comes up into our windows, and enters into our palaces; he cuts off the children from without, and the young men from the streets." Jer 9:21. Our life is less than an handbreadth. How soon and how insensibly we slip into the grave!—*Augustus F. Tholuck.*

**Verse 7.** *For we are consumed by thine anger.* This is a point disputed by philosophers. They seek for the cause of death, since indeed proofs of immortality that cannot be despised exist in nature. The prophet replies, that the chief cause must not be sought in the material, either in a defect of the fluids, or in a failure of the natural heat; but that God being offended at the sins of men, hath subjected this nature to death and other infinite calamities. Therefore, our sins are the causes which have brought down this destruction. Hence he says, *In thine anger we vanish away.*—*Mollerus.*

**Verse 7.** *For we are consumed by thine anger, etc.* Whence we may first of all observe, how they compare their present estate in the wilderness, with the



estate of other nations and people, and shew that their estate was far worse than theirs: for others died now one, and then one, and so they were diminished; but for them, they were hastily consumed and suddenly swept away by the plague and pestilence which raged amongst them. Hence we may observe, first of all—That it is a ground of humiliation to God's people when their estate is worse than God's enemies'. Moses gathers this as an argument to humble them, and to move them to repentance and to seek unto God; viz., that because of their sins they were in a far worse case and condition than the very enemies of God were. For though their lives were short, yet they confess that theirs was far worse than the very heathen themselves, for they were *suddenly consumed by his anger*. When God is worse to his own church and people than he is to his enemies; when the Lord sends wars in a nation called by his name, and peace in other kingdoms that are anti Christian; sends famine in his church, and plenty to the wicked; sends the plague and pestilence in his church, and health and prosperity to the wicked; oh, here is matter of mourning and humiliation; and it is that which hath touched God's people to the quick, and wounded them to the heart, to see the enemies of the church in better condition than the church itself.—*Samuel Smith*.

**Verse 7.** *By thy wrath are we troubled.* The word used by Moses is much stronger than merely "troubled." It implies being cut off, destroyed—in forms moreover of overwhelming terror.—*Henry Cowles, in "The Psalms; with Notes."* New York, 1872.

**Verse 8.** God needs no other light to discern our sins by but the light of his own face. It pierceth through the darkest places; the brightness thereof enlightens all things, discovers all things. So that the sins that are committed in deepest darkness are all one to him as if they were done in the face of the sun. For they are done in his face, that shines more, and from which proceeds more light than from the face of the sun. So that this ought to make us the more fearful to offend; he sees us when we see not him, and the light of his countenance shines about us when we think ourselves hidden in darkness. Our sins are not only then in his sight when they are a committing and whilst the deed is doing; but ever after, when the act is past and gone and forgotten, yet then is it before the face of God, even as if it were in committing: and how should this make us afraid to sin! When our sins are not only in his sight while they are a committing, but so continue still for ever after they are past and done. God *sets our sins before him*; this shows he is so affected with them, he takes them so to heart, that he doth in a special manner continue the remembrance of them. As those that having had

great wrong will store it up, or register it, or keep some remembrance of it or other, lest they should forget, when time shall serve, to be quit with those that have wronged them: so doth God, and his so doing is a sign that he takes our sins deeply to heart; which should teach us to fear the more how we offend him. When God in any judgment of death, or sickness, or loss of friends, shows his wrath, we should think and meditate of this; especially when he comes nearest us: Now the Lord looks upon my sins, they are now before him; and we should never rest till we have by repentance moved him to blot them out. Yea, to this end we should ourselves call them to remembrance. For the more we remember them, the more God forgets them; the more we forget them, the more God remembers them; the more we look upon them ourselves, the more he turneth his eyes from them.—*William Bradshaw.*

**Verse 8.** It is a well known fact that the appearance of objects, and the ideas which we form of them, are very much affected by the situation in which they are placed in respect to us, and by the light in which they are seen. Objects seen at a distance, for example, appear much smaller than they really are. The same object, viewed through different mediums, will often exhibit different appearances. A lighted candle, or a star, appears bright during the absence of the sun; but when that luminary returns, their brightness is eclipsed. Since the appearance of objects, and the ideas which we form of them, are thus affected by extraneous circumstances, it follows, that no two persons will form precisely the same ideas of any object, unless they view it in the same light, or are placed with respect to it in the same situation.

Apply these remarks to the case before us. The psalmist addressing God, says, *Thou hast set our iniquities before thee, our secret sins in the light of thy countenance.* That is, our iniquities or open transgressions, and our secret sins, the sins of our hearts, are placed, as it were, full before God's face, immediately under his eye; and he sees them in the pure, clear, all disclosing light of his own holiness and glory. Now if we would see our sins as they appear to him, that is, as they really are, if we would see their number, blackness and criminality, and the malignity and desert of every sin, we must place ourselves, as nearly as is possible, in his situation, and look at sin, as it were, through his eyes. We must place ourselves and our sins in the centre of that circle which is irradiated by the light of his countenance where all his infinite perfections are clearly displayed, where his awful majesty is seen, where his concentrated glories blaze, and burn and dazzle, with insufferable brightness. And in order to this, we must, in thought, leave our dark and sinful world, where God is unseen and almost forgotten, and where

consequently, the evil of sinning against him cannot be fully perceived—and mount up to heaven, the peculiar habitation of his holiness and glory, where he does not, as here, conceal himself behind the veil of his works, and of second causes, but shines forth the unveiled God, and is seen as he is.

My hearers, if you are willing to see your sins in their true colours; if you would rightly estimate their number, magnitude and criminality, bring them into the hallowed place, where nothing is seen but the brightness of unsullied purity, and the splendours of uncreated glory; where the sun itself would appear only as a dark spot; and there, in the midst of this circle of seraphic intelligences, with the infinite God pouring all the light of his countenance round you, review your lives, contemplate your offences, and see how they appear. Recollect that the God, in whose presence you are, is the Being who forbids sin, the Being of whose eternal law sin is the transgression, and against whom every sin is committed.—*Edward Payson*.

**Verse 9.** For all our days go back again (wnp) in thy wrath. Hitherto he has spoken of the cause of that wrath of God which moveth him to smite the world with such mortality. Now here he further sets forth the same by the effects thereof in reference to that present argument he hath in hand. 1. That our days do as it were go backward in his wrath: that whereas God gave us being to live, our life and our being are nothing else but a going backward, as it were, to death and to nothing. Even as if a stranger being suddenly rapt and carried midway to his home, where are all his comforts, he should spend all the time that is behind, not in going forward to his home, but in going backward to the place from which he was suddenly brought. All the sons of Adam as soon as they have being and live are brought suddenly a great part of their way: and whereas they should go forward and live longer and longer, they from their first beginning to live go backward again to death and to nothing. This is the sum in effect of that which the Lord saith in the beginning of the Psalm, (Ps 90:3:) *Thou bringest men to destruction; saying, Return again, ye sons of Adam:* as if he should say, Thou makest a man, and when he is made, he in thy wrath doth haste to nothing else but destruction and to be marred again. Thus do our days as it were go backward, and we in them return from whence we came.—*William Bradshaw*.

**Verse 9.** When I was in Egypt, three or four years ago, I saw what Moses himself might have seen, and what the Israelites, no doubt, very often witnessed:—a crowd of people surrounding a professed story teller, who was going through some tale, riveting the attention and exciting the feelings of those who listened to him. This is one of the customs of the East. It naturally springs up among any people who have few books, or none; where the

masses are unable to read, and where, therefore, they are dependent for excitement or information on those who can address the ear, and who recite, in prose or verse, traditionary tales and popular legends. I dare say this sort of thing would be much in repute among the Israelites themselves during their detention in the wilderness, and that it served to beguile for them many a tedious hour. It is by this custom, then, that we venture to illustrate the statement of the text. The hearing of a story is attended by a rapid and passing interest—it leaves behind it a vague impression, beyond which comparatively but few incidents may stand out distinctly in the after thought. In our own day even, when tales are put into printed books, and run through three or four volumes, we feel when we have finished one, how short it appears after all, or how short the time it seemed to take for its perusal. If full of incident, it may seem sometimes long to remember, but we generally come to the close with a sort of feeling that says, "And so that's all." But this must have been much more the case with the tales "that were told." These had to be compressed into what could be repeated at one time, or of which three or four might be given in an evening or an hour. The story ended; and then came the sense of shortness, brevity, the rapid flight of the period employed by it, with something like a feeling of wonder and dissatisfaction at the discovery of this. "For what is your life? It is even as a vapour, that appeareth for a little time, and then vanisheth away."—*Thomas Binney*.

**Verse 9.** *As a tale.* The grace whereof is *brevity*.—*John Trapp*.

**Verse 9.** *As a tale that is told.* The Chaldee has it, *like the breath of our mouth in winter*.—*Daniel Cresswell*.

**Verse 9.** The thirty-eight years, which after this they were away in the wilderness, were not the subject of the sacred history, for little or nothing is recorded of that which happened to them from the second year to the fortieth. After they came out of Egypt, their time was perfectly trifled away, and was not worthy to be the subject of a history, but only of *a tale that is told*; for it was only to pass away time like telling stories, that they spent those years in the wilderness; all that while they were in the consuming, and another generation was in the rising...The spending of our years is like the telling of a tale. A year when it is past is like a tale when it is told. Some of our years are as a pleasant story, others as a tragical one; most mixed, but all short and transient; that which was long in the doing may be told in a short time.—*Matthew Henry*.

**Verse 9.** *We spend our year as a tale that is told*, or, *as a meditation* (so some translate) suddenly or swiftly: a discourse is quickly over, whether it

be a discourse from the mouth, or in the mind; and of the two the latter is far the more swift and nimble of foot. A discourse in our thoughts outruns the sun, as much as the sun outruns a snail; the thoughts of a man will travel the world over in a moment; he that now sits in this place, may be at the world's end in his thoughts, before I can speak another word.—*Joseph Caryl*.

**Verse 9.** *We spend our years as a tale that is told.* This seems to express both a necessary fact and a censure. The rapid consumption of our years—their speedy passing away, is inevitable. But they may be spent also in a trifling manner to little valuable purpose, which would complete the disconsolate reflection on them, by the addition of guilt and censure.—*John Foster, 1768-1843*.

**Verse 9.** *As a tale that is told.* In the Hebrew it is *hgx-wmk, sicut meditatio, (as a meditation)* and so we read it in the margin, as if all our years were little else than a continual meditation upon the things of this world. Indeed, much of man's time is spent in this kind of vain meditation, as how to deceive and play fast and loose for advantage; such a meditation had they, Isa 59:13, or meditating with the heart lying words; the same word in the Hebrew as in my text; or how to heap up riches, such a meditation had that covetous man in the gospel, Lu 12:17; or how to violate the sacred bonds of religion and laws of God, such a meditation had they, Ps 2:1-3; and in such vain meditations as these do men spend their years "as a tale that is told." . . . To close this point with Gregory Nazianzen. What are we but a vain dream that hath no existence or being, a mere phantasm or apparition that cannot be held, a ship sailing in the sea which leaves no impression or trace behind it, a dust, a vapour, a morning dew, a flower flourishing one day and fading another, yea, the same day behold it springing and withered, but my text adds another metaphor from the flying of a bird, *and we fly away*, not go and run but fly, the quickest motion that any corporeal creature hath. Our life is like the flight of a bird, it is here now and it is gone out of sight suddenly. The Prophet therefore speaking of the speedy departure of Ephraim's glory expresses it thus, "It shall flee away like a bird", Ho 9:11; and Solomon saith the like of riches, "they make themselves wings and flee away like an eagle toward heaven": Pr 23:5. David wished for the wings of a dove that he might flee away and be at rest and good cause he had for it, for this life is not more short than miserable. . . . Be it our care then not to come creeping and coughing to God with a load of diseases and infirmities about us, when we are at death's door and not before, but to consecrate the first fruits of our life to his service. It is in the spending our time (as one compares it) as in the distilling of waters, the thinnest and purest part runs out first and only the

lees at last: what an unworthy thing will it be to offer the prime of our time to the world, the flesh, and the devil, and the dregs of it to God. He that forbade the lame and the blind in beasts to be sacrificed, will not surely allow it in men; if they come not to present their bodies a living sacrifice, while they are living and lively too, ere they be lame or blind or deformed with extremity of age, it is even a miracle if it prove then a holy, acceptable, or reasonable service.—*Thomas Washbourne, 1655.*

**Verse 9.** (*second clause*). The Hebrew is different from all the Versions. *We consume our years* (hgx-wmk kemo hegeh) *like a groan*. We live a dying, whining, complaining life, and at last a *groan* is its termination!—*Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 9.** The Vulgate translation has, *Our years pass away like those of a spider*. It implies that our life is as frail as the thread of a spider's web. Constituted most curiously the spider's web is; but what more fragile? In what is there more wisdom than in the complicated frame of the human body; and what more easily destroyed? Glass is granite compared with flesh; and vapours are rocks compared with life.—*C.H.S.*

**Verse 10.** *It is soon cut off, and we fly away.* At the Witan or council assembled at Edwin of Northumbria at Godmundingham (modern name Godmanham), to debate on the mission of Paulinus, the King was thus addressed by a heathen Thane, one of his chief men:—"The present life of man, O King, may be likened to what often happens when thou art sitting at supper with thy thanes and nobles in winter time. A fire blazes on the hearth, and warms the chamber; outside rages a storm of wind and snow; a sparrow flies in at one door of thy hall, and quickly passes out at the other. For a moment and while it is within, it is unharmed by the wintry blast, but this brief season of happiness over, it returns to that wintry blast whence it came, and vanishes from thy sight. Such is the brief life of man; we know not what went before it, and we are utterly ignorant as to what shall follow it. If, therefore, this new doctrine contain anything more certain, it justly deserves to be followed."—*Bede's Chronicle.*

**Verse 10.** *The time of our life is threescore years and ten* (saith Moses), or set it upon the tenters, and rack it to *fourscore*, though not one in every fourscore arrives to that account, yet can we not be said to live so long; for take out, first, ten years for infancy and childhood, which Solomon calls the time of wantonness and vanity (Ec 11:1-10.), wherein we scarce remember what we did, or whether we lived or no; and how short it is then? Take out of the remainder a third part for sleep, wherein like blocks we lie senseless, and

how short is it then? Take out yet besides the time of our carking and worldly care, wherein we seem both dead and buried in the affairs of the world, and how short is it then? And take out yet besides, our times of wilful sinning and rebellion, for while we sin, we live not, but we are "dead in sin", and what remaineth of life? Yea, how short is it then? So short is that life which nature allows, and yet we sleep away part, and play away part, and the cares of the world have a great part, so that the true spiritual and Christian life hath little or nothing in the end.—*From a Sermon by Robert Wilkinson, entitled "A Meditation of Mortalitie, preached to the late Price Henry, some few daies before his death", 1612.*

**Verse 10.** *Threescore years and ten.* It may at first seem surprising that Moses should describe the days of man as "*Threescore years and ten.*" But when it is remembered, that, in the second year of the pilgrimage in the wilderness, as related in Nu 14:28-39, God declared that all those who had been recently numbered at Sinai should die in the wilderness, before the expiration of forty years, the lamentation of Moses on the brevity of human life becomes very intelligible and appropriate; and the Psalm itself acquires a solemn and affecting interest, as a penitential confession of the sins which had entailed such melancholy consequences on the Hebrew nation; and as a humble deprecation of God's wrath; and as a funeral dirge upon those whose death had been preannounced by the awful voice of God.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

**Verse 10.** There have been several *gradual abbreviations* of man's life. Death hath been coming nearer and nearer to us, as you may see in the several ages and periods of the world. Adam, the first of human kind, lived nine hundred and thirty years. And seven or eight hundred years was a usual period of man's life before the Flood. But the Sacred History (which hath the advantage and preeminence of all other histories whatsoever, by reason of its antiquity) acquaints us that immediately after the Flood the years of man's life were shortened by no less than half...*After the Flood* man's life was apparently shorter than it was before, for they fell from nine hundred, eight hundred, and seven hundred years to four hundred and three hundred, as we see in the age of Arphaxad, Salah, Heber: yea, they fell to two hundred and odd years, as we read of Peleg, Reu, Serug, and Tharah; yea, they came down to less than two hundred years. In the space of a few years man's life was again cut shorter by almost half, if not a full half. We read that Abraham lived but one hundred and seventy-five years, so that man's age ran very low then. See the account given in Scripture of Nahor, Sarah, Ishmael, Isaac, Jacob, Joseph (who died at a hundred) which confirms the same. And again

the *third time*, man's life was shortened by almost *another half*, viz., about the year of the World 2,500, in Moses' time. For he sets the bounds of man's life thus: "The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away." Ps 90:10. Eighty years is the utmost limit he sets man's life at, *i.e.*, in the most ordinary and common account of man's life. Though some are of the opinion that these words do not give an account of the duration of man's life in general, but refer to the short lives of the Israelites in the wilderness, yet I do not see but it may take in both; and Moses who composed the Psalm, lived a hundred and twenty years himself, yet he might speak of the common term of man's life, and what usually happened to the generality of men.—*John Edwards*.

**Verse 10.** *Their strength is labour and sorrow.* Most commonly old age is a feeble estate; the very grasshopper is a burden to it. Ec 12:5. Even the old man himself is a burden, to his wife, to his children, to himself. As Barzillai said to David, "I am this day fourscore years old: and can I discern between good and evil? Can thy servant taste what I eat or what I drink? can I hear any more the voice of singing men and singing women?" 2Sa 19:35. Old age, we say, is a good guest, and should be made welcome, but that he brings such a troop with him; blindness, aches, coughs, & c.; these are troublesome, how should they be welcome? *Their strength is labour and sorrow.* If their very strength, which is their best, be labour and grief, what is their worst?—*Thomas Adams*.

**Verse 10.** *Their strength is labour and sorrow.*

Unnumbered maladies his joints invade,  
Lay siege to life, and press the dire blockade.  
—*Samuel Johnson*, 1709-1784.

**Verse 10.** *Their strength.* Properly, *the pride* of the days of our life is labour and sorrow—*i.e.*, our days at their best.—*Barth's "Bible Manual"*.

**Verse 10.** *We fly away.*

Bird of my breast, away!  
The long wished hour is come.  
On to the realms of cloudless day,  
On to thy glorious home!



Long has been thine to mourn  
 In banishment and pain.  
 Return, thou wandering dove, return,  
 And find thy ark again!

Away, on joyous wing,  
 Immensity to range;  
 Around the throne to soar and sing,  
 And faith for sight exchange.

Flee, then, from sin and woe,  
 To joys immortal flee;  
 Quit thy dark prison house below,  
 And be for ever free!

I come, ye blessed throng,  
 Your tasks and joys to share;  
 O, fill my lips with holy song,  
 My drooping wing upbear.  
 —*Henry Francis Lyte*, 1793-1847.

**Verse 11.** *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* We may take some scantling, some measure of the wrath of man, and know how far it can go, and what it can do, but we can take no measure of the wrath of God, for it is unmeasurable.—*Joseph Caryl*.

**Verse 11.** *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* None at all; and unless the power of that can be known, it must abide as unspeakable as the love of Christ which passeth knowledge.—*John Bunyan*.

**Verse 11.** Moses, I think, here means, that it is a holy awe of God, and that alone, which makes us truly and deeply feel his anger. We see that the reprobate, although they are severely punished, only chafe upon the bit, or kick against God, or become exasperated, or are stupefied, as if they were hardened against all calamities; so far are they from being subdued. And though they are full of trouble, and cry aloud, yet the Divine anger does not so penetrate their hearts as to abate their pride and fierceness. The minds of the godly alone are wounded with the wrath of God; nor do they wait for his thunder bolts, to which the reprobate hold out their hard and iron necks, but they tremble the very moment when God moves only his little finger. This I consider to be the true meaning of the prophet.—*John Calvin*.

**Verse 11.** *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* etc. The meaning is, What man doth truly know and acknowledge the power of thine anger, according to that measure of fear wherewith thou oughtest to be feared? Note hence, how Moses and the people of God, though they feared God, yet notwithstanding confess that they failed in respect of that measure of the fear of God which they ought to have had; for we must not think, but Moses and some of his people did truly fear God. But yet in regard of the power of God's anger, which was now very great and grievous, their fear of God was not answerable and proportionable; then it is apparent that Moses and his people failed in respect of the measure of the fear of God which they ought to have had, in regard of the greatness and grievousness of the judgments of God upon them. See, that the best of God's servants in this life fall short in their fear of God, and so in all graces of the Spirit; in that love of God, in faith in repentance, and in obedience, we come short all of us of that which the Lord requires at our hands. For though we do know God, and that he is a just God, and righteous, and cannot wink at sin; yet what man is there that so fears before him as he ought to be feared? what man so quakes at his anger as he should; and is so afraid of sin as he ought to be? We have no grace here in perfection, but the best faith is mixed with infidelity; our hope with fear; our joy with sorrow. It is well we can discern our wants and imperfections, and cry out with the man in the gospel, "I believe; Lord, help my unbelief!"—*Samuel Smith.*

**Verse 11.** *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* No man knows the power of God's anger, because that power has never yet put itself forth to its full stretch. Is there, then, no measure of God's wrath—no standard by which we may estimate its intenseness? There is no fixed measure or standard, but there is a variable one. The wicked man's fear of God is a measure of the wrath of God. If we take the man as he may be sometime taken, when the angel of death is upon him, when the sins of his youth and of his maturer years throng him like an armed troop, and affright and afflict him—when with all his senses keenly alive to the rapid strides of bodily decay, he feels that he must die, and yet that he is not prepared—why, it may come to pass, it does occasionally, though not always come to pass, that his anticipations of the future are literally tremendous. There is such a fear and such a dread of that God into whose immediate presence he feels himself about to be ushered, that even they who love him best, and charm him most, shrink from the wildness of his gaze and the fearfulness of his speech. And we cannot tell the man, though he may be just delirious with apprehension, that his fear of God invests the wrath of God with a darker than its actual colouring. On the contrary, we know that according to the fear, so is the wrath. We know that

if man's fear of God be wrought up to the highest pitch, and the mind throb so vehemently that its framework threaten to give way and crumble, we know that the wrath of the Almighty keeps pace with this gigantic fear. . . .

If it has happened to you—and there is not perhaps a man on the face of the earth to whom it does not sometimes happen—if it has ever happened to you to be crushed with the thought, that a life of ungodliness must issue in an eternity of woe, and if amid the solitude of midnight and amid the dejections of sickness there pass across the spirit the fitful figures of all avenging ministry, then we have to tell you, it is not the roar of battle which is powerful enough, nor the wail of orphans which is thrilling enough, to serve as the vehicle of such a communication; we have to tell you, that you fly to a refuge of lies, if you dare flatter yourselves that either the stillness of the hour or the feebleness of disease has caused you to invest vengeance with too much of the terrible. We have to tell you, that the picture was not overdrawn which you drew in your agony. *"According to thy fear, so is thy wrath."* Fear is but a mirror, which you may lengthen indefinitely, and widen indefinitely, and wrath lengthens with the lengthening and widens with the widening, still crowding the mirror with new and fierce forms of wasting and woe. We caution you, then, against ever cherishing the flattering notion, that fear can exaggerate God's wrath. We tell you, that when fear has done its worst, it can in no degree come up to the wrath which it images...

Now, it is easy to pass from this view of the text to another, which is in a certain sense similar. You will always find, that men's apprehensions of God's wrath are nicely proportioned to the fear and reverence which are excited in them by the name and the attributes of God. He will have but light thoughts of future vengeance, who has but low thoughts of the character and properties of his Creator: and from this it comes to pass, that the great body of men betray a kind of stupid insensibility to the wrath of Jehovah...Look at the crowd of the worldly and the indifferent. There is no fear of God in that crowd; they are "of the earth earthy." The soul is sepulchred in the body, and has never wakened to a sense of its position with reference to a holy and avenging Creator. Now, then, you may understand the absence of all knowledge of the power of God's wrath. *"Who knoweth the power of thine anger? even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath."*—Henry Melvill.

**Verse 11.** *Who knoweth the power of thine anger?* etc. This he utters, 1. By way of lamentation. He sighing forth a most doleful complaint against the security and stupor he observed in that generation of men in his time, both in those that had already died in their sins, as well as of that new generation that had come up in their room, who still lived in their sins; oh, says he,

'Who of them knoweth the power of thine anger?' namely, of that wrath which followeth after death, and seizes upon men's souls for ever; that is, who considers it, or regards it, till it take hold upon them? He utters it, 2. In a way of astonishment, out of the apprehension he had of the greatness of that wrath. "*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" that is, who hath or can take it in according to the greatness of it? which he endeavours to set forth, as applying himself to our own apprehension, in this wise, *Even according to thy fear, so is thy wrath.* Where those words, "*thy fear*" are taken *objective*, and so signify the *fear of thee*; and so the meaning is, that according to whatever proportion our souls can take in, in fears of thee and of thine anger, so great is thy wrath itself. You have souls that are able to comprehend vast fears and terrors; they are as extensive in their fears as in their desires, which are stretched beyond what this World or the creatures can afford them, to an infinity. The soul of man is a dark cell, which when it begets fears once, strange and fearful apparitions rise up in it, which far exceed the ordinary proportion of worldly evils (which yet also our fears usually make greater than they prove to be); but here, as to that punishment which is the effect of God's own immediate wrath, let the soul enlarge itself, says he, and widen its apprehension to the utmost; fear what you can imagine, yet still God's wrath, and the punishment it inflicts, are not only proportionable, but infinitely exceedingly all you can fear or imagine. "*Who knoweth the power of thine anger?*" It passeth knowledge.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

**Verse 12.** *So teach us to number our days, that we may apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Moses who was learned in all the sciences of the Egyptians (among which arithmetic was one) desireth to learn this point of arithmetic only of thee, O Lord; and why? Is it because, as Job speaketh, thou hast determined the number of his days? Would Moses have thee reveal to every man the moment of his end? Such speculations may well beseem an Egyptian, an Israelite they do not beseem. Thy children, O Lord, know that it is not for them so to know times and seasons which thou keepest in thine own power, and are a secret sealed up with thee: we should not pry into that counting house, nor curiously inquire into that sum. It is not then a mathematical numbering of days that Moses would be schooled in, but a moral; he would have God not simply to teach him to number, but to number "*so*"; and "*so*" points out a special manner, a manner that may be useful for the children of God. And indeed our petitions must bear this mark of profitable desires, and we should not ask aught of thee but that by which (if we speed) we may become the better; he that so studies his mortality learns it as he should, and it is only thou, O Lord, that takest him out such a lesson. But what is the use, O Moses, that thou wouldst have man make of such a

knowledge? "*Even to apply his heart unto wisdom.*" O happy knowledge, by which a man becomes wise; for wisdom is the beauty of a reasonable soul. God created him therewith, but sin hath divorced the soul and wisdom; so that a sinful man is indeed no better than a fool, so the Scripture calleth him; and well it may call him so, seeing all his carriage is vain, and the upshot of his endeavours but vexation of spirit. But though sin have divorced wisdom and the soul, yet are they not so severed but they may be reunited; and nothing is more powerful in furthering this union than this feeling meditation—that we are mortal.—*Arthur Lake.*

**Verse 12.** *So teach us,* etc. Moses sends you to God for teaching. "Teach Thou us; not as the world teacheth—teach Thou us." No meaner Master; no inferior school; not Moses himself except as he speaks God's word and becomes the schoolmaster to bring us to Christ; not the prophets, not apostles themselves, neither "holy men of old", except as they "spake and were moved by the Holy Ghost." This knowledge comes not from flesh and blood, but from God. "So teach Thou us." And so David says, "Teach me Thy way, O Lord, and I will walk in Thy truth." And hence our Lord's promise to his disciples, "The Holy Ghost, He shall teach you all things."—*Charles Richard Summer, 1850.*

**Verse 12.** *Teach us to number our days.* Mark what it is which Moses here prays for, only to be taught to number his days. But did he not do this already? Was it not his daily work this, his constant and continual employment? Yes, doubtless it was; yea, and he did it carefully and conscientiously too. But yet he thought he did it not well enough, and therefore prays here in the text to be taught to do better. See a good man, how little he pleaseth himself in any action of his life, in any performance of duty that he does. He can never think that he does well enough whatever he does, but still desires to do otherwise, and would fain do better. There is an affection of modesty and humility which still accompanies real piety, and every pious man is an humble, modest man, and never reckons himself a perfect proficient, or to be advanced above a teaching, but is content and covetous to be a continual learner; to know more than he knows and to do better than he does; yea, and thinks it no disparagement to his graces at all to take advice, and to seek instruction where it is to be had.—*Edm. Barker's Funeral Sermon for Lady Capell, 1661.*

**Verse 12.** *Teach us to number our days.*

"Improve Time in time, while the Time doth last.  
For all Time is no time, when the Time is past."

—From Richard Pigot's *"Life of Man, symbolised by the Months of the Year"*, 1866.

**Verse 12.** *Teach us to number our days.* The proverbial oracles of our parsimonious ancestors have informed us that the fatal waste of fortune is by small expenses, by the profusion of sums too little singly to alarm our caution, and which we never suffer ourselves to consider together. Of the same kind is prodigality of life: he that hopes to look back hereafter with satisfaction upon past years, must learn to know the present value of single minutes, and endeavour to let no particle of time fall useless to the ground. An Italian philosopher expressed in his motto that time was his estate; an estate, indeed, that will produce nothing without cultivation, but will always abundantly repay the labours of industry, and satisfy the most extensive desires, if no part of it be suffered to lie waste by negligence, to be overrun by noxious plants, or laid out for show rather than for use.—*Samuel Johnson*.

**Verse 12.** *To number our days*, is not simply to take the reckoning and admeasurement of human life. This has been done already in Holy Scripture, where it is said, *"The days of our years are threescore years and ten; and if by reason of strength they be fourscore years, yet is their strength labour and sorrow; for it is soon cut off, and we fly away."* Nor yet is it, in the world's phrase, to calculate the chances of survivorship, which any man may do in the instance of the aggregate, but which no man can do in the case of the individual. But it is to take the measure of our days as compared with the work to be performed, with the provision to be laid up for eternity, with the preparation to be made for death, with the precaution to be taken against judgment. It is to estimate human life by the purposes to which it should be applied, by the eternity to which it must conduct, and in which it shall at last be absorbed. Under this aspect it is, that David contemplates man when he says, *"Thou hast made our days as an handbreadth; and mine age is as nothing before thee"*, Ps 39:5; and then proceeds to include in this comprehensive estimate even those whose days have been the longest upon earth: *"Verily, every man at his best estate is altogether vanity."*—*Thomas Dale*, 1847.

**Verse 12.** *To number our days.* Number we our days by our daily prayers—number we them by our daily obedience and daily acts of love—number we them by the memories that they bring of holy men who have entered into their Saviour's peace, and by the hopes which are woven with them of glory and of grace won for us!—*Plain Commentary*.

**Verse 12.** *Apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Sir Thomas Smith, secretary to Queen Elizabeth, some months before his death said, That it was a great pity men know not to what end they were born into this world, until they were ready to go out of it.—*Charles Bradbury.*

**Verse 12.** *Apply our hearts unto wisdom.* St. Austin says, "We can never do that, except we number every day as our last day." Many put far the evil day. They refuse to leave the earth, when the earth is about to take its leave of them.—*William Secker.*

**Verse 12.** *Apply our hearts unto wisdom.* Moses speaketh of *wisdom* as if it were physic, which doth no good before it be applied; and the part to apply it to is the *heart*, where all man's affections are to love it and to cherish it, like a kind of hostess. When the heart seeketh it findeth, as though it were brought unto her, like Abraham's ram. Therefore God saith, "They shall seek me and find me, because they shall seek me with their hearts", Jer 29:13; as though they should not find him with all their seeking unless they did seek him with their heart. Therefore the way to get wisdom is to apply your hearts unto it, as if it were your calling and living, to which you were bound apprentices. A man may apply his ears and his eyes as many truants do to their books, and yet never prove scholars; but from that day when a man begins to apply his heart unto wisdom, he learns more in a month after than he did in a year before, nay, than ever he did in his life. Even as you see the wicked, because they apply their hearts to wickedness, how fast they proceed, how easily and how quickly they become perfect swearers, expert drunkards, cunning deceivers, so if ye could apply your hearts as thoroughly to knowledge and goodness, you might become like the apostle which teacheth you. Therefore, when Solomon sheweth men the way how to come by wisdom, he speaks often of the heart, as, "Give thine heart to wisdom", "let wisdom enter into thine heart", "get wisdom", "keep wisdom", "embrace wisdom", Pr 2:10 4:5 8:8, as though a man went a wooing for wisdom. Wisdom is like God's daughter, that he gives to the man that loves her, and sueth for her, and means to set her at his heart. Thus we have learned how to apply knowledge that it may do us good; not to our ears, like them which hear sermons only, nor to our tongues, like them which make table talk of religion, but to our hearts, that we may say with the virgin, "My heart doth magnify the Lord", Lu 1:46, and the heart will apply it to the ear and to the tongue, as Christ saith, "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," Mt 12:34.—*Henry Smith.*

**Verse 12.** Of all arithmetical rules this is the hardest—to *number our days*. Men can number their herds and droves of oxen and of sheep, they can

estimate the revenues of their manors and farms, they can with a little pains number and tell their coins, and yet they are persuaded that their days are infinite and innumerable and therefore do never begin to number them. Who saith not upon the view of another, surely yonder man looketh by his countenance as if he would not live long, or yonder woman is old, her days cannot be many: thus we can number other men's days and years, and utterly forget our own, therefore this is the true wisdom of mortal men, to number their own days.—*Thomas Tymme*.

**Verse 12.** Observe here, after that Moses had given us a description of the wrath of God, presently his thoughts are taken up with the meditation of death. The wrath of God thought on makes us think of death...Let us often think of the wrath of God, and let the thought of it so far work upon us, as to keep us in a constant awe and fear of God; and let this fear drive us to God by prayer, that fearing as we ought, we may pray as we are commanded, and praying, we may prevent the wrath of God. If our present sorrows do not move us, God will send greater; and when our sorrows are grown too great for us, we shall have little heart or comfort to pray. Let our fears then quicken our prayers; and let our prayers be such as are able to overcome our fears; so both ways shall we be happy, in that our fears have taught us to pray, and our prayers have made us to fear no more.—*Christopher Shute, in "Ars pie moriendi: or, The true Accomptant. A Sermon", etc., 1658.*

**Verse 12.** It is evident, that the great thing wanted to make men provide for eternity, is the practical persuasion that they have but a short time to live. They will not apply their hearts unto wisdom until they are brought to the numbering of their days. And how are you to be brought, my brethren? The most surprising thing in the text is, that it should be in the form of a prayer. It is necessary that God should interfere to make men number their days. We call this surprising. What! is there not enough to make us feel our frailty, without an actual, supernatural impression? What! are there not lessons enough of that frailty without any new teaching from above? Go into our churchyards—all ages speak to all ranks. Can we need more to prove to us the uncertainty of life? Go into mourning families, and where are they not to be found?—in this it is the old, in that it is the young, whom death has removed—and is there not eloquence in tears to persuade us that we are mortal? Can it be that in treading every day on the dust of our fathers, and meeting every day with funerals of our brethren, we shall not yet be practically taught to number our days, unless God print the truth on our hearts, through some special operation of his Spirit? It is not thus in other things. In other things the frequency of the occurrence makes us expect it.



The husbandman does not pray to be made believe that the seed must be buried and die before it will germinate. This has been the course of the grain of every one else, and where there is so much experience what room is there for prayer. The mariner does not pray to be taught that the needle of his compass points towards the north. The needle of every compass has so pointed since the secret was discovered, and he has not to ask when he is already so sure. The benighted man does not pray to be made to feel that the sun will rise in a few hours. Morning has succeeded to night since the world was made, and why should he ask what he knows too well to doubt? But in none of these things is there greater room for assurance than we have each one for himself, in regard to its being appointed to him once to die. Nevertheless, we must pray to be! made to know—to be made to feel—that we are to die, in the face of an experience which is certainly not less than that of the parties to whom we have referred. This is a petition that we may believe, believe as they do: for they act on their belief in the fact which this experience incontestably attests. And we may say of this, that it is amongst the strangest of the strange things that may be affirmed of human nature, that whilst, in regard to inferior concerns, we can carefully avail ourselves of experience, taking care to register its decisions and to deduce from them rules for our guidance—in the mightiest concern of all we can act as though experience had furnished no evidence, and we were left without matter from which to draw inferences. And, nevertheless, in regard to nothing else is the experience so uniform. The grain does not always germinate—but every man dies. The needle does not always point due north—but every man dies. The sun does not cross the horizon in every place in every twenty-four hours—but every man dies. Yet we must pray—pray as for the revelation of a mystery hidden from our gaze—we must pray to be made to know—to be made to believe—that every man dies! For I call it not belief, and our text calls it not belief, in the shortness of life and the certainty of death, which allows men to live without thought of eternity, without anxiety as to the soul, or without an effort to secure to themselves salvation. I call it not belief—no, no, anything rather than belief. Men are rational beings, beings of forethought, disposed to make provision for what they feel to be inevitable; and if there were not a practical infidelity as to their own mortality, they could not be practically reckless as to their own safety.—*Henry Melvill.*

**Verse 12.** *So teach us to number our days*, etc. Five things I note in these words: first, that death is the haven of every man; whether he sit on the throne, or keep in a cottage, at last he must knock at death's door, as all his fathers have done before him. Secondly, that man's time is set, and his bounds appointed, which he cannot pass, no more than the Egyptians could

pass the sea; and therefore Moses saith, "*Teach us to number our days*", as though there were a number of our days. Thirdly, that our days are few, as though we were sent into this world but to see it; and therefore Moses, speaking of our life, speaks of days, not of years, nor of months, nor of weeks; but "*Teach us to number our days*", shewing that it is an easy thing even for a man to number his days, they be so few. Fourthly, the aptness of man to forget death rather than anything else; and therefore Moses prayeth the Lord to teach him to number his days, as though they were still slipping out of his mind. Lastly, that to remember how short a time we have to live, will make us apply our hearts to that which is good.—*Henry Smith*.

**Verse 12.** *Our hearts.* In both the Scriptures of the Old and New Testament, the term "*heart*" is applied alike to the mind that thinks, to the spirit that feels, and the will that acts. And it here stands for the whole mental and moral nature of man, and implies that the whole soul and spirit, with all their might, are to be applied in the service of wisdom.—*William Brown Keer*, 1863.

**Verse 12.** *Wisdom.* I consider this "*wisdom*" identical with the hypostatic *wisdom* described by Solomon, Pr 8:15-31, and Pr 9:1,5, even Immanuel, the *wisdom*, righteousness, sanctification, and redemption of his people. The chief pursuit of life should be the attainment of an experimental knowledge of Christ, by whom "kings reign and princes decree justice; whose delights are with the sons of men, and who crieth, Whoso findeth me findeth life, and shall obtain favour of the Lord; come, eat of my bread and drink of the wine which I have mingled." David in the Psalms, and Solomon, his son, in the Proverbs, have predictively manifested Messiah as the hypostatic *wisdom*, "whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting."—*J.N. Coleman*.

**Verse 13.** *Let it repent thee.* According to the not infrequent and well known phraseology of Scripture, God is said to repent, when putting away men's sorrow, and affording new ground of gladness, he appears as it were to be changed.—*John Calvin*.

**Verse 14.** *O satisfy us with thy mercy.* A poor hungry soul lying under sense of wrath, will promise to itself happiness for ever, if it can but once again find what it hath sometime felt; that is, one sweet fill of God's sensible mercy towards it.—*David Dickson*.

**Verse 14.** *O satisfy us.* That is everywhere and evermore the cry of humanity. And what a strange cry it is, when you think of it, brethren! Man

is the offspring of God; the bearer of his image; he stands at the head of the terrestrial creation; on earth he is peerless; he possesses wondrous capacities of thought, and feeling, and action. The world, and all that is in it, has been formed in a complete and beautiful adaptation to his being. Nature seems to be ever calling to him with a thousand voices, to be glad and rejoice; and yet he is unsatisfied, discontented, miserable! This is a most strange thing—strange, that is, on any theory respecting man's character and condition, but that which is supplied by the Bible; and it is not only a testimony to the ruin of his nature, but also to the insufficiency of everything earthly to meet his cravings.—*Charles M. Merry, 1864.*

**Verse 14.** *O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days.* We pass now to this particular prayer, and those limbs that make up the body of it. They are many; as many as words in it: satisfy, and satisfy us, and do that early, and do that with that which is thine, and let that be mercy. So that first it is a prayer for fulness and satisfaction,—*satisfy*: and then it is a prayer not only of appropriation to ourselves, satisfy me, but of a charitable dilation and extension to others, satisfy *us*, all us, all thy servants, all thy church; and then thirdly it is a prayer of despatch and expedition, "Satisfy us *early*;" and after that, it is a prayer of evidence and manifestation, satisfy us with that which is, and which we may discern to be *thine*; and then lastly it is a prayer of limitation even upon God himself, that God will take no other way herein but the way of "*mercy*." "*Satisfy us early with thy mercy*." ...There is a spiritual fulness in this life of which St. Hierome speaks, *Ebrietas felix, satietas salutaris*, A happy excess and a wholesome surfeit; *quoe quanto copiosius sumitur, majorem donat sobrietatem*, In which the more we eat, the more temperate we are, and the more we drink, the more sober. In which (as St. Bernard also expresses it in his mellifluence) *Mutua interminabili inexplicabili generatione, desiderium generat satietatem, et satietas parit desiderium*, By a mutual and reciprocal, by an undeterminable and inexpressible generation of one another, the desire of spiritual graces begets a satiety, and then this satiety begets a farther desire. This is a holy ambition, a sacred covetousness. Naphtali's blessing, "*O Naphtali, satisfied with favour, and full with the blessing of the Lord*", De 33:23; St. Stephen's blessing, "*Full of faith and of the Holy Ghost*", Ac 6:5; the blessed Virgin's blessing, "*Full of grace*"; Dorcas' blessing, "*Full of good works and of alms deeds*", Ac 9:36; the blessing of him who is blessed above all, and who blesseth all, even Christ Jesus, "*Full of wisdom, full of the Holy Ghost, full of grace and truth*". Lu 2:40 4:1 Joh 1:14. ..."*Satisfy us early with*" that which is thine, "*thy mercy*;" for there are mercies (in a fair extent and accommodation of the word, that is refreshing, eases, deliverances), that are

not *his* mercies, nor his satisfactions...It is not his mercy, except we go by good ways to good ends; except our safety be established by alliance with his friends, except our peace may be had with the perfect continuance of our religion, there is no safety, there is no peace. But let me feel the effect of this prayer, as it is a prayer of manifestation, let me discern that that which is done upon me is done by the hand of God, and I care not what it be, I had rather have God's vinegar, than man's oil, God's wormwood, than man's manna, God's justice, than any man's mercy; for therefore did Gregory Nyssen call St. Basil in a holy sense, Ambidextrum, because he took everything that came by the right handle, and with the right hand, because he saw it come from God. Even afflictions are welcome when we see them to be his: though the way that he would choose, and the way that this prayer entreats, be only mercy, "*Satisfy us early with thy mercy.*"—*John Donne.*

**Verse 16.** *And thy glory unto their children.* That is to say, that our children may see the glorious fruit of this affliction in us, that so they may not be discouraged thereby to serve thee, but rather the more heartened, when they shall see what a glorious work thou hast wrought in and upon us by afflicting us.—*William Bradshaw.*

**Verse 16-17.** "Thy work." "The work of our hands." You will observe a beautiful parallelism between two things which are sometimes confounded and sometimes too jealously sundered: I mean *God's agency* and *man's instrumentality*, between man's personal activity and that power of God which actuates and animates, and gives it a vital efficacy. For forty years it had been the business of Moses to bring Israel into a right state politically, morally, religiously: *that* had been *his* work, And yet, in so far as it was to have any success or enduringness, it must be God's work. "The work of our hands" do thou establish; and this God does when, in answer to prayer, he adopts the work of his servants, and makes it his own "work", his own "glory", his own "beauty."—*James Hamilton.*

**Verse 16-17.** There is a twofold Rabbinical tradition respecting this verse and the preceding one; that they were the original prayer recited by Moses as a blessing on the work of making the Tabernacle and its ornaments, and that subsequently he employed them as the usual formula of benediction for any newly undertaken task, whenever God's *glorious Majesty* was to be consulted for an answer by Urim and Thummim.—*Lyranus, R. Shelomo, and Genebrardus, quoted by Neale.*

**Verses 16-17.** They were content to live and to die as pilgrims, provided only they could feel that in his sterner dealings with them, God was,

however slowly, preparing the way for that display of glorious blessedness which should be the lot of their descendants. In a similar spirit they ask God to establish the work of their hands, though they reckoned not that they should behold its results. Their comfort in sowing was the belief that their children would reap.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp*.

**Verses 16-17.** It is worthy of notice that this prayer was answered. Though the first generation fell in the wilderness, yet the labours of Moses and his companions were blessed to the second. These were the most devoted to God of any generation that Israel ever saw. It was of them that the Lord said, "I remember thee, the kindness of thy youth, the love of thine espousals, when thou wentest after me in the wilderness, in a land that was not sown. Israel was holiness unto the Lord, and the first fruits of his increase." It was then that Balaam could not curse, but, though desirous of the wages of unrighteousness, was compelled to forego them, and his curse was turned into a blessing. We are taught by this case, amidst temporal calamities and judgments, in which our earthly hopes may be in a manner extinguished, to seek to have the loss repaired by spiritual blessings. If God's work does but appear to us, and our posterity after us, we need not be dismayed at the evils which afflict the earth.—*Andrew Fuller*.

**Verse 17.** *Let the beauty of the LORD our God be upon us*, etc. Let us try to look at our life's work in relation to the Lord's beauty. Our work and Divine Beauty, at first sight, how different; yet, on deeper insight, how truly one, how inseparably united. There is light so beauty giving, that nothing it touches is positively ugly. In our sea girt island, with our fickle climate and grey atmosphere, we can only rarely imagine what magic power the serene skies, the balmy air, the sunny atmosphere of the South have over even the least interesting object in nature; but from certain hours, in certain places, I think we may form an idea of the transforming faculty of light. There is also spiritual light, so beauty inspiring, that the plainest face within which it is born is illumined with singular loveliness, which wins its way into many a heart. Who of us has not marvelled at an unexpected light, in what we had always thought an uninteresting face? Who has not beheld a light divine irradiate the human countenance, giving joy, and prophesying perfection, where we had least thought to find beauty? May we not take these facts as emblems, albeit faint and imperfect, of what the "*Beauty of the Lord*" does for us, and our work? You know what the natural light can do for material objects; you know what mental and moral light can work for human faces; rise from these, and know what spiritual light, Divine Light, can do for

immortal beings and immortal works.—*Jessie Coombs, in "Thoughts for the Inner Life", 1867.*

**Verse 17.** *The beauty of the Lord.* In the word Men (beauty) there is something like a deluge of grace. Thus far, he says, we have sought thy work, O Lord. There we do nothing, but are only spectators and recipients of thy gifts, we are merely passive. There thou showest thyself to us, and makest us safe, by thy work alone, which thou doest, when thou dost liberate us from that disease which Satan inflicted on the whole human race in Adam, to wit, Sin and Eternal death.—*Martin Luther.*

**Verse 17.** God is glorified and his work advances when his church is beautiful. *The beauty of the Lord* is the beauty of holiness,—that beauty which in the Lord Jesus himself shone with lustre so resplendent, and which ought to be repeated or reflected by every disciple. And it is towards this that all amongst us who love the Saviour, and who long for the extension of his Kingdom, should very mainly direct their endeavours. Nothing can be sadder than when preaching or personal effort is contradicted and neutralized by the low or unlovely lives of those who pass for Christians; and nothing can go further to insure success than when prayer is carried out and preaching is seconded by the pure, holy, and benevolent lives of those who seek to follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth.—*James Hamilton.*

**Verse 17.** *The work of our hands.* Jarchi interprets this of the work of the Tabernacle, in which the hands of the Israelites were employed in the wilderness; so Arama of the Tabernacle of Bezaleel.—*John Gill.*

---

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** The near and dear relation between God and his people, so that they mutually dwell in each other.

**Verse 1.** The abode of the church the same in all ages; her relation to God never changes.

**Verse 1.**

1. The soul is at home in God. (a) Originally. Its birth place—its native air—home of its thoughts, will, conscience, affections, desires. (b) Experimentally. When it returns here it feels itself at home: "Return unto thy

rest", etc. (c) Eternally. The soul, once returned to this home, never leaves it: "it shall go no more out for ever."

2. The soul is not at home elsewhere. "Our dwelling place", etc. (a) For all men. (b) At all times. He is ever the same, and the wants of the soul substantially are over the same.—*G.R.*

**Verse 2.** A Discourse upon the Eternity of God. S. Charnock. Works pg 344-373, Nichol's Edition.

**Verse 2.** (*last clause*).—The consideration of God's eternity may serve,

1. For the support of our faith; in reference to our own condition for the future; in reference to our posterity; and to the condition of God's church to the end of the world.
2. For the encouragement of our obedience. We serve the God who can give us an everlasting reward.
3. For the terror of wicked men.

—*Tillotson's Sermon on the Eternity of God.*

**Verse 3.**

1. The cause of death—"thou turnest."
2. The nature of death—"return."
3. The necessities of death—reconciliation with God, and preparation to return.

**Verse 4.**

1. Contemplate the lengthened period with all its events.
2. Consider what He must be to whom all this is as nothing.
3. Consider how we stand towards Him.

**Verse 5.** Comparison of mortal life to sleep. See William Bradshaw's remarks in our Notes on this verse.

**Verses 5-6.** The lesson of the Meadows.

1. Grass growing the emblem of youth.
2. Grass flowering—or man in his prime.
3. The scythe.
4. Grass mown—or man at death.

**Verse 7.**

1. Man's chief troubles are the effect of death. (a) His own death. (b) The death of others.
2. Death is the effect of Divine anger: "We are consumed by", etc.
3. Divine anger is the effect of sin. Death by sin.—*G.R.*

**Verse 8.**

1. The notice which God takes of sin. (a) Individual. "*Our* iniquities." (b) Universal notice—"iniquities"—not one only, but all. (c) Minute, even the most secret sins. (d) Constant: "Set them before" him—"in the light", etc.
2. The notice which we should take of them on that account. (a) In our thoughts. Set them before us. (b) In our consciences. Condemn ourselves on account of them. (c) In our wills. Turn from them by repentance—turn to a pardoning God by faith.—*G.R.*

**Verse 9.**

1. Every man has a history. His life is as a tale—a separate tale—to be told.
2. Every man's history has some display of God in it. All our days, some may say, are passed away in thy wrath—all, others may say, in thy love—and others, some of our days in anger and some in love.
3. Every man's history will be told. In death, at judgment, through eternity.—*G.R.*

**Verse 10.**

1. What life is *to* most. It seldom reaches its natural limits. One half die in childhood; more than half of the other half die in manhood; few attain to old age.
2. What life is *at* most. "Threescore years", etc.



3. What it is to most beyond that limit. "If by reason", etc.
4. What it is to all. "It is soon cut off", etc.—*G.R.*

### **Verse 11.**

1. The anger of God against sin is not fully known by its effects in this life. "Who knoweth the power", etc. Here we see the hiding of its power.
2. The anger of God against sin hereafter is equal to our greatest fears. "According to thy fear", etc.; or, "the fear of thee", etc.—*G.R.*

### **Verse 12.**

1. The Reckoning. (a) What their usual number. (b) How many of them are already spent. (c) How uncertain the number that remains. (d) How much of them must be occupied with the necessary duties of this life. (e) What afflictions and helplessness may attend them.
2. The use to be made of it. (a) To "seek wisdom"—not riches, worldly honours, or pleasures—but wisdom; not the wisdom of the world, but of God. (b) To "apply the heart" to it. Not mental merely, but moral wisdom; not speculative merely, but experimental; not theoretical merely, but practical. (c) To seek it at once—immediately. (d) To seek it constantly—"apply our hearts", etc.
3. The help to be sought in it. "So teach us", etc. (a) Our own ability is insufficient through the perversion both of the mind and heart by sin. (b) Divine help may be obtained. "If any man lack wisdom." etc.—*G.R.*

**Verse 12.**—The Sense of Mortality. Show the variety of blessings dispensed to different classes by the right use of the sense of mortality.

1. It may be an antidote for the sorrowful. Reflect, "there is an end."
2. It should be a restorative to the labouring.
3. It should be a remedy for the impatient.
4. As a balm to the wounded in heart.
5. As a corrective for the worldly.

6. As a sedative to the frivolous.

—*R. Andrew Griffin, in "Stems and Twigs", 1872.*

**Verse 13.** In what manner the Lord may be said to repent.

**Verse 14.** (*first clause*). See "*Spurgeon's Sermons*", No. 513: "*The Young Man's Prayer*."

**Verse 14.**

1. The deepest yearning of man is for satisfaction.
2. Satisfaction can only be found in the realization of Divine Mercy.

—*C.M. Merry, 1864.*

**Verse 14.** *O satisfy us early with thy mercy*, etc. Learn,

1. That our souls can have no solid satisfaction in earthly things.
2. That the mercy of God alone can satisfy our souls.
3. That nothing but satisfaction in God can fill our days with joy and gladness.

—*John Cawood, 1842.*

**Verse 14.**

1. The most cheerful days of earth are made more cheerful by thoughts of Divine mercy.
2. The most sorrowful days of earth are made glad by the consciousness of Divine love.

—*G.R.*

**Verse 15.**

1. The joy of faith is in proportion to the sorrow of repentance.
2. The joy of consolation is in proportion to suffering in affliction.

3. The joy of the returning smiles of God is in proportion to the terror of his frowns.—*G.R.*

**Verse 15.** The Balance of life, or the manner in which our joys are set over against our sorrows.

**Verse 16.**

1. Our duty—"work", and our desire about it.

2. Our children's portion—"glory", and our prayer in reference to it.

**Verse 17.** The Right Establishment, or the work which will endure—why it will endure and should endure. Why we wish our work to be of such a nature, and whether there are enduring elements in it.

---

## WORKS UPON THE NINETIETH PSALM

Enarratio Psalmi 90. Per D. Doctorem Martinum Luth. In Schola Vuittembergensi, Anno, 1534, publice absoluta, edita vers Anno MD.

41. (In Vol. 4 of the Jena edition of Luther's Works, 1712 and other years, folio.)

A Meditation of Man's Mortalitie. Containing an Exposition of the Ninetieth Psalme. By that Reverend and Religious Servant of God Mr. William Bradshaw, sometime Fellow of Sidney Colledge in Cambridge. Published since his decease by Thomas Gataker B. of D. and Pastor of Rotherhith. London...1621.

Moses his Prayer. Or, An Exposition of the Ninetieth Psalme. In which is set forth, the Frailty and Misery of Mankind: most needful for these Times.

Wherein:

1. The Sum and Scope.
2. The Doctrines.
3. The Reasons.
4. The uses of most Texts are observed.

By *Samuel Smith*, Minister of the Gospel, Author of *David's Repentance* and the *Great Assize*, and yet Living...1656.

# Psalm 91

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

---

**TITLE.** This Psalm is without a title, and we have no means of ascertaining either the name of its writer, or the date of its composition, with certainty. The Jewish doctors consider that when the author's name is not mentioned we may assign the Psalm to the last named writer; and, if so, this is another Psalm of Moses, the man of God. Many expressions here used are similar to those of Moses in Deuteronomy, and the internal evidence, from the peculiar idioms, would point towards him as the composer. The continued lives of Joshua and Caleb, who followed the Lord fully, make remarkably apt illustrations of this Psalm, for they, as a reward for abiding in continued nearness to the Lord, lived on "amongst the dead, amid their graves." For these reasons it is by no means improbable that this Psalm may have been written by Moses, but we dare not dogmatize. If David's pen was used in giving us this matchless ode, we cannot believe as some do that he thus commemorated the plague which devastated Jerusalem on account of his numbering the people. For him, then, to sing of himself as seeing "the reward of the wicked" would be clean contrary to his declaration, "I have sinned, but these sheep, what have they done?"; and the absence of any allusion to the sacrifice upon Zion could not be in any way accounted for, since David's repentance would inevitably have led him to dwell upon the atoning sacrifice and the sprinkling of blood by the hyssop.

In the whole collection there is not a more cheering Psalm, its tone is elevated and sustained throughout, faith is at its best, and speaks nobly. A German physician was wont to speak of it as the best preservative in times of cholera, and in truth, it is a heavenly medicine against plague and pest. He who can live in its spirit will be fearless, even if once again London should become a lazaret-house, and the grave be gorged with carcases.

**DIVISION.** On this occasion we shall follow the divisions which our translators have placed at the head of the Psalm, for they are pithy and suggestive.

Ps 91:1-2—The state of the godly.

Ps 91:3-8—Their safety.

Ps 91:9-10—Their habitation.

Ps 91:11-13—Their servants.

Ps 91:14-16—Their friend; with the effects of them all.

---

## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High.* The blessings here promised are not for all believers, but for those who live in close fellowship with God. Every child of God looks towards the inner sanctuary

and the mercyseat, yet all do not dwell in the most holy place; they run to it at times, and enjoy occasional approaches, but they do not habitually reside in the mysterious presence. Those who through rich grace obtain unusual and continuous communion with God, so as to abide in Christ and Christ in them, become possessors of rare and special benefits, which are missed by those who follow afar off, and grieve the Holy Spirit of God. Into the secret place those only come who know the love of God in Christ Jesus, and those only dwell there to whom to live is Christ. To them the veil is rent, the mercyseat is revealed, the covering cherubs are manifest, and the awful glory of the Most High is apparent: these, like Simeon, have the Holy Ghost upon them, and like Anna they depart not from the temple; they are the courtiers of the Great King, the valiant men who keep watch around the bed of Solomon, the virgin souls who follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. Elect out of the elect, they have "attained unto the first three", and shall walk with their Lord in white, for they are worthy. Sitting down in the august presence chamber where shines the mystic light of the Shekinah, they know what it is to be raised up together, and to be made to sit together with Christ in the heavenlies, and of them it is truly said that their conversation is in heaven. Special grace like theirs brings with it special immunity. Outer court worshippers little know what belongs to the inner sanctuary, or surely they would press on until the place of nearness and divine familiarity became theirs. Those who are the Lord's constant guests shall find that he will never suffer any to be injured within his gates; he has eaten the covenant salt with them, and is pledged for their protection. Shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty. The Omnipotent Lord will shield all those who dwell with him, they shall remain under his care as guests under the protection of their host. In the most holy place the wings of the cherubim were the most conspicuous objects, and they probably suggested to the psalmist the expression here employed. Those who commune with God are safe with Him, no evil can reach them, for the outstretched wings of his power and love cover them from all harm. This protection is constant—they *abide* under it, and it is all sufficient, for it is the shadow of *the Almighty*, whose omnipotence will surely screen them from all attack. No shelter can be imagined at all comparable to the protection of Jehovah's own shadow. The Almighty himself is where his shadow is, and hence those who dwell in his secret place are shielded by himself. What a shade in the day of noxious heat! What a refuge in the hour of deadly storm! Communion with God is safety. The more closely we cling to our Almighty Father the more confident may we be.

**Verse 2.** *I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress.* To take up a general truth and make it our own by personal faith is the highest wisdom. It is but poor comfort to say 'the Lord is a refuge, 'but to say he is *my* refuge, is the essence of consolation. Those who believe should also speak—"I will say", for such bold avowals honour God and lead others to seek the same confidence. Men are apt enough to proclaim their doubts, and even to boast of them, indeed there is a party nowadays of the most audacious pretenders to culture and thought, who glory in casting suspicion upon every thing: hence it becomes the duty of all true believers to speak out and testify with calm courage to their own well grounded reliance upon their God. Let others say what they will, be it ours to say of the Lord, "he is our *refuge*." But what we say we must prove by our actions, we must fly to the Lord for shelter, and not to an arm of flesh. The bird flies away to the thicket, and the fox hastens to its hole, every creature uses its refuge in the hour of danger, and even so in all peril or fear of peril let us flee unto Jehovah, the Eternal Protector of his own. Let us, when we are secure in the Lord, rejoice that our position is unassailable, for he is our *fortress* as well as our refuge. No moat, portcullis, drawbridge, wall, battlement and donjon, could make us so secure as we are when the attributes of the Lord of Hosts environ us around. Behold this day the Lord is to us instead of walls and bulwarks! Our ramparts defy the leagured hosts of hell. Foes in flesh, and foes in ghostly guise are alike balked of their prey when the Lord of Hosts stands between us and their fury, and all other evil forces are turned aside. Walls cannot keep out the pestilence, but the Lord can.

As if it were not enough to call the Lord his refuge and fortress, he adds, My God! in him will I trust. Now he can say no more; "my God" means all, and more than all, that heart can conceive by way of security. It was most meet that he should say "in him will I trust", since to deny faith to such a one were wilful wickedness and wanton insult. He who dwells in an impregnable fortress, naturally trusts in it; and shall not he who dwells in God feel himself well at ease, and repose his soul in safety? O that we more fully carried out the psalmist's resolve! We have trusted in God, let us trust him still. He has never failed us, why then should we suspect him? To trust in man is natural to fallen nature, to trust in God should be as natural to regenerated nature. Where there is every reason and warrant for faith, we ought to place our confidence without hesitancy or wavering. Dear reader, pray for grace to say, "In *him* will I trust."

**Verse 3.** Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler. Assuredly no subtle plot shall succeed against one who has the eyes of God watching

for his defence, We are foolish and weak as poor little birds, and are very apt to be lured to our destruction by cunning foes, but if we dwell near to God, he will see to it that the most skilful deceiver shall not entrap us.

"Satan the fowler who betrays  
Unguarded souls a thousand ways,"

shall be foiled in the case of the man whose high and honourable condition consists in residence within the holy place of the Most High.

And from the noisome pestilence. He who is a Spirit can protect us from evil spirits, he who is mysterious can rescue us from mysterious dangers, he who is immortal can redeem us from mortal sickness. There is a deadly pestilence of error, we are safe from that if we dwell in communion with the God of truth; there is a fatal pestilence of sin, we shall not be infected by it if we abide with the thrice Holy One; there is also a pestilence of disease, and even from that calamity our faith shall win immunity if it be of that high order which abides in God, walks on in calm serenity, and ventures all things for duty's sake. Faith by cheering the heart keeps it free from the fear which, in times of pestilence, kills more than the plague itself. It will not in all cases ward off disease and death, but where the man is such as the first verse describes, it will assuredly render him immortal where others die; if all the saints are not so sheltered it is because they have not all such a close abiding with God, and consequently not such confidence in the promise. Such special faith is not given to all, for there are diversities in the measure of faith. It is not of all believers that the psalmist sings, but only of those who dwell in the secret place of the Most High. Too many among us are weak in faith, and in fact place more reliance in a phial or a globule than in the Lord and giver of life, and if we die of pestilence as others die it is because we acted like others, and did not in patience possess our souls. The great mercy is that in such a case our deaths are blessed, and it is well with us, for we are for ever with the Lord. Pestilence to the saints shall not be noisome but the messenger of heaven.

**Verse 4.** *He shall cover thee with thy feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust.* A wonderful expression! Had it been invented by an uninspired man it would have verged upon blasphemy, for who should dare to apply such words to the Infinite Jehovah? But as he himself authorised, yea, dictated the language, we have here a transcendent condescension, such as it becomes us to admire and adore. Doth the Lord speak of his feathers, as though he likened himself to a bird? Who will not see herein a matchless love, a divine tenderness, which should both woo and win our confidence?

Even as a hen covereth her chickens so doth the Lord protect the souls which dwell in him; let us cower down beneath him for comfort and for safety. Hawks in the sky and snares in the field are equally harmless when we nestle so near the Lord. His truth—his true promise, and his faithfulness to his promise, shall be thy shield and buckler. Double armour has he who relies upon the Lord. He bears a shield and wears an all surrounding coat of mail—such is the force of the word "buckler." To quench fiery darts the truth is a most effectual shield, and to blunt all swords it is an equally effectual coat of mail. Let us go forth to battle thus harnessed for the war, and we shall be safe in the thickest of the fight. It has been so, and so shall it be till we reach the land of peace, and there among the "helmed cherubim and sworded seraphim, " we will wear no other ornament, his truth shall still be our shield and buckler.

**Verse 5.** *Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night.* Such frail creatures are we that both by night and by day we are in danger, and so sinful are we that in either season we may be readily carried away by fear; the promise before us secures the favourite of heaven both from danger and from the fear of it. Night is the congenial hour of horrors, when alarms walk abroad like beasts of prey, or ghouls from among the tombs; our fears turn the sweet season of repose into one of dread, and though angels are abroad and fill our chambers, we dream of demons and dire visitants from hell. Blessed is that communion with God which renders us impervious to midnight frights, and horrors born of darkness. Not to be afraid is in itself an unspeakable blessing, since for every suffering which we endure from real injury we are tormented by a thousand griefs which arise from fear only. The shadow of the Almighty removes all gloom from the shadow of night: once covered by the divine wing, we care not what winged terrors may fly abroad in the earth. Nor for the arrow that flieth by day. Cunning foes lie in ambush, and aim the deadly shaft at our hearts, but we do not fear them, and have no cause to do so. That arrow is not made which can destroy the righteous, for the Lord hath said, "No weapon that is formed against thee shall prosper." In times of great danger those who have made the Lord their refuge, and therefore have refused to use the carnal weapon, have been singularly preserved; the annals of the Quakers bear good evidence to this; yet probably the main thought is, that from the cowardly attacks of crafty malice those who walk by faith shall be protected, from cunning heresies they shall be preserved, and in sudden temptations they shall be secured from harm. Day has its perils as well as night, arrows more deadly than those poisoned by the Indian are flying noiselessly through the air, and we shall be their victims unless we find both shield and buckler in our God. O believer, dwell under the shadow of the



Lord, and none of the archers shall destroy thee, they may shoot at thee and wound thee grievously, but thy bow shall abide in strength. When Satan's quiver shall be empty thou shalt remain uninjured by his craft and cruelty, yea, his broken darts shall be to thee as trophies of the truth and power of the Lord thy God.

**Verse 6.** *Nor for the pestilence that walketh in darkness.* It is shrouded in mystery as to its cause and cure, it marches on, unseen of men, slaying with hidden weapons, like an enemy stabbing in the dark, yet those who dwell in God are not afraid of it. Nothing is more alarming than the assassin's plot, for he may at any moment steal in upon a man, and lay him low at a stroke; and such is the plague in the days of its power, none can promise themselves freedom from it for an hour in any place in the infected city; it enters a house men know not how, and its very breath is mortal; yet those choice souls who dwell in God shall live above fear in the most plague stricken places—they *shall not be afraid of the "plagues which in the darkness walk."* Nor for the destruction that wasteth at noonday. Famine may starve, or bloody war devour, earthquake may overturn and tempest may smite, but amid all, the man who has sought the mercy seat and is sheltered beneath the wings which overshadow it, shall abide in perfect peace. Days of horror and nights of terror are for other men, his days and nights are alike spent with God, and therefore pass away in sacred quiet. His peace is not a thing of times and seasons, it does not rise and set with the sun, nor does it depend upon the healthiness of the atmosphere or the security of the country. Upon the child of the Lord's own heart pestilence has no destroying power, and calamity no wasting influence: pestilence walks in darkness, but he dwells in light; destruction wastes at noonday, but upon him another sun has risen whose beams bring restoration. Remember that the voice which saith "thou shalt not fear" is that of God himself, who hereby pledges his word for the safety of those who abide under his shadow, nay, not for their safety only, but for their serenity. So far shall they be from being injured that they shall not even be made to fear the ills which are around them, since the Lord protects them.

"He, his shadowy plumes outspread.  
With his wing shall fence thy head;  
And his truth around thee wield,  
Strong as targe or bossy shield!  
Naught shall strike thee with dismay,  
Fear by night, nor shaft by day."

**Verse 7.** *A thousand shall fall at thy side and ten thousand at thy right hand.* So terribly may the plague rage among men that the bills of mortality may

become very heavy and continue to grow ten times heavier still, yet shall such as this Psalm speaks of survive the scythe of death. It shall not come nigh thee. It shall be so near as to be at thy side, and yet not nigh enough to touch thee; like a fire it shall burn all around, yet shall not the smell of it pass upon thee. How true is this of the plague of moral evil, of heresy, and of backsliding. Whole nations are infected, yet the man who communes with God is not affected by the contagion; he holds the truth when falsehood is all the fashion. Professors all around him are plague smitten, the church is wasted, the very life of religion decays, but in the same place and time, in fellowship with God, the believer renews his youth, and his soul knows no sickness. In a measure this also is true of physical evil; the Lord still puts a difference between Israel and Egypt in the day of his plagues. Sennacherib's army is blasted, but Jerusalem is in health.

"Our God his chosen people saves  
Amongst the dead, amidst the graves."

**Verse 8.** *Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.* The sight shall reveal both the justice and the mercy of God; in them that perish the severity of God will be manifest, and in the believer's escape the richness of divine goodness will be apparent. Joshua and Caleb verified this promise. The Puritan preachers during the plague of London must have been much impressed with this verse as they came out of their hiding places to proclaim mercy and judgment to the dissolute age which was so sorely visited with the pest. The sight of God's judgments softens the heart, excites a solemn awe, creates gratitude, and so stirs up the deepest kind of adoration. It is such a sight as none of us would wish to see, and yet if we did see it we might thus be lifted up to the very noblest style of manhood. Let us but watch providence, and we shall find ourselves living in a school where examples of the ultimate reward of sin are very plentiful. One case may not be judged alone lest we misjudge, but instances of divine visitation will be plentiful in the memory of any attentive observer of men and things; from all these put together we may fairly draw conclusions, and unless we shut our eyes to that which is self evident, we shall soon perceive that there is after all a moral ruler over the sons of men, who sooner or later rewards the ungodly with due punishment.

**Verses 9-10.** Before expounding these verses I cannot refrain from recording a personal incident illustrating their power to soothe the heart, when they are applied by the Holy Spirit. In the year 1854, when I had scarcely been in London twelve months, the neighbourhood in which I laboured was visited by Asiatic cholera, and my congregation suffered from its inroads. Family

after family summoned me to the bedside of the smitten, and almost every day I was called to visit the grave. I gave myself up with youthful ardour to the visitation of the sick, and was sent for from all corners of the district by persons of all ranks and religions. I became weary in body and sick at heart. My friends seemed falling one by one, and I felt or fancied that I was sickening like those around me. A little more work and weeping would have laid me low among the rest; I felt that my burden was heavier than I could bear, and I was ready to sink under it. As God would have it, I was returning mournfully home from a funeral, when my curiosity led me to read a paper which was wafered up in a shoemaker's window in the Dover Road. It did not look like a trade announcement, nor was it, for it bore in a good bold handwriting these words:

Because thou hast made the Lord, which is my refuge, even the most *High, thy habitation; there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling.* The effect upon my heart was immediate. Faith appropriated the passage as her own. I felt secure, refreshed, girt with immortality. I went on with my visitation of the dying in a calm and peaceful spirit; I felt no fear of evil, and I suffered no harm. The providence which moved the tradesman to place those verses in his window I gratefully acknowledge, and in the remembrance of its marvellous power I adore the Lord my God. The psalmist in these verses assures the man who dwells in God that he shall be secure. Though faith claims no merit of its own, yet the Lord rewards it wherever he sees it. He who *makes* God his refuge shall find him a refuge; he who dwells in God shall find his dwelling protected. We must *make* the Lord our habitation by choosing him for our trust and rest, and then we shall receive immunity from harm; no evil shall touch us personally, and no stroke of judgment shall assail our household. The *dwelling* here intended by the original was only a tent, yet the frail covering would prove to be a sufficient shelter from harm of all sorts. It matters little whether our abode be a gypsy's hut or a monarch's palace if the soul has made the Most High its habitation. Get into God and you dwell in all good, and ill is banished far away. It is not because we are perfect or highly esteemed among men that we can hope for shelter in the day of evil, but because our refuge is the Eternal God, and our faith has learned to hide beneath his sheltering wing.

"For this no ill thy cause shall daunt,  
No scourge thy tabernacle haunt."

It is impossible that any ill should happen to the man who is beloved of the Lord; the most crushing calamities can only shorten his journey and hasten

him to his reward. Ill to him is no ill, but only good in a mysterious form. Losses enrich him, sickness is his medicine, reproach is his honour, death is his gain. No evil in the strict sense of the word can happen to him, for everything is overruled for good. Happy is he who is in such a case. He is secure where others are in peril, he lives where others die.

**Verse 11.** *For he shall give his angels charge over thee.* Not one guardian angel, as some fondly dream, but all the angels are here alluded to. They are the bodyguard of the princes of the blood imperial of heaven, and they have received commission from their Lord and ours to watch carefully over all the interests of the faithful. When men have a charge they become doubly careful, and therefore the angels are represented as bidden by God himself to see to it that the elect are secured. It is down in the marching orders of the hosts of heaven that they take special note of the people who dwell in God. It is not to be wondered at that the servants are bidden to be careful of the comfort of their Master's guests; and we may be quite sure that when they are specially charged by the Lord himself they will carefully discharge the duty imposed upon them. To keep thee in all thy ways. To be a bodyguard, a garrison to the body, soul, and spirit of the saint. The limit of this protection "in all thy ways" is yet no limit to the heart which is right with God. It is not the way of the believer to go out of his way. He keeps in the way, and then the angels keep him. The protection here promised is exceeding broad as to place, for it refers to *all* our ways, and what do we wish for more? How angels thus keep us we cannot tell. Whether they repel demons, counteract spiritual plots, or even ward off the more subtle physical forces of disease, we do not know. Perhaps we shall one day stand amazed at the multiplied services which the unseen bands have rendered to us.

**Verse 12.** *They, that is the angels, God's own angels, shall cheerfully become our servants. They shall bear thee up in their hands;* as nurses carry little children, with careful love, so shall those glorious spirits bear up each individual believer. Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone; even minor ills they ward off. It is most desirable that we should not stumble, but as the way is rough, it is most gracious on the Lord's part to send his servants to bear us up above the loose pebbles. If we cannot have the way smoothed it answers every purpose if we have angels to bear us up in their hands. Since the greatest ills may arise out of little accidents, it shows the wisdom of the Lord that from the smaller evils we are protected.

**Verse 13.** *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder.* Over force and fraud shalt thou march victoriously; bold opponents and treacherous adversaries shall alike be trodden down. When our shoes are iron and brass lions and

adders are easily enough crushed beneath our heel. The young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet. The strongest foe in power, and the most mysterious in cunning, shall be conquered by the man of God. Not only from stones in the way, but from serpents also, shall we be safe. To men who dwell in God the most evil forces become harmless, they wear a charmed life, and defy the deadliest ills. Their feet come into contact with the worst of foes, even Satan himself nibbles at their heel, but in Christ Jesus they have the assured hope of bruising Satan under their feet shortly. The people of God are the real "George and the dragon," the true lion kings and serpent tamers. Their dominion over the powers of darkness makes them cry, "Lord, even the devils are subject unto us through thy word."

**Verse 14.** Here we have the Lord himself speaking of his own chosen one. Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver *him*. Not because he deserves to be thus kept, but because with all his imperfections he does love his God; therefore not the angels of God only, but the God of angels himself will come to his rescue in all perilous times, and will effectually deliver him. When the heart is enamoured of the Lord, all taken up with him, and intensely attached to him, the Lord will recognise the sacred flame, and preserve the man who bears it in his bosom. It is love,—love set upon God, which is the distinguishing mark of those whom the Lord secures from ill. I will set him on high, because he hath known my name. The man has known the attributes of God so as to trust in him, and then by experience has arrived at a yet deeper knowledge, this shall be regarded by the Lord as a pledge of his grace, and he will set the owner of it above danger or fear, where he shall dwell in peace and joy. None abide in intimate fellowship with God unless they possess a warm affection towards God, and an intelligent trust in him; these gifts of grace are precious in Jehovah's eyes, and wherever he sees them he smiles upon them. How elevated is the standing which the Lord gives to the believer. We ought to covet it right earnestly. If we climb on high it may be dangerous, but if God sets us there it is glorious.

**Verse 15.** *He shall call upon me, and I will answer him.* He will have need to pray, he will be led to pray aright and the answer shall surely come. Saints are first called *of* God and then they call *upon* God; such calls as theirs always obtain answers. Not without prayer will the blessing come to the most favoured, but by means of prayer they shall receive all good things. I will be with him in trouble, or "I *am* with him in trouble." Heirs of heaven are conscious of a special divine presence in times of severe trial. God is always near in sympathy and in power to help his tried ones. I will deliver

him, and honour him. The man honours God, and God honours him. Believers are not delivered or preserved in a way which lowers them, and makes them feel themselves degraded; far from it, the Lord's salvation bestows honour upon those it delivers. God first gives us conquering grace, and then rewards us for it.

**Verse 16.** *With long life will I satisfy him.* The man described in this Psalm fills out the measure of his days, and whether he dies young or old he is quite satisfied with life, and is content to leave it. He shall rise from life's banquet as a man who has had enough, and would not have more even if he could. And shew him my salvation. The full sight of divine grace shall be his closing vision. He shall look from Amana and Lebanon. Not with destruction before him black as night, but with salvation bright as noonday smiling upon him he shall enter into his rest.

---

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Whole Psalm.** The Talmud writers ascribe not only the ninety-first Psalm, but the nine ensuing, to the pen of Moses; but from a rule which will in no respect hold, that all the psalms which are without the name of an author in their respective titles are the production of the poet whose name is given in the nearest preceding title. And though it is impossible to prove that this highly beautiful ode was not written by David, the general drift of its scenery and allusions rather concur in showing that, like the last, we are indebted for it to the muse of Moses: that it was composed by him during the journey through the wilderness, shortly after the plague of the fiery serpents; when the children of Israel, having returned to a better spirit, were again received into the favour of JEHOVAH. Besides political enemies, the children of Israel in the wilderness had other evils in great numbers to encounter, from the nature and diseases of the climate, which exposed them to coups de soleil, or *sun smiting*, during the heat of the day; and to pestilential vapours, *moon smiting*, during the damp of the night, so as to render the miraculous canopy of the cloud that hung over them in the former season, and the miraculous column of fire that cheered and purified them in the latter, equally needful and refreshing. In Egypt, they had seen so much of the plague, and they had been so fearfully threatened with it as a punishment for disobedience, that they could not but be in dread of its reappearance, from the incessant fatigues of their journeying. In addition to all which, they had to be perpetually on their guard against the insidious attacks of the savage monsters and reptiles of "that great and terrible wilderness", as Moses describes it on another occasion, "wherein were fiery serpents, and

scorpions, and drought; where there was no water" (De 8:15); and where, also, as we learn from other parts of Scripture, bears, lions, leopards or tigers, and "the wolf of the evening", as Jeremiah has beautifully expressed it, prowled without restraint. Now in the Psalm before us, and especially in Ps 91:6-13, we have so clear and graphic a description of the whole of these evils presented to us, as to bring its composition directly home to the circumstances and the period here pitched upon, and to render it at least needless to hunt out for any other occasion. *J. M. Good's "Historical Outline of the Book of Psalms"*, 1842.

**Whole Psalm.** It is one of the most excellent works of this kind which has ever appeared. It is impossible to imagine anything more solid, more beautiful, more profound, or more ornamented. Could the Latin or any modern language express thoroughly all the beauties and elegancies as well of the *words* as of the *sentences*, it would not be difficult to persuade the reader that we have no poem, either in *Greek* or *Latin*, comparable to this Hebrew ode. *Simon de Muis*.

**Whole Psalm.** Psalm 90 spoke of man withering away beneath God's anger against sin. Psalm 91 tells of a Man, who is able to tread the lion and adder under His feet.—Undoubtedly the Tempter was right in referring this Psalm to "the Son of God" (Mt 4:6). The imagery of the Psalm seems to be in part drawn from that Passover Night, when the Destroying Angel passed through Egypt, while the faithful and obedient Israelites were sheltered by God. *William Kay*.

**Verse 1.** *He*, no matter who he may be, rich or poor, learned or unlearned, patrician or plebeian, young or old, for "God is no respecter of persons", but "he is rich to all that call upon him." *Bellarmino*.

**Verse 1.** *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High.* Note, he who dwells in the secret place of the Most High is not he that conjures up one or two slight and fleeting acts of hope in Him, but the man that places in him an assiduous and constant confidence. In this way he establishes for himself in God by that full trust, a home, a dwelling place, a mansion, ...The Hebrew for *he that dwelleth*, is *bvy*, that is, dwelling in quietude, and resting, enduring and remaining with constancy. *Le Blanc*.

**Verse 1.** *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High.* What intimate and unrestrained communion does this describe!—the Christian in everything making known his heart, with its needs and wishes, its thoughts and feelings, its doubts and anxieties, its sorrows and its joys, to God, as to a

loving, perfect friend. And all is not on one side. This Almighty Friend has admitted his chosen one to his "*secret place*." It is almost too wonderful to be true. It is almost too presumptuous a thought for such creatures as we are to entertain. But He himself permits it, *desires* it, teaches us to realise that it is *communion* to which he calls us. "The secret of the Lord is with them that fear him." And what is this "*secret*"? It is *that* in God which the world neither knows, nor sees, nor cares to enjoy. It is his mind revealed to those that love him, his plans, and ways ("He made known his *ways* to *Moses*", Ps 103:7), and thoughts opened to them. Yea, and things hid from angels are manifest to the least of his friends (1Pe 1:12). He wishes us to know him, and by his Word and by his Spirit he puts himself before us. Ah! it is not his fault if we do not know him. It is our own carelessness. *Mary B. M. Duncan*, in "*Under the Shadow*", 1867.

**Verse 1.** By *secret* here is meant a place of refuge from the storms of the world under the secret of his providence, who careth for all his children. Also, by the *secret of the most High*, some writers understand the castle of his mighty defence, to which his people run, being pursued by enemies, as the wild creature doth to his hole or den for succour, when the hunter hath him in chase, and the dogs are near. This then being the meaning of that which the prophet calleth the "*secret place of the most High*", and our dwelling in it, by confidence in him; we learn, in all troubles, to cleave to *God* chiefly or only for help, and to *means* but as underlings to his providence. . . . That which is here translated *dwelleth*, is as much in weight as sitteth, or is settled; and so, our dwelling in God's secret, is as much as our sitting down in it: the meaning is, we must make it our rest, as if we should say, Here will we dwell. From whence we learn, that God's children should not come to God's *secret place* as guests to an inn, but as inhabitants to their own dwellings; that is, they should continue to trust in God, as well in want as in fulness; and as much when they *wither* in their root, as when they *flourish* in it. *Robert Horn*.

**Verse 1.** *He that dwelleth*, etc.

1. "He dwells", therefore he shall "abide." He shall lodge quietly, securely.
2. "He dwells in the secret place", therefore he shall "abide under the shadow." In the cool, the favour, the cover from the heat
3. "He dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, therefore he shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty; *i.e.*, of the all powerful God, of the God of heaven; of that God whose name is Shaddai, All sufficient. *Adam Clarke*.



**Verse 1.** *Shall abide.* The Hebrew for "shall abide" is Nkwltly, which signifies, he shall pass the night. Abiding denotes a constant and continuous dwelling of the just in the assistance and protection of God. That help and protection of God is not like a lodge in a garden of cucumbers, or in a vineyard; which is destroyed in a moment, nor is it like a tent in the way which is abandoned by the traveller. It is a strong tower, a paternal home, wherein we spend all our life with the best, wealthiest, and mightiest of parents. *Passing the night* also denotes security and rest in time of darkness, temptations and calamities. With God Abraham passed the night, when He foretold to him the affliction of his descendants in Egypt, and their deliverance, Ge 15:12-16. Then also God said to him (Ge 15:1), *Fear not Abram. I am thy shield.* And leading him forth he showed him the glittering stars, and said, Tell the number of the stars, if thou be able; so shall thy seed be. *Le Blanc.*

**Verse 1.** *The shadow.* The allusion of this verse may be to the awful and mystic symbols of the ark. Under the ancient ceremony, the high priest only could enter, and that but once a year, into the holy place, where stood the emblems of the divine glory and presence; but under the present bright and merciful dispensation, every true believer has access, with boldness, into the holiest of all; and he who now dwelleth in the secret place of prayer and communion with the God of salvation, shall find the divine mercy and care spread over him for his daily protection and solace. *John Morison.*

**Verse 1.** *Under the shadow of the Almighty.* This is an expression which implies great nearness. We must walk very close to a companion, if we would have his shadow fall on us. Can we imagine any expression more perfect in describing the *constant presence* of God with his chosen ones, than this—they shall "*abide under his shadow*"? In Solomon's beautiful allegory, the Church in a time of special communion with Christ, says of him—"I sat down under his shadow with great delight" (So 2:3)—"sat down", desiring not to leave it, but to abide there for ever. And it is he who chooses to dwell in the secret place of the most High, who shall "abide under the shadow of the Almighty." There is a condition and a promise attached to it. The condition is, that we "dwell in the secret place,"—the promise, that if we do so we "shall abide under the shadow." It is of importance to view it thus. For when we remember the blessing is a *promised* blessing—we are led to feel it is a gift—a thing therefore to be prayed for in faith, as well as sought for by God's appointed means. Ah, the hopes that *this* awakens! My wandering, wavering, unstable heart, that of itself cannot keep to one course two days together is to seek its perseverance from God, and not in its own

strength. He will hold it to him if it be but seeking for steadfastness. It is not we who cling to him. It is he who keeps near to us. *Mary B. M. Duncan.*

**Verse 1-4, 9.** O you that be in fear of any danger, leave all carnal shifts, and carking counsels, and projects, and dwell in the rock of God's power and providence, and be like the dove that nestles in the holes of the rock; by faith betake yourselves unto God, by faith dwell in that rock, and there nestle yourselves, make your nests of safety in the clefts of this rock. But how may we do this thing, and what is the way to do it? Do this,—Set thy faith on work to make God that unto thee which thy necessity requires, pitch and throw thyself upon his power and providence, with a resolution of spirit to rest thyself upon it for safety, come what will come. See an excellent practice of this, Ps 91:1, *He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty*; that is, he shall be safe from all fears and dangers. Aye, that is true, you will say, who makes any doubt of it? But how shall a man come to dwell, and get into this secret place, within this strong tower? See Ps 91:2: *I will say of the LORD, He is my refuge and my fortress*; as if he had said, I will not only say, that he is a refuge; but he is *my* refuge, I will say to the Lord; that is, I will set my faith on work in particular, to throw, devolve, and pitch myself upon him for my safety. And see what follows upon this setting faith thus on work, Ps 91:3-4: *Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler, and from the noisome pestilence. He shall cover thee with his feathers*, etc. So confident the Psalmist is that upon this course taken, safety shall follow. Our safety lies not simply upon this, because God is a refuge, and is an habitation, but "Because *thou hast made* the Lord which is my refuge, thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee," etc. It is therefore the making of God our habitation, upon which our safety lies; and this is the way to make God an habitation, thus to pitch and cast ourselves by faith upon his power and providence. *Jeremiah Dyke.*

**Verse 1.** We read of a stag that roamed about in the greatest security, by reason of its having a label on its neck, "*Touch me not, I belong to Caesar*": thus the true servants of God are always safe, even among lions, bears, serpents, fire, water, thunder, and tempests; for all creatures know and reverence the shadow of God. *Bellarmino.*

**Verse 2.** *My refuge, my fortress, my God. "My refuge."* God is our "*refuge*." He who avails himself of a refuge is one who is forced to fly. It is a quiet retreat from a pursuing enemy. And there are trials, and temptations, and enemies, from which the Christian does best to fly. He cannot resist them. They are too strong for him. His wisdom is to fly into the refuge of the secret

place of his God—to rest in the shadow of the Almighty. His "strength is to sit still" *there*. Isa 30:7. "*My fortress.*" The Psalmist says, moreover, that God is his "*fortress.*" Here the idea is changed—no longer a peaceful, quiet hiding place, but a tower of defence—strong, manifest, ready to meet the attacks of all enemies, ready and able to resist them all. God is a Friend who meets every want in our nature, who can supply every need. So when we are weak and fainting, and unable to meet the brunt of battle, and striving against sin and sorrow and the wrath of man He is our safe, quiet resting place—our fortress also where no harm can reach us, no attack injure us. "*My God.*" Now the Psalmist, as a summing up of all his praises, says "I will say of Him, He is... my God!" Is there any thing omitted in the former part of his declaration? *Everything* is here—all possible ascription of honour, and glory, and power to Him "*as God*"—"God over all, blessed for ever, "and of love, reverence, trust, obedience, and filial relation towards him on the part of the Psalmist, as MY God ...when reflecting on the refuge and strength which the Lord has always been to him, and recalling his blessed experiences of sweet communion with God—words fail him. He can only say (but oh, with what expression!) MY GOD! *Mary B.M. Duncan.*

**Verse 2.** *My God.* Specially art Thou my God, first, on thy part, because of the special goodness and favour which Thou dost bestow upon me. Secondly, on my part, because of the special love and reverence with which I cling to Thee. *J. Paulus Palanteriorius.*

**Verse 2-4.** If the severity and justice of God terrify, the Lord offereth himself as *a bird with stretched out wings* to receive the suppliant, Ps 91:4. If enemies who are too strong do pursue, the Lord openeth his bosom as a *refuge*, Ps 91:2. If the child be assaulted, he becometh a fortress, Ps 91:2. If he be hotly pursued and enquired after, the Lord becometh a *secret place* to hide his child; if persecution be hot, God giveth himself for a shadow; if potentates and mighty rulers turn enemies, the Lord interposes as the *Most High and Almighty Saviour*, Ps 91:1. If his adversaries be crafty like fowlers or hunters, the Lord promises to prevent and break the snares, Ps 91:3. Whether evils do come upon the believer night or day, secretly or openly, to destroy him, the Lord preserveth his child from *destruction*; and if stumbling blocks be laid in his child's way, he hath his instruments, his servants, his angels, prepared to keep the believer that he stumble not: *He shall give his angels charge over thee*; not one angel only, but all of them, or a number of them. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 3.** *He shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler.* Are we therefore beasts? Beasts doubtless. *When man was in honour he understood not, but*

*was like the foolish beasts.* (Ps 49:12) Men are certainly beasts, wandering sheep, having no shepherd. Why art thou proud, O man? Why dost thou boast thyself, O smatterer? See what a beast thou art, for whom the snares of the fowler are being prepared. But who are these *fowlers*? The fowlers indeed are the worst and most wicked, the cleverest and the most cruel. The fowlers are they who sound no horn, that they may not be heard, but shoot their arrows in secret places at the innocent... But lo! since we know the fowlers and the beasts, our further enquiry must be, what this *snare* may be. I wish not myself to invent it, nor to deliver to you what is subject to doubt. The Apostle shows us this snare, for he was not ignorant of the devices of these fowlers. Tell us, I pray, blessed Paul, what this snare of the devil is, from which the faithful soul rejoices that it is delivered? *They that will be rich* (in this world?) says he, *fall into temptation and the snare* (of the devil?) (1Ti 6:9-10). Are not the riches of this world, then, the snare of the devil? Alas! how few we find who can boast of freedom from this snare, how many who grieve that they seem to themselves too little enmeshed in the net, and who still labour and toil with all their strength to involve and entangle themselves more and more. Ye who have left all and followed the Son of man who has not where to lay his head, rejoice and say, *He hath delivered we from the snare of the fowlers.* Bernard.

**Verse 3.** *Surely he shall deliver thee from the noisome pestilence.* Lord Craven lived in London when that sad calamity, the plague, raged. His house was in that part of the town called Craven Buildings. On the plague growing epidemic, his Lordship, to avoid the danger, resolved to go to his seat in the country. His coach and six were accordingly at the door, his baggage put up, and all things in readiness for the journey. As he was walking through his hall with his hat on, his cane under his arm, and putting on his gloves, in order to step into his carriage, he overheard his negro, who served him as postillion, saying to another servant. "I suppose, by my Lord's quitting London to avoid the plague, that his God lives in the country, and not in town." The poor negro said this in the simplicity of his heart, as really believing a plurality of gods. The speech, however, struck Lord Craven very sensibly, and made him pause. "My God," thought he, "lives everywhere, and can preserve me in town as well as in the country. I will even stay where I am. The ignorance of that negro has just now preached to me a very useful sermon. Lord, pardon this unbelief, and that distrust of thy providence, which made me think of running from thy hand." He immediately ordered his horses to be taken from the coach, and the baggage to be taken in. He continued in London, was remarkably useful among his sick neighbours, and never caught the infection. *Whitecross's Anecdotes.*

**Verses 3, 6.** Pestilence. It is from a word (rkd) that signifies to speak, and speak out; the pestilence is a speaking thing, it proclaims the wrath of God amongst a people. Drusius fetches it from the same root, but in *piel*, which is to decree; showing that the pestilence is a thing decreed in heaven, not casual. Kirker thinks it is called rkd, because it keeps order, and spares neither great nor small. The Hebrew root signifies to destroy, to cut off, and hence may the plague or pestilence have its name. The Septuagint renders it *yanatos*, death, for ordinarily it is death; and it is expressed by "*Death*", "Re 6:8, he sat on the pale horse, and killed with sword, hunger, death, and beasts of the earth; it refers to Eze 14:21, where the pestilence is mentioned.

Pestilence may be from a word which signifies to spread, spoil, rush upon, for it doth so; 2Sa 24:15, seventy thousand slain in three days; and plague, a plhgh from plhssw, to smite, to wound, for it smites suddenly, and wounds mortally; hence it is in Nu 14:12, "I will smite them with the pestilence."

This judgment is very grievous, it is called in Ps 91:3 the "noisome pestilence, "because it is infectious, contagious; and therefore the French read it, "*de la peste dangereuse*, "from the dangerous pestilence, it doth endanger those that come near it: and Musculus hath it, *a peste omnium pessima*, from the worst pestilence of all: and others, the woeful pestilence; it brings a multitude of woes with it to any place or person it comes unto, it is a messenger of woeful fears, sorrows, distractions, terrors, and death itself. *William Greenhill.*

**Verse 4.** *He shall cover thee with his feathers*, etc. Christ's wings are both for healing and for hiding (Mt 4:2), for curing and securing us; the devil and his instruments would soon devour the servants of God, if he did not set an invincible guard about them, and cover them with the golden feathers of his protection. *Thomas Watson.*

**Verse 4.** *He shall cover thee with his feathers*, etc. This is the promise of the present life. For the promise of the life to come, who can explain? If the expectation of the just be gladness, and such gladness, that no object of desire in the world is worthy to be compared with it, what will the thing itself be which is expected? No eye, apart from Thee, O God, hath seen what Thou hast prepared for them that love Thee. Under these wings, therefore, four blessings are conferred upon us. For under these we are *concealed*: under these we are *protected* from the attack of the hawks and kites, which are the powers of the air: under these a salubrious shade *refreshes* us, and wards off the overpowering heat of the sun; under these, also we are *nourished* and cherished. *Bernard.*

**Verse 4.** *He shall cover thee with his feathers*, etc.,

His plumes shall make a downie bed,  
 here thou shalt rest; He shall display  
 His wings of truth over thy head,  
 Which, like a shield, shall drive away  
 The fears of night, the darts of day. *Thomas Caryl.*

**Verse 4.** *His truth shall be thy shield and buckler.* That which we must oppose to all perils is the truth, or Word of God; so long as we keep that, and ward off darts and swords by that means, we shall not be overcome. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 5.** The true remedy against tormenting fear is faith in God; for many terrible things may befall men when they are most secure, like unto those which befall men in the night: but for any harm which may befall the believer this way, the Lord here willeth him to be nothing afraid: *Thou shalt not be afraid for the terror by night.* Many sadder accidents may befall men when they are most watching and upon their guard, but the Lord willeth the believer to be confident that he shall not be harmed this way: *Thou shalt not be afraid for the arrow that flieth by day.* Many evils are men subject unto, which come upon them men cannot tell how, but from such evils the Lord assures the believer he shall have no harm: *Thou shalt not be afraid of the pestilence which walketh in darkness.* Men are subject to many evils which come upon them openly, and not unawares, such as are calamities from enemies and oppressors; the Lord willeth the believer to be confident that he shall not be harmed this way: *Thou shalt not be afraid for the destruction that wasteth at noonday.* *David Dickson.*

**Verse 5.** *Thou shalt not be afraid.* Not only do the pious stand safe, they are not even touched with fear. For the prophet does not say, Thou shalt not be seized; but, Thou shalt not be afraid. Certainly such a confidence of mind could not be attributed to natural powers, in so menacing and so overwhelming a destruction. For it is natural to mortals, it is implanted in them by God the author and maker of nature, to fear whatever is hurtful and deadly, especially what visibly smites and suddenly destroys. Therefore does he beautifully join together these two things: the first, in saying, *Thou shalt not be afraid*; the second, by adding, *For the terror.* He acknowledges that this plague is terrible to nature; and then by his trust in divine protection he promises himself this security, that he shall not fear the evil, which would otherwise make human nature quail. Wherefore, in my judgment, those persons are neither kind (*humani*) nor pious who are of opinion that so great a calamity is not to be dreaded by mortals. They neither observe the

condition of our nature, nor honour the blessing of divine protection; both of which we see here done by the prophet. *Musculus*.

**Verse 5.** Not that we are always actually delivered out of every particular danger or grievance, but because all will turn (such is our confidence in God) to our greater good; and the more we suffer the greater shall our reward and our glory be. To the same purpose is the expression of Isaiah: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee; and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee; when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee." Isa 43:2. So also Hab 3:17-18, "Although the fig tree shall not blossom, "&c.; and Job 5:19-20, etc. And therefore here is no ground, if the words be rightly understood, for any man absolutely to presume or conclude that he shall actually be delivered out of any particular danger; much less upon such a presumption wilfully to run into dangers. If such figures, the ornament of all language; such rhetorical, emphatic amplifications be allowed to human writers, and well enough understood in ordinary language; why not to holy writers as well, who had to do with men, as well as others; whose end also was to use such expressions as might affect and move? That human writers have said as much of the security of good and godly men, I shall need to go no further than Horace his Ode, *Integer vitae scelerisque purus*, &c. Most dangerous then and erroneous is the inference of some men, yea, of some expositors, here, upon these words of the psalmist, that no godly man can suffer by the plague, or pestilence: nor is old Lactantius his assertion much sounder, *Non potest ergo fieri, quin hominem justum inter discrimina tempestatum*, &c., that no just man can perish by war, or by tempest. (Instit. 1. v, c. 18). Most interpreters conclude here, that the godly are preserved in time of public calamities; which, in a right sense, may be true; but withal they should have added, that all godly men are not exempted at such times; to prevent rash judgments. *Westminster Assembly's Annotations*.

**Verse 5. The arrow.** The arrow in this passage probably means the pestilence. The Arabs denote the pestilence by an allusion to this flying weapon. "I desired to remove to a less contagious air. I received from Solyman, the emperor, this message; that the emperor wondered what I meant, in desiring to remove my habitation; *is not the pestilence God's arrow, which will always hit his mark?* If God would visit me here with, how could I avoid it? is not the plague, said he, in my own palace, and yet I do not think of removing." *Busbequiu's Travels*. "What, say they, is not the plague the dart of Almighty God, and can we escape the blow that he levels at us? is not his hand steady to hit the persons he aims at? can we run out of

his sight, and beyond his power?" *Smith's Remarks on the Turks*, 1673. *Herbert* also, speaking of Curroon, says, "That year his empire was so wounded with God's arrows of plague, pestilence, and famine, as this thousand years before was never so terrible." See Eze 5:16. *S. Burder's Scripture Expositor*.

**Verses 5-6.** Joseph Scaliger explains, in Epis. 9, these two verses thus, *thou shalt not fear*, dxkm, *from consternation by night*, Uxm, *from the arrow flying by day*, rgdm, *from pestilence walking at evening*, kymqm, *from devastation at noon*. Under these four he comprehends all the evils and dangers to which man is liable. And as the Hebrews divide the twenty-four hours of day and night into four parts, namely, evening, midnight, morning, and midday, so he understands the hours of danger to be divided accordingly: in a word, "that the man who has made God his refuge, "is always safe, day and night, at every hour, from every danger. *Bythner*.

**Verse 6.** *The pestilence that walketh in darkness; the destruction that wasteth at noonday.* The description is equally forcible and correct. The diseases of all hot climates, and especially where vegetation is highly luxuriant, and marshes and miry swamps are abundant, as in the wilderness here referred to, proceed from the accumulating vapours of the *night*, or from the violence of the sun's rays at *midday*. The Beriberi of Ceylon, the spasmodic cholera and jungle fever of India, and the greater part of the fevers of intertropical climates, especially that called the yellow fever, chiefly originate from the first of these—"the *pestilence* that stalks in darkness"; while sunstrokes or coups de soleil, apoplexies, inflammations of the brain, and liver complaints of most kinds, proceed from the second, "the *destruction* that wasteth at noonday." And it is in allusion to this double source of mischief that the psalmist exclaims most beautifully on another occasion, Ps 121:6: "The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night." And hence the Israelites were miraculously defended against both during their passage through the wilderness by the pillar of a cloud in the daytime, to ward off the solar rays; and by the pillar of fire by night, to dissipate the collecting vapours, and preserve the atmosphere clear, dry, and healthy. *J. M. Good*.

**Verse 6.** The putrid plague fever often comes on in the night while the patient is asleep; the solstitial disease seizes in heat of harvest upon a man in open air, and cuts him off, perhaps ere evening. It is safety from perils like these that is spoken of. All these blessings are derived from and rest on (Ps 91:1) the position of Him that claims them "*under the covert of the Most High*." *Andrew A. Bonar*.



**Verse 6.** *The pestilence that walketh in darkness.* It walketh not so much in natural darkness, or in the darkness of the night, as in a figurative darkness, no man knowing where it walks, or whither it will walk, in the clearest light, whether to the poor man's house, or to the rich man's house, whether to the dwelling of the plebeian, or of the prince, till it hath left its own mark, and given a deadly stroke. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 7.** *Ten thousand.* The word *myriad* would better represent the exact idea in the original, as the Hebrew word is different from that which is translated "a thousand." It is here put for any large number. *Albert Barnes.*

**Verse 7.** *It shall not come nigh thee.* Not nigh thee? What? when they die on this side and on that, on every hand of a man, doth it not come nigh him? Yes, nigh him, but not so nigh as to hurt him: the power of God can bring us near to danger, and yet keep us far from harm. As good may be locally near us, and yet virtually far from us, so may evil. The multitude thronged Christ in the Gospel, and yet but one touched him so as to receive good; so Christ can keep us in a throng of dangers, that not one shall touch us to our hurt. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 7.** *It shall not come nigh thee.* Not with a view of showing that all good men may hope to escape from the pestilence, but as proofs that some who have had superior faith have done so, I have collected the following instances from various sources. *C. H. S.*

Before his departure from Isna (Isny), the town was greatly afflicted with the pestilence; and he, understanding that many of the wealthiest of the inhabitants intended to forsake the place, without having any respect or care of such as laboured with that disease, and that the houses of such as were infected, were commanded to be shut up by the magistrate, he openly admonished them, either to continue in the town, or liberally to bestow their alms before their departure, for the relief of such as were sick. And during the time of the visitation, he himself in person would visit those that were sick: he would administer spiritual comfort unto them, pray for them, and would be present with them day and night; and yet by the providence of God he remained untouched, and was preserved by the all powerful hand of God. *From the Life of Paulus Fagius, in T. Fuller's Abel Redivivus.*

In 1576, Cardinal Carlo Borromeo, Archbishop of Milan, the worthiest of all the successors of St. Ambrose, when he learnt at Lodi, that the plague had made its appearance in his city, went at once to the city. His council of clergy advised him to remain in some healthy part of his diocese till the

sickness should have spent itself, but he replied that a bishop, whose duty it is to give his life for his sheep, could not rightly abandon them in time of peril. They owned that to stand by them was the higher course. "Well," he said, "is it not a bishop's duty to choose the higher course?" So back into the town of deadly sickness he went, leading the people to repent, and watching over them in their suffering, visiting the hospitals, and, by his own example, encouraging his clergy in carrying spiritual consolation to the dying. All the time the plague lasted, which was four months, his exertions were fearless and unwearied, and what was remarkable was, that of his whole household only two died, and they were persons who had not been called to go about among the sick. *From "A Book of Golden Deeds," 1864.*

Although Defoe's history of the plague is a work of fiction, yet its statements are generally facts, and therefore we extract the following:—"The misery of the poor I had many occasions to be an eyewitness of, and sometimes also of the charitable assistance that some pious people daily gave to such, sending them relief and supplies both of food, physic, and other help as they found they wanted... Some pious ladies were transported with zeal in so good a work, and so confident in the protection of Providence in discharge of the great duty of charity, that they went about in person distributing alms to the poor, and even visiting poor families, though sick and infected, in their very houses, appointing nurses to attend those that wanted attending, and ordering apothecaries and surgeons... giving their blessing to the poor in substantial relief to them, as well as hearty prayers for them. I will not undertake to say, as some do, that none of those charitable people were suffered to fall under the calamity itself; but this I may say, that I never knew anyone of them that came to any ill, which I mention for the encouragement of others in case of the like distress, and, doubtless, if they that give to the poor lend to the Lord, and he will repay them, those that hazard their lives to give to the poor, and to comfort and assist the poor in such misery as this, may hope to be protected in the work." *Daniel Defoe's Journal of the Plague in London.*

Horne, in his notes on the Psalms, refers to the plague in Marseilles and the devotion of its bishop. There is a full account of him in the Percy Anecdotes from which we cull the following:—"M. de Belsunce, Bishop of Marseilles, so distinguished himself for his humanity during the plague which raged in that city in 1720, that the Regent of France offered him the richer and more honourable See of Laon, in Picardy; but he refused it, saying, he should be unwilling to leave a flock that had been endeared to him by their sufferings. His pious and intrepid labours are commemorated in a picture in the Town Hall of Marseilles, in which he is represented in his episcopal habit, attended

by his almoners, giving his benediction to the dying... But perhaps the most touching picture extant of the bishop's humane labours, is to be found in a letter of his own, written to the Bishop of Soissons, Sept. 27, 1720. 'Never,' he says, 'was desolation greater, nor was ever anything like this. Here have been many cruel plagues, but none was ever more cruel: to be sick and dead was almost the same thing. What a melancholy spectacle have we on all sides', we go into the streets full of dead bodies, half rotten through, which we pass to come to a dying body, to excite him to an act of contrition, and to give him absolution.'"Notwithstanding exposure to a pestilence so fatal, the devoted bishop escaped uninjured.

While France justly boasts of "Marseilles' good Bishop, "England may congratulate herself on having cherished in her bosom a clergyman who in an equally earnest manner discharged his pastoral care, and watched over the simple flock committed to his charge, at no less risk of life, and with no less fervour of piety and benevolence. The Rev. W. Mompesson was rector of Eyam in Derbyshire, in the time of the plague that nearly depopulated the town in the year 1666. During the whole time of the calamity, he performed the functions of the physician, the legislator, and the minister of his afflicted parish; assisting the sick with his medicines, his advice, and his prayers. Tradition still shows a cavern near Eyam, where this worthy pastor used to preach to such of his parishioners as had not caught the distemper, Although the village was almost depopulated, his exertions prevented the spread of the plague to other districts, and he himself survived unharmed.

**Verse 8.** *Only with thine eyes shalt thou behold and see the reward of the wicked.* First, indeed, because of thy own escape; secondly, on account of thy complete security; thirdly, for the sake of comparison; fourthly, because of the perfect preeminence of justice itself. For then it will not be the time of mercy, but of judgment; nor shall any mercy in any way be ever shown towards the wicked there, where no improvement can be hoped for. Far away will be that softness of human infirmity, which meanwhile charity nevertheless uses for salvation, collecting in the ample folds of her outspread net good and bad fishes, that is, pleasant and hurtful affections. But this is done at sea. On the shore she chooses only the good, and so rejoicing with them that do rejoice, it hence comes to pass that she weeps not with those that weep. *Bernard.*

**Verse 9.** Here commences the second half of the Psalm. And it is as though the Psalmist feared lest (as is too often the case with us) we should, in dwelling on the promises and blessings of God, and applying them to ourselves, forget the condition to which they are annexed—the character of

those who are to receive them. He therefore pauses here to remind us of the opening verses of the Psalm, by repeating again their substance. *Mary B. M. Duncan.*

**Verse 9.** *Because thou hast made the Lord*, etc. What faith is this, what trust is that which God hath promised protection and deliverance to in the time of a plague? What act of faith is it? What faith is it? I answer *first*, there is a faith of persuasion, called faith, whereby men are persuaded and verily believe that they shall not die, nor fall by the hand of the plague. This is well; but I do not find in the 91st Psalm that this protection is entailed upon this persuasion, neither do I find this faith here mentioned. There is also a faith of reliance, whereby a man doth rely upon God for salvation; this is a justifying faith, true justifying faith; this is true faith indeed; but I do not find in this Psalm, that this promise of protection and deliverance in the time of a plague is entailed upon this, nor that this is here mentioned.

But again, there is a faith, I may call it a faith of recourse unto God, whereby a man doth betake himself unto God for shelter, for protection as to his habitation; when other men do run one this way, another that way, to their hiding places: in the time of a plague for a man then to betake himself to God, as to his habitation, I think this is the faith here spoken of in this 91st Psalm: for do but mark the words of the Psalm: at Ps 91:1, "He that dwelleth in the secret place of the most High, "in the hiding place of the Most High: as if he should say, "When others run from the plague and pestilence and run to their hiding places, ""He that dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, "that betakes himself to God as his Hiding place and his habitation, he shall abide under the shadow of the Almighty, shall be protected; and so at Ps 91:9, "Because thou hast made the Lord which is my refuge, even the Most High thy habitation, there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling; "as if he should say to us, In time of a plague men are running and looking out for habitations and hiding places; but because thou hast made the Lord thy habitation and hast recourse to him as thy habitation, "no evil shall befall thee, neither shall the plague come nigh thy dwelling:" and again at Ps 91:11 it is said, "He shall give his angels charge over thee to keep thee in all thy ways, "the ways of thy calling; as if he should say, In the time of a plague men will be very apt to leave station and calling, and so run away from the plague and pestilence; but saith he, "He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways, "the ways of thy calling and place; that is, look when a man in the time of a plague shall conscientiously keep his station and place, and betake himself to God as his habitation; this is the faith that is here spoken of, and this is the

faith that God hath promised protection to, here in the 91st Psalm... This promise of protection and deliverance is not made to a believer as a believer, but as acting and exercising faith; for though a man be a believer, if he do not act and exercise his faith, this promise will not reach him, therefore if a believer die, not exercising faith and trusting in God, it is no disparagement to the promise. *William Bridge*.

**Verse 9.** No man can have two *homes*—two places of *constant* resort. And if the Lord be truly "*our habitation*," we can have no other refuge for our souls, no other resting place for our hearts. *Mary B. M. Duncan*.

**Verses 9-10.** There is a threefold preservation which the church and the members of it may look for from divine providence. One from, another in, and a third by, dangers.

I. First, from dangers, according to the promise in one of the Psalms, "Because thou hast made the Lord who is my refuge, even the Most High thy habitation: there shall no evil befall thee, neither shall any plague come nigh thy dwelling." Austin had appointed to go to a certain town to visit the Christians there, and to give them a sermon or more. The day and place were known to his enemies, who set armed men to lie in wait for him by the way which he was to pass, and kill him. As God would have it, the guide whom the people had sent with him to prevent his going out of the right way mistook, and led him into a bypath, yet brought him at last to his journey's end. Which when the people understood, as also the adversaries' disappointment, they adored the providence of God, and gave him thanks for that great deliverance. (Agnoscent omnes miram Dei providentiam, cui ut liberatori gratias merito egerunt. Possidonius in vita August, chap. 12.)

II. In dangers. So in Job 5:19-20. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles, yea in seven there shall no evil touch thee. In famine he shall redeem thee from death: and in war from the power of the sword." In time of famine the widow of Sarepta's store was made to hold out. The providence of God was with Daniel in the lions' den, shutting up the mouths of those furious beasts: and with the men in the fiery furnace, giving a prohibition to the fire that it should not burn, when they were in the jaws of danger, yea of death. The church hath always been a lily among thorns, yet flourishes still. This bush is yet far from a consumption, although it has seldom or never been out of the fire.

III. By danger. There is a preservation from greater evils by less. No poison but Providence knoweth how to make an antidote; so Jonah was swallowed

by a whale, and by that danger kept alive. Joseph thrown into a pit, and afterwards sold into Egypt, and by these hazards brought to be a nursing father to the church. Chrysostom excellently, *Fides in periculis securae est, in securitate periclitatur.* (Homil. 26, operis imperf in Matt.) Faith is endangered by security, but secure in the midst of danger, as Esther's was when she said, "If I perish I perish." God preserveth us, not as we do fruits that are to last but for a year, in sugar; but as flesh for a long voyage in salt: we must expect in this life much brine and pickle, because our heavenly Father preserveth us as those whom he resolves to keep for ever, in and by dangers themselves. Paul's thorn in the flesh, which had much of danger and trouble in it, was given him on purpose to prevent pride, which was a great evil. "Lest I, "said he, "should be exalted above measure through abundance of revelations, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure." Elsewhere having commemorated Alexander the coppersmith's withstanding and doing him much evil, yea Nero's opening his mouth as a lion against him, and the Lord's delivering of him thence, he concludes as more than a conqueror. "And the Lord shall deliver me from every evil work, and will preserve me unto his heavenly kingdom; to whom be glory for ever and ever, Amen." 2Ti 4:14-15, 17-18. *John, Arrowsmith, (1602-1659).*

**Verses 9-14.** Dependence on Christ is not the cause of his hiding us, but it is the qualification of the person that shall be hid. *Ralph Robinson.*

**Verse 10.** *There shall no evil befall thee,* etc. It is a security in the very midst of evils. Not like the security of angels—safety in a world of safety, quiet in a calm; but it is quiet in a storm; safety amid desolation and the elements of destruction, deliverance where everything else is going to wreck. *Cicaties Bradley, 1840.*

**Verse 10.** God doth not say no afflictions shall befall us, but no evil. *Thomas Watson.*

**Verse 10.** Sin which has kindled a fire in hell, is kindling fires on earth continually. And when they break out, every one is asking how they happened. Amos replies, "Shall there be evil in a city, and the Lord hath not done it?" And when desolation is made by fire, Isaiah declares, The Lord hath "consumed us, because of our iniquities." Many years ago my house was oft threatened to be destroyed, but the Lord insured it, by giving me Ps 91:10; and the Lord's providence is the best insurance. *John Bridge.*

**Verse 11.** *He shall give his angels charge*, etc. Charge; charge is a strict command, more than a bare command; as when you would have a servant do a business certainly and fully, you lay a charge upon him, I charge you that you do not neglect that business; you do not barely tell what he should do, prescribe him his work, but you charge him to do it. So says the Lord unto the angels: My servants or children, now they are in the plague and pestilence, O my angels, I charge you stir not from their houses, I charge you, stir not from such an one's bedside; it is a charge, "He shall give his angels charge." Further, he doth not only, and will not only charge his angel, but his angels; not one angel charged with the safety of his people, but many angels; for their better guard and security, "He shall give his angels charge." And again, "He will give his angels charge over *thee* to keep thee; "to keep *thee*; charge over *thee* and to keep thee; not only over the whole church of God, but over every particular member of the church of God; "He will give his angels charge over thee to keep thee; "this is his marvellous care. Well, but besides this, "He will give his angels charge to keep thee *in all thy ways*, "not in some of thy ways, but in all thy ways. As God's providence is particular in regard of our persons, so it is universal in regard of our ways. "He will give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee, "not in some but "in all thy ways." But is this all? No: "They shall bear thee up in their hands, "as every servant desires and loves to take up the young heir, or the young master into his arms, so the angels. It is a great matter that the Lord promises to pitch his tents. "And the angels of the Lord shall pitch their tents round about them that fear him; "but here is more; the angels shall not only pitch their tents, be their guard, but their nurses, to bear them up in their hands; but why? "That thou dash not thy foot against a stone." When children begin to go, they are very apt to fall and get many a knock; to stumble at every little stone. Now there are many stones of stumbling that are in our way, and we are very apt to fall and miscarry; but such is the goodness of God, the providence of God, the goodness of his providence, that as he hath provided his angels to be our guard, in opposition to all our foreign enemies, so he hath provided his angels to be our nurses, in opposition to all our weaknesses and infirmities, that we get no hurt, that we miscarry not in the least.

But what need God make use of angels to protect his people, he is able to do it alone; and is it not for God's dishonour to make use of them for the protection of his people? No, it is for the honour of God, for the more honourable the servants are, the instruments are, that a king or prince doth use for the protecting of his people, the more honourable is that king or prince. Now, the angels, they are honourable creatures; frequently they are called gods; "Thou hast made him a little lower than the angels."... They are

the fittest people in the world for this employment, fittest in regard of themselves, fittest in regard of the saints. They are fittest in regard of themselves, for *First*, they are an exceeding strong and potent people; who more fit to look to and care for the concerns of the saints and people of God, than those that are strong and potent? It is said of the angels in Ps 103:20 that they excel in strength. One angel you know destroyed a hundred and fourscore thousand of the host of Assyria in a night; as one constable will scare away twenty thieves, so one good angel invested with God's authority is able to drive away a thousand evil angels, devils: they are an exceeding strong and potent people. *Second*. As they are an exceeding strong and potent people, so they are a very knowing and a wise people; and who so fit to manage the affairs and concerns of the saints and people of God, and to protect and defend them, as a knowing and understanding people? You know what Joab said to David; "Thou art for wisdom as an angel of God." Says our Saviour, "No man knoweth that day and time, no, not the angels in heaven; "as if the angels in heaven knew every secret and were acquainted with every hidden thing: they are an exceeding knowing people, very prudent and very wise. *Third*. As they are an exceeding knowing and wise people, so they are also exceeding active and expeditious, quick in despatches. Who more fit to protect and defend the saints and people of God, than those that are active, expedite, and quick in their despatches? such are the angels. In the first of Ezekiel ye read that every one had four wings; why?, because of their great activity and expedition, and the quick despatch they make in all their affairs. *Fourth*. As they are an active and expeditious people, so they are a people very faithful both to God and man; in Ps 103:20-21 they are ready to do God's will, and not only ready to fulfil God's will, but they do it: "Bless the Lord all ye his angels that excel in strength (Ps 103:20), that do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. Bless ye the Lord, all ye his hosts, ye ministers of his that do his pleasure." They are very faithful; and who so fit to do the work, to attend and look to the concerns of the saints and people of God, as those that are faithful? *Fifth*. As they are an exceeding faithful people, so they are a people that are very loving to the saints and children of God, very loving; otherwise they were not fit to be their nurses: what is a nurse without love? They are loving to the saints. "Do it not, "(said the angel unto John), "I am thy fellow servant; "do not give divine worship to me, I am thy fellow servant; fellow servants are loving to one another; they are fellow servants with the saints... It is recorded of Alexander that being in great danger and to fight next day with his enemies, he slept very soundly the night before; and he being asked the reason thereof, said, Parmenio wakes; meaning a great and faithful captain of his; Parmenio wakes, says he. The angels are called watchmen, they watch and



are faithful, therefore you may be secure, quiet, and at rest: trust in the Lord for ever, upon this account, in this day trust in the Lord.

If these things be so, then, friends, why should we not stoop to any work commanded, though it lie much beneath us? Do not you think that the attending upon a sick man, a man that hath a plague sore running upon him, is a work that lies much beneath angels? yet the angels do it because it is commanded, though much beneath them yet they stoop to it because it is commanded; and what though a work lie much beneath you, yet if it be commanded, why should you not stoop to it? You will say, Such an one is much beneath me, I will not lay my hand under his shoes, he is much beneath me; ah, but the angels lay their hands under your shoes, and the work they do for you is much beneath them: why should we not be like our attendants? This is angelical obedience; the angels do you many a kindness, and never look for thanks from you, they do many a kindness that you are not aware of: why are you delivered sometimes you know not how? here is a hand under a wing, the ministration of angels is the cause of it. But I say the work they stoop to for you is much beneath them, and therefore why should we not stoop to any work commanded, though it lie much beneath us?

*William Bridge.*

**Verse 11.** *He shall give his angels charge over thee*, etc. When Satan tempted Christ in the wilderness, he alleged but one sentence of Scripture for himself, Mt 4:6, and that Psalm out of which he borrowed it made so plain against him, that he was fain to pick here a word and there a word, and leave out that which went before, and skip in the midst, and omit that which came after, or else he had marred his cause. The Scripture is so holy, and pure, and true, that no word nor syllable thereof can make for the Devil, or for sinners, or for heretics: yet, as the devil alleged Scripture, though it made not for him, but against him, so do the libertines, and epicures, and heretics, as though they had learned at his school. *Henry Smith.*

**Verse 11.** One angel armed with the power and glory of God is stronger than a whole country. Earthly princes are subject to many changes and great unsurety of life and estate. The reason is, their enemies may kill their watch, and corrupt their guard. But what men or kingdoms can touch the Church's watch? what angels of gold are able to corrupt the angels of God? and then how can that perish that is committed to keepers so mighty and faithful? Secondly, the charge of us is given to those ministering spirits by parcels, not in gross and piecemeal, not in a lump: our members in a book, our hairs by tale and number. For it is upon record, and, as it were, delivered to them in writing in one Psalm, *They keep all our bones*, Ps 34:20; in this, *they keep*

*our very foot*, putting it in security (Ps 91:12); and elsewhere our whole man and every member. And can a charge so precisely and so particularly given and taken, be neglected? Thirdly, their manner of keeping us, as it is set down in the text, cannot but promise great assurance; for, is not the little child safe while the nurse carrieth it in her arms, or beareth it in her hands? So while these nurses so bear us, can we be ill danger? but our nurses on earth may fall; these nurses, the *angels*, cannot. *Robert Horn.*

**Verse 11.** *His angels.* Taking the word angel in its literal meaning, *messenger*, we may look upon any agency which God employs to strengthen, protect, and help us, as *his angel* to us. *Mary B.M. Duncan.*

**Verse 11.** *To keep thee in all thy ways.* How should those heavenly spirits bear that man in their arms, like nurses, upon earth living; or bear up his soul to heaven, like winged porters, when he dies, that refuseth the right way? They shall keep us in all our ways. Out of the way it is their charge to oppose us, as to preserve us in the way. Nor is this more a terror to the ungodly, than to the righteous a comfort. For if an angel would keep even a Balaam from sinning, how much more careful are all those glorious powers to prevent the miscarriages of God's children! From how many falls and bruises have they saved us! In how many inclinations to evil have they turned us, either by removing occasions, or by casting in secretly good motions! We sin too often, and should catch many more falls, if those holy guardians did not uphold us. Satan is ready to divert us, when we endeavour to do well; when to do ill, angels are as ready to prevent us. We are in Joshua the high priest's ease, with Satan on the one hand, on the other an angel, Zec 3:1: without this, our danger were greater than our defence, and we could neither stand nor rise. *Thomas Adams.*

**Verse 11.** *To keep thee in all thy ways.* Their commission, large as it is, reaches no further: when you leave that, you lose your guard; but while you keep your way, angels, yea; the God of angels, will keep you. Do not so much fear losing your estate or your liberty or your lives, as losing your way, and leaving your way: fear that more than any tiring; nothing but sin exposes you to misery. So long as you keep your way, you shall keep other things; or if you lose any of them, you shall get what is better: though you may be sufferers for Christ, you shall not be losers by him. *Samuel Sletter, (1704) in "Morning Exercises."*

**Verse 11.** *In all thy ways* Your ways are God's ways, your way is the way commanded by God. If you be out of God's ways, you are out of your own way: if you be in your way, the angels shall keep you, even in the time of a

plague, and bear you up in their hands that you dash not your foot against a stone; but if you be out of your way, I will not insure your safety. When Balaam went upon the devil's errand an angel met him and scared his ass, and the ass ran his foot against the wall, dashed his foot against the wall. The promise is, "Thou shalt not dash thy foot against a stone;" but he was out of his way, and the angel met him and scared his ass, and his ass made him rush his leg against the wall. Jonah went out of his way when he ran away from God; God bade him go one way, and he went another. Well, what then were the angels with him for his protection; the very sea would not be quiet till he was thrown overboard: instead of angels to protect him, he had a whale to devour him. I confess indeed, through the free grace and mercy of God, the belly of destruction was made a chamber of preservation to him, but he was out of his way; and instead of an angel to keep him that he dash not his foot, his whole body was thrown overboard. Says Solomon, "As a bird from her nest, so is a man out of his place:" so long as the bird is in her nest it is free from the hawk, it is free from the birding piece, it is free from the nets and gins and snares as long as it is in its nest; but when the bird is off her nest then she is exposed to many dangers. So, so long as a man is in his way, in his place and in his way, he is well and under protection; but when a man is off his nest, out of his place and out of his way, then is he exposed to all dangers: but be but in your way and then you may assure yourselves of divine protection, and of the management thereof by the hands of angels. Oh who would not labour always to be in that way which God hath appointed him to be in? Why should we not always consider with ourselves and say, But am I in my way? Old Mr. Dod being upon the water and going out of one boat into another, slipped between them, and the first word he spake was this, "Am I in my way?" so we should always be saying, But am I in my way? am I in my way? I am now idling away my time, but am I in my way? Oh my soul, am I in my way? I am in my calling this day without prayer in the morning and reading the Scriptures; but am I in my way? Oh, my soul, am I in my way? I am now in such frothy company where I get no good, but hurt; but am I in my way? Ever consider this, Am I in my way? You may expect the Lord's protection and the angels' attendance, if you be in your way, but not else. *William Bridge.*

**Verse 11.** We have the safeguard of the empire; not only the protection of the King, from which the wicked as outlaws are secluded; but also the keeping of angels, to whom he hath given a charge over us, to keep us in all his ways. So nearly we participate of his Divine things, that we have his own guard royal to attend us. *Thomas Adams.*

**Verse 11.** *He shall give his angels charge over thee, etc.*

And is there care in heaven, and is there love  
 In heavenly spirits to these creatures base,  
 That may compassion of their evils move?  
 There is, else much more wretched were the race  
 Of men than beasts. But oh, the exceeding grace  
 Of highest God, that loves his creatures so,  
 And all his works with mercy doth embrace,  
 That blessed angels he sends to and fro,  
 To serve us wicked men, to serve his wicked foe!

How oft do they their silver bowers leave,  
 To come to succour us that succour want!  
 How oft do they with golden pinions cleave  
 The flitting skies, like flying pursuivant,  
 Against foul fiends to aid us militant!  
 They for us fight, they watch and duly ward,  
 And their bright squadrons round about us plant;  
 And all for love and nothing for reward.  
 Oh, wily should heavenly God to man have such regard!  
 —*Edmund Spenser, 1552-1599.*

**Verses 11-12.** It is observable that Scripture is the weapon that Satan doth desire to wield against Christ. In his other ways of dealing he was shy, and did but lay them in Christ's way, offering only the occasion, and leaving him to take them up; but in this he is more confident, and industriously pleads it, as a thing which he could better stand to and more confidently avouch. The care of his subtlety herein, lay in the misrepresentation and abuse of it, as may be seen in these particulars: (1) In that he urged this promise to promote a sinful thing, contrary to the general end of all Scripture, which was therefore written 'that we sin not.' (2) But more especially in his clipping and mutilating of it. He industriously leaves out that part of it which doth limit and confine the promise of protection to lawful undertakings, such as this was not, and renders it as a general promise of absolute safety, be the action what it will. It is a citation from Ps 91:11-12, which there runs thus, *He shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways.* These last words, "*in all thy ways*," which doth direct to a true understanding of God's intention in that promise, he deceitfully leaves out, as if they were needless and unnecessary parts of the promise, when indeed they were on purpose put there by the Spirit of God, to give a description of those persons and actions, unto whom, in such cases, the accomplishment of the promise might be

expected; for albeit the word in the original, which is translated "*ways*"—Mykrd—doth signify any kind of way or action in the general, yet in this place it doth not; for then God were engaged to an absolute protection of men, not only when they unnecessarily thrust themselves into dangers, but in the most abominably sinful actions whatsoever, which would have been a direct contradiction to those many scriptures wherein God threatens to withdraw his hand and leave sinners to the danger of their iniquities; but it is evident that the sense of it is no more than this, 'God is with you, while you are with him.' We have a paraphrase of this text, to this purpose, in Pr 3:23, "Then shalt thou walk in thy way safely, and thy foot shall not stumble:" where the condition of this safety, pointed to in the word "then," which leads the promise, is expressly mentioned in the foregoing verses, "My son, let them"—that is, the precepts of wisdom—"not depart from thine eyes... Then"—not upon other terms—"shalt thou walk in thy way safely." The "*ways*" then in this promise cited by Satan, are the ways of duty, or the ways of our lawful callings. The fallacy of Satan in this dealing with Scripture is obvious, and Christ might have given this answer, as Bernard hath it, That God promises to keep him in his ways, but not in self created dangers, for that was not his way, but his ruin; or if a way, it was Satan's way, but not his. (3) To these two, some add another abuse, in a subtle concealment of the following verse in Ps 91:13: *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder*. This concerned Satan, whose cruelty and poisonous deceits were fitly represented by the lion and the adder, and there the promise is also explained to have a respect to Satan's temptations—that is—God would so manage his protection, that his children should not be led into a snare. *Richard Gilpin*.

**Verses 11-12.** There is, to my mind, a very remarkable coincidence of expression between the verses of this Psalm, about the office of God's angels, and that passage in Isaiah where Christ's sympathy and presence receive the same charge attributed to them without interposition. In Isa 63:9, we read, "In all their affliction he was afflicted, and the angel of his presence saved them." And again, "They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone," compared with "And he bare them, and he carried them all the days of old." Christ in us, by sympathy with our nature—Christ in us, by the indwelling of his Spirit in each individual heart—thus he knows all our needs. Christ with us, in every step, all powerful to make all work for good, and with love and pity watching over our interests—thus his presence saves us, and *all* things are made his messengers to us. *Mary B.M. Duncan*.

**Verse 12.** *Angels... shall bear thee up... lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.* Angels are introduced as bearing up the believer in their hands, not that he may be carried in safety over some vast ocean, not that he may be transported through hostile and menacing squadrons, not that; when exposed to some extraordinary danger, he may be conveyed to a place of refuge, but, as bearing him up in their arms, "lest at any time he hurt his foot against a stone."... Angels, the topmost beings in creation, the radiant, the magnificent, the powerful—angels are represented as holding up a righteous man, lest some pebble in the path should make him trip, lest he hurt his foot against a stone. Is there, after all, any want of keeping between the agency and the act, so that there is even the appearance of angels being unworthily employed, employed on what is beneath them, when engaged in bearing us up, lest at any time we hurt the foot against a stone? Nay, the hurting the foot against a stone has often laid the foundations of fatal bodily disease: the injury which seemed too trifling to be worth notice has produced extreme sickness, and ended in death. Is it different in spiritual respects, in regard of the soul, to which the promise in our text must be specially applied? Not a jot. Or, if there be a difference, it is only that the peril to the soul from a slight injury is far greater than that to the body: the worst spiritual diseases might commonly be traced to inconsiderable beginnings. . . . It can be no easy thing, this keeping the foot from being hurt against a stone, seeing that the highest of created beings are commissioned to effect it. Neither is it. The difficulty in religion is the taking up the cross "daily," rather than the taking it up on some set occasion, and under extraordinary circumstances. The serving God in little things, the carrying religious principles into the details of life, the discipline of our tempers, the regulation of our speech, the domestic Christianity, the momentary sacrifices, the secret and unobserved self denials; who that knows anything of the difficulties of piety, does not know that there is greater danger of his failing in these than in trials of apparently far higher cost, and harder endurance; if on no other account, yet because the very absence of what looks important, or arduous, is likely to throw him off his guard, make him careless or confident, and thereby almost insure defect or defeat? *Henry Melvill.*

**Verse 12.** To carry them in their hands is a metaphor, and signifies a perfect execution of their custody, to have a special care of them, and therefore is rather expressed so, than carrying them on their shoulders. That which one carries on their hand they are sure to keep. The Spaniards have a proverb when they would signify eminent favour and friendship, 'they carry him upon the palms of their hands,' that is, they exceedingly love him, and diligently keep him. *Lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.* He persists in

the metaphor: children often stumble and fall, unless they be led and carried in hands and arms. By *stones* are meant all difficulties, objections, perils, both to the outward and inward man, as Christ is said to take care of hairs and sparrows, that is, of every thing even to a hair. Now we know what this charge is, saving that Zanchy adds also the metaphor of schoolmasters, and says that we are poor rustic people, strangers; but being adopted into the household of God, he gives his most noble ministers, the *angels*, charge, first of our nursing and then of our education; when we are weaned, to instruct us, to admonish, to institute, to correct us, to comfort us, to defend us, to preserve us from all evil, and to provoke us to all good. And these angels, seeing we are so dear to God, that for our sakes he spared not his own Son, take this charge with all their hearts upon them, and omit nothing of their duty from our birth to the end of our life. *Henry Lawrence, in "A Treatise of our Communion and Warre with Angells, "1646.*

**Verse 13.** *Thou shalt tread upon the lion and adder, the young lion and the dragon shalt thou trample under feet.* What avails a human foot among these? What force of human affection can stand fast among such terrible monsters? These are spiritual wickednesses, and are designated by not incongruous titles... One is an *asp*, another a basilisk, a third a *lion*, and a fourth a *dragon*, because each in his own invisible way variously wounds,—one by his bite, another by his look, a third by his roar or blow, and a fourth by his breath. . . . Consider this also, whether perchance we are able to meet these four temptations with four virtues. The lion roars, who will not fear? If any there be, he shall be *brave*. But when the lion is foiled, the dragon lurks in the sand, in order to excite the soul with his poisonous breath; breathing therein the lust of earthly things. Who, think you, shall escape his wiles? None but the *prudent*. But perhaps whilst you are careful in attacking these, some annoyance vexes you; and lo! the asp is upon you forthwith. For he seems to have found for himself a seasonable moment. Who is he that shall not be exasperated by this asp? Certainly the man of *temperance* and modesty, who knows how to abound, and to suffer want. On this opportunity, I think, the Evil Eye with its wicked allurements may determine to fascinate thee. Who shall turn away his face? Truly the *just* man, who not only desires not to take to himself the glory due to God, but not even to receive what is presented by another: if yet he is a just man, that justly executes what is just, who performs not his righteousness before men, who, lastly, although he is just, lifts not up his head. For this virtue consists specially in humility. This purifies the intention, this also obtains merit all the more truly and effectually, because it arrogates less to itself. *Bernard.*

**Verse 13. Adder.** The *pethen* is classed with the lion as being equally to be dreaded by the traveller... There is no doubt that the Egyptian cobra is the *pethen* of Scripture. *J. G. Wood.*

**Verse 13. Dragon.** The expression is used (1) for "sea monsters, " (2) for serpents, (3) for wild beasts or birds characteristic of desolate places, and (4) it is used figuratively to represent the enemies of the Lord, and especially Pharaoh, as head and representative of the Egyptian power, and Nebuchadnezzar, the head and representative of the Chaldean monarchy. The term is thus a general one, signifying any monstrous creature, whether of the land or of the water, and is to be set down with the one or the other, according as the context indicates. *John Duns, in "Biblical Natural Science."*

**Verse 13. Thou shalt tread upon; thou shalt trample under feet.** Thou shalt tread upon them, not accidentally, as a man treads upon an adder or a serpent in the way; but his meaning is, thou shalt intentionally tread upon them like a conqueror, thou shalt tread upon them to testify the dominion over them, so when the Lord Jesus gave that promise (Lu 10:19) to his disciples, that they should do great things, he saith, *You shall tread upon serpents*; that is, you shall have power to overcome whatsoever may annoy you: serpentine power is all hurtful power, whether literal or mystical. As the Apostle assures all believers (Ro 16:20), *"God shall tread down Satan (that old serpent) under your feet shortly."* *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 13 (second clause).** But what is said unto Christ? *And thou shalt tread on the lion and dragon.* *Lion*, for overt wrath; *dragon* for covert lurking. *Augustine.*

**Verse 14. Because he hath set his love upon me.** Vulg. *Because he hath hoped in me.* Whatever is to be done, whatever is to be declined, whatever is to be endured, whatever is to be chosen, Thou O Lord art my hope. This is the only cause of all my promises, this the sole reason of my expectation. Let another pretend to merit, let him boast that he bears the burden and heat of the day, let him say that he fasts twice on the Sabbath, let him finally glory that he is not as other men; for me it is good to cleave unto God, to place my hope in the Lord God. Let others hope in other things, one in his knowledge of letters, another in his worldly wisdom, one in his nobility, one in his dignity, another in some other vanity, for thy sake I have made all things loss, and count them but dung; since Thou, Lord, art my hope. *Bernard*, quoted by *Le Blanc.*



**Verse 14** (.first clause). As there is a *because* and a *therefore* in the process of the law, in concluding death for sin, so there is a *because* and a *therefore* in the process of grace, and of the gospel, which doth reason from one grace given to infer another grace to be given, even grace for grace; and such is this here: *Because he hath set his love upon me, therefore will I deliver him.* *David Dickson.*

**Verse 14.** He does not say, Because he is without sin, because he has perfectly kept all my precepts, because he has merit and is worthy to be delivered and guarded. But he produces those qualities which are even found in the weak, the imperfect, and those still exposed to sin in the flesh, namely, adhesion, knowledge of his name, and prayer. *Musculus.*

**Verse 14.** *He hath set his love upon me.* In the love of a divinely illuminated believer there is (1) the sweet property of *gratitude*. The soul has just and enlarged views of the salvation which he has obtained through the name of Jesus. The evils from which he is saved; the blessings in hand, and the blessings in hope; the salvation in time, and the salvation through eternity, which can and shall be enjoyed through the name of Jesus, excites feelings of the most ardent gratitude in the soul of the Christian. (2) Another delightful ingredient in this settled love is, *admiration*. Everything in the scheme and execution of God's redeeming plan is an object of admiration. All that the Lord Jesus is in himself; all that he has done; all that he does at the present; and all that he has promised to do for his people, deserves the warmest admiration. This holy feeling is experienced in the breast of the man to whom the Lord can say, *He hath set his love upon me.* (3) Another ingredient in the illuminated love of the believer is *delightful complacency*. Nothing can afford complacent delight in any excellency unless we are persuaded that we either do possess, or may possess it. I may go to the palace of the greatest monarch in the world, and be deeply struck with astonishment and admiration at the wonder beheld, but there will not be one thrill of complacency felt in my bosom at the view of the astonishing objects which crowd upon my vision. Why? Because I neither have, nor can have any interest in them; they are not mine, nor ever can be; therefore, I cannot take complacent delight in them. But the love of the Christian is a delightful love, (as Mr. Baxter called it,) because there is in the Lord everything that is worthy of infinite and eternal admiration; and then there is the thought which produces a thrill of pleasure,—whatever I admire I can, in some measure, possess. The illuminated eye of God's favourite sees everything in the Lord to supply his necessities; everything to satisfy his desires, all his own; which makes the soul delight itself in the Lord, and he rests in his love. Therefore,

the Lord says of the object of his lovingkindness, "*He hath set his love upon me*"—he hath renounced sin as the greatest abomination; he hath taken off the heart from all idolatrous attachment to the creature, and placed it fixedly and supremely upon God. *William Dawson, Methodist Preacher (1773-1841).*

**Verse 14.** *He hath set his love upon me.* We have a similar expression in daily use, which means the bending of all our energies to one end—a ceaseless effort after one object. We say, "I have set my heart on such a thing." This is what God will have from us—an intense, single hearted love. We must love him "with all our heart, and with all our soul, and with all our strength, and with all our mind, "so that, like Jesus, we may "delight to do his will." Just let us think of the way in which setting our heart on anything affects us, head, hands, time, thought, action—all are at work for us attainment. How we sacrifice everything else to it? Comfort, ease, present advantage, money, health, nay, our very selves, go freely for the sake of our cherished wish. Have I so "set my heart upon" God? Temperaments differ. This may be an overdrawn picture of the way in which some of us seek a cherished object. But each knows his own capability in this way. God also knows our frame, and requires his best at every man's hand. There is one thing in this verse which may encourage us very much. It is not because of *perfect* love that God will deliver. It is to the will to love and serve—it is to the *setting* the heart, that the promise is made—to the "full purpose of heart" that is *set* to cleave unto the Lord. *Mary B. M. Duncan.*

**Verse 14.** *I will set him on high.* That is, in an inaccessible, or lofty place, I will set him, which means, I will deliver him. When men truly know God to be a deliverer, they both put confidence in Him, and call upon Him. Then God exalts and delivers him that calls. *Franciscus Vatablus.*

**Verse 14.** *I will set him on high, because he hath known my name.* There is a great deal of safety in the knowledge of God, in his attributes, and in his Christ. A man's safety we see lies in his running to the tower (Pr 28:10); he runs and is safe. And it is the knowledge of this tower that sets a man a running to it. Hence we find safety attributed to the knowledge of the Lord. "*I will set him on high*, "I will exalt him, and so he shall be safe. Why so? "*Because he hath known my name*"; for the knowing of God aright was that which made him run, and so he is exalted and set on high. Then a man is safe when he hath got this tower to be his tower, when he hath gotten God to be his God. Now when we know God, we get him to be our God, and make this tower our tower, Jer 24:7: "I will give them an heart to know me, and I will be their God." Jeremiah Dyke, in "The Righteous Man's Tower, "1639.

**Verses 14-16.** He hath known my name. From this text I would introduce to your notice the most desirable character under the sun; and I would exhibit him before you to excite each one to seek, until you obtain the same blessedness. The character that I shall exhibit is GOD'S FAVOURITE, one who is an object of the "lovingkindness of the Lord"; and in reading this passage there are two things which strike our attention concerning such a character. *First*, what the Lord says *of* him. *Second*, what the Lord says *to* him. Now, then, my brethren—LOOK! There stands before you GOD's FAVOURITE!

Listen to *what God says OF him*. 1. He says of him, "*He knows my name.*" The first principle of the life of God the fallen soul of man is knowledge; spiritual, divine knowledge. The first operation of the Holy Ghost in the work of salvation, is a conviction of the character and perfections and relations of God. The Lord says, "he knows my name." He knows my name as Omniscient, Omnipresent, Holy, Just and True. (1) He first knows my name as a sin hating, sin avenging God; and this knowledge was a means of leading him to a deep sense of his own personal corruption, guilt, and danger as a sinner. (2) But the favourite of the Lord knows his name as revealed to Moses, as "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity, and transgression, and sin." He knows the name of the Lord as concentrated in the name of Jesus, who "shall save his people from their sins." By the *white* beams of God's holiness, (if I may so speak) the sinner sees his corruption, guilt and deformity: by the *red* beams of God's justice he sees his unspeakable danger: by the *mild* beams of God's mercy, he discovers a ground of hope—that there is pardon for his aggravated crimes. But it is in the face of our Lord Jesus Christ, that God appears most delightful. Hence we can say to every saved soul, as Paul did to the Corinthians—"God, who commanded the light to shine out of darkness, hath shined in our hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ." As all the colours of the rainbow meet in one sunbeam, so all the perfections of God as perfectly unite, and more beautifully shine forth, in the person and offices of Jesus Christ, upon the soul of the penitent believer. This saving knowledge is always vital, active, and powerful. *William Dawson.*

**Verse 14.** *He hath known my name.* May we not get some light on this expression from the custom of the Jews, keeping the name JEHOVAH sacred to their own use, regarding it as too holy even to be pronounced by them in common use and thus preserving it from being taken in vain by the

heathen around? Thus it was known to Jews only... But whatever be the origin of the expressions, to "know *His name*, " to "trust in *His name*, "to "believe in *His name*, "it evidently in all these cases means whatever is revealed concerning Him—all that by which he maketh himself known. His Word, his Providence, above all, his Son, are included thus in his *name*, which we must know, believe in, and trust. So that to "know his name" is to know himself, as revealed in the Gospel. *Mary B. M. Duncan.*

**Verse 14.** (last clause). Sound love to God, floweth from and is joined with sound knowledge of God, as his Majesty is declared unto us in Scripture: the believer who hath set his *love* upon God, *hath known my name*, saith he. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 15.** *I will answer him.* I think we sometimes discourage ourselves by a misconception of the exact meaning of the expression, "*answer*, "taking it to mean only *grant*. Now, an answer is not necessarily an acquiescence. It may be a refusal, an explanation, a promise, a conditional grant. It is, in fact, simply *attention to our request expressed*. In this sense, before we call he will answer, and while we are yet speaking he will hear, Isa 65:24. *Mary B. M. Duncan.*

**Verse 15.** *I will be with him in trouble.* *I will be with him in trouble*, says God: and shall I seek meanwhile anything else than trouble? It is good for me to cleave unto God. Not only so, but also to put my hope in the Lord: because *I will deliver him*, he says, *and honour him. I will be with him in trouble. My delights*, he says, *are with the sons of men*. Emmanuel God with us. *Hail, thou art highly favoured*, says the Angel to Mary, *the Lord is with thee*. In the fulness of grace He is with us, in the plenitude of glory we shall be with Him. He descends in order to be near to those who are of a troubled heart, that He may be with us in our trouble... It is better for me, O Lord, to be troubled, whilst only Thou art with me, than to reign without Thee, to feast without Thee, to be honoured without Thee. It is good rather to be embraced by Thee in trouble, to have thee in this furnace with me, than to be without Thee even in heaven. For what have I in heaven, and without Thee what do I desire upon earth? The furnace tries the gold, and the temptation of trouble just men. *Bernard.*

**Verse 15.** *I will be with him trouble.* God hath made promises of his special presence with his saints in suffering. If we have such a friend to visit us in prison, we shall do well enough; though we change our place, we shall not change our keeper. "*I will be with him.*" God will hold our head and heart when we are fainting! What if we have more afflictions than others, if we

have more of God's company? God's honour is dear to him; it would not be for his honour to bring his children into sufferings, and leave them there; he will be with them to animate and support them; yea, when new troubles arise. Job 5:19. "He shall deliver thee in six troubles." *Thomas Watson.*

**Verse 15.** *I will be with him in trouble.* Again God speaks and acts like a tender hearted mother towards a sickly child. When the child is in perfect health she can leave it in the hands of the nurse; but when it is sick she will attend it herself; she will say to the nurse, "You may attend a while to some other business, I will watch over the child myself." She hears the slightest moan; she flies to the cradle; she takes it in her arms; she kisses its lips, and drops a tear upon its face, and asks, "What can I do for thee, my child? How can I relieve thy pain and soften thy sufferings? Do not weep and break my heart; it is thy mother's arms that are around thee; it is thy mother's lap on which thou art laid; it is thy mother's voice that speaks to thee; it is thy mother that is with thee; fear not." So the Lord speaks to his afflicted children. *"I will be with him in trouble."* No mother can equally sympathise with her suffering child; as the Lord does with his suffering people. No! could all the love that ever dwelt in all the mothers' hearts that ever existed, be united in one mother's heart, and fixed on her only child, it would no more bear a comparison with the love of God to his people than the summer midnight glow worm is to be compared to the summer midday sun. Oh, that delightful sentence *I will be with him in trouble.* At other times God will leave them in the hands of angels: "I will give them charge over them, to keep them in all their ways; they bear them up lest at any time they dash their feet against a stone." But when they are in trouble, I will say to the angels, "Stand aside, I will take care of them myself." *"I will be with them in trouble."* So he speaks to his people: "When thou passest through the waters, I will be with thee and through the rivers, they shall not overflow thee: when thou walkest through the fire, thou shalt not be burned; neither shall the flame kindle upon thee. For I am the Lord thy God, the Holy One of Israel, thy Saviour." When languishing in sickness, He will make his bed, and his pillow; when travelling through the valley of the shadow of death, the Lord will be with him, and enable him to sing, "I will fear no evil: for thou art with me; thy rod and thy staff they comfort me." Thus he is with them as their physician and nurse, in pain and sickness; as their strength in weakness; as their guide in difficulty; their ease in pain; and as their life in death. *"I will be with him in trouble."* *William Dawson.*

**Verse 16.** *With long life will I satisfy him.* Saint Bernard interprets this of *heaven*; because he thought nothing long that had an end. This, indeed, is the

emphasis of heaven's joy; those blessed souls never sin, never weep more; they shall not only be with the Lord, but ever with the Lord. This is the accent which is set on the eulogies given to heaven in Scripture. It is "an inheritance, "and that an "incorruptible one, that fadeth not away; "it is "a crown of glory, "and that a weighty one, yea, "an exceeding great and eternal weight of glory." When once it is on the saint's head it can never fall, or be snatched off; it is a feast, but such a one that hath a sitting down to it but no rising up from it. *William Gurnall*.

**Verse 16.** *With long life will I satisfy him.* Observe the joyful contrast here to the mournful words in the foregoing Psalm. "We spend our years as a tale that is told. The days of our years are threescore years and ten, "(Ps 90:9-10.) The life of Israel in the wilderness was shortened by Disobedience. The Obedience of Christ in the wilderness has won for us a blessed immortality. *Christopher Wordsworth*.

**Verse 16.** *With long life will I satisfy him,* etc. The margin here is "length of days; "that is, days lengthened out or multiplied. The meaning is, I will give him length of days as he desires, or until he is satisfied with life;—implying (1) that it is natural to desire long life; (2) that long life is to be regarded as a blessing (comp. Pr 3:2,16 Ex 20:12); (8) that the tendency of religion is to lengthen out life; since virtue, temperance, regular industry, calmness of mind, moderation in all things, freedom from excesses in eating and drinking,—to all of which religion prompts,—contribute to health and to length of days; and (4) that a time will come, even under this promised blessing of length of days, when a man will be "*satisfied*" with living; when he will have no strong desire to live longer; when, under the infirmities of advanced years, and under his lonely feelings from the fact that his early friends have fallen, and under the influence of a bright hope of heaven, he will feel that he has had *enough* of life here, and that it is better to depart to another world. *And shew him my salvation.* In another life, after he shall be satisfied with this life. *Albert Barnes*.

**Verse 16.** *With long life will I satisfy him.* This promise concerning length of life contains a gift of God by no means to be despised. Many enemies indeed will plot against his life, and desire to extinguish him as suddenly and as quickly as possible; but I shall so guard him that he shall live to a good old age and be filled with years, and desire to depart from life. *J. B. Folengius*.

**Verse 16.** *With long life will I satisfy him.*

We live in deeds, not years; in thoughts, not breaths;  
 In feelings, not in figures on a dial.  
 We should count time by heart throbs. He most lives  
 Who thinks most, feels noblest, acts the best.  
 —*Philip James Bailey, in "Festus."*

**Verse 16.** *Long life.*

They err who measure life by years,  
 With false or thoughtless tongue;  
 Some hearts grow old before their time;  
 Others are always young.  
 It is not the number of the lines  
 On life's fast filling page,  
 It is not the pulse's added throbs,  
 Which constitute their age.  
 Some souls are serfs among the free,  
 While others nobly thrive;  
 They stand just where their fathers stood  
 Dead, even while they live.  
 Others, all spirit, heart, and sense,  
 Theirs the mysterious power  
 To live in thrills of joy or woe,  
 A twelvemonth in an hour! *Bryan W. Procter*

**Verse 16.** *Long life.*

He liveth long who liveth well!  
 All other life is short and vain:  
 He liveth longest who can tell  
 Of living most for heavenly gain.  
 Fie liveth long who liveth well!  
 All else is being flung away;  
 He liveth longest who can tell of true things  
 truly done each day. *Horatius Bonar*

**Verse 16.** *I will show him my salvation.* The last, greatest, climax of blessing, including and concluding all! What God does is perfectly done. Hitherto has his servant caught glimpses of the "great salvation." The Spirit has revealed step by step of it, as he was able to bear it. The Word has taught him, and he has rejoiced in his light. But all was seen *in part* and known *in part*. But when God has satisfied his servant with length of days, and time

for him is over, eternity begun, he will "*shew him his salvation.*" All will be plain. All will be known. God will be revealed in his love and his glory. And we shall know all things, even as we are known! *Mary B. M. Duncan.*

---

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

### Verse 1.

1. The secret dwelling place. There is the dweller in the dark world, in the favoured land, in the holy city, in the outer court; but the holy of holies is the "secret place"—communion, acceptance, etc.
2. The protecting shadow—security, peace, etc.; like hamlets of olden time clustered beneath castle walls. *Charles A. Davis.*

### Verse 1.

1. *The person.* One who is in intimate, personal, secret, abiding communion with God, dwelling near the mercyseat, within the veil.
2. The Privilege. He is the guest of God, protected, refreshed, and comforted by him, and that to all eternity.

### Verses 1-2. Four names of God.

1. We commune with him reverently, for he is the Most High.
2. We rest in him as the Almighty.
3. We rejoice in him as Jehovah or Lord.
4. We trust him as EL, the mighty God.

### Verse 2.

1. Observe the nouns applied to God—refuge from trouble, fortress in trouble, God at all times.
2. Observe the pronouns applied by man—"I" will say, "*my* refuge, my fortress, "etc. *G. R.*

**Verse 2.** The power, excellence, fruit, reasonableness, and open avowal of personal faith.



**Verse 3.** Invisible protection from invisible dangers; wisdom to meet cunning, love to war with cruelty, omnipresence to match mystery, life to baffle death.

**Verse 3.** SURELY, or reasons for assured confidence in God's protection.

**Verses 3-7.** Pestilence, panic, and peace; (for times of widespread disease).  
*Charles A. Davis.*

**Verses 3, 8-9.**

1. Saints are safe—*"surely,"* (Ps 91:3).
2. The evil is bounded—*"only,"* (Ps 91:8).
3. The Lord has reasons for preserving his own—*"because,"* (Ps 91:9).

**Verse 4.**

1. The compassion of God.
2. The confidence of saints.
3. The panoply of truth.

**Verses 5-6.**

1. The exposure of all men to fear. (a) Continually, day and night. (b) Deservedly: "conscience doth make cowards of us all."
2. The exemption of some men from fear. (a) Because of their trust. (b) Because of the divine protection.

**Verse 7.** How an evil may be near but not nigh.

**Verse 8.** What we have actually seen of the reward of the wicked.

**Verses 9-10.**

1. God our spiritual habitation.
2. God the keeper of our earthly habitation.
3. General truth that the spiritual blesses the temporal.

**Verse 10.**

1. The Personal Blessing.
2. The Domestic Blessing.
3. The connection between the two.

**Verses 11-12.** A "wrested" Scripture righted.

1. Satan's version—presumptuousness.
2. The Holy Spirit's version—trustfulness. *Charles A. Davis.*

**Verses 11-12.**

1. The Ministry of Angels as employed by God. (a) Official: "he shall give, "etc. (b) Personal: "over thee." (c) Constant: "in all thy ways."
2. As enjoyed by man. (a) For preservation: "shall bear thee, "etc.; tenderly but effectually. (b) Under limitation. They cannot do the work of God, or of Christ, or of the Spirit, or of the word, or of ministers, for salvation; "are they not all ministering spirits, "etc. *G. R.*

**Verse 12.** Preservation from minor evils most precious because they are often most grievous, lead to greater evils, and involve much damage.

**Verse 13.** The believer's love set upon God.

**Verse 13.**

1. Every child of God has his enemies. (a) They are numerous: "the lion, adder, young lion, dragon." (b) Diversified: subtle and powerful—"lion and adder; " new and old—"young lion" and the" old dragon."
2. He will finally obtain a complete victory over them—"Thou shalt tread, "etc.; "shall put thy foot, "etc.; "the Lord shall bruise Satan, "etc. *G. R.*

**Verses 14-16.** The six "I wills."

**Verse 14.** Here we have,

1. Love for love: "Because, "etc. (a) The fact of the saints' love to God. There is, first, love in God without their love, then love for their love. (b) The evidence of his love to them: "I will deliver him"—from sin, from danger, from temptation, from every evil.

2. Honour for honour. (a) His honouring God. "He hath known my name" and made it known; God honouring him; "I will set him on high"—high in honour, in happiness, in glory. *G. R.*

**Verse 15-16.** Observe,

1. The exceeding great and precious promises. (a) Answer to prayer: "he shall call, "etc. (b) Comfort in trouble: "I will be with him." (c) Deliverance from trouble: "I will deliver him." (d) Greater honour after trouble: deliver "and honour him." (e) Length of days; life long enough to satisfy him. (f) God's salvation; "show him my salvation; "far beyond what man could think or desire.

2. To whom these promises belong; who is the *he* and the *him* to whom these promises are made. He "calls upon God, "says Ps 91:15; he "hath known my name, "says Ps 91:14; he "hath set his love upon me, "says the former part of the same verse; he "has made the Lord his habitation, "says Ps 91:9; he "dwelleth in the secret place of the Most High, "says Ps 91:1. Hannah More says, "To preach privileges without specifying to whom they belong is like putting a letter in the post office without a direction." It may be very good and contain a valuable remittance, but no one can tell for whom it is intended. All the promises of Scripture are plainly directed to those to whom they belong. The direction put upon the promises of this Psalm is unmistakably clear and often repeated. *G. R.*

---

## WORKS UPON THE NINETY-FIRST PSALM

S. Patris Bernardi, in Psalmum 90. (91). Qui habitat. *Sermones* (In the Paris edition of Bernard's works, imperial 8vo. 1839, Volume one part 2, also in the quarto volume of Sermons, *Salisburgi* MDCLXVI.

The Shield of the Righteous: or, the Ninety-first Psalm, expounded, with the addition of Doctrines and Verses. Verie necessarie and comfortable in these dayes of heauinesse, wherein the Pestilence rageth so sore in London, and other parts of this Kingdome. By ROBERT HORN, Minister of God's Word...London. 1628 (4to).

The Righteous man's Habitation in the Time of the Plague and Pestilence; being a brief Exposition of the Ninety-first Psalm: (In the Works of William Bridge (1600-1670) Tegg's Edition, Volume one pg. 463-500.

In "UNDER THE SHADOW: *being additional leaves from the Note Book of the late Mary B.M. Duncan*, 1867", pp. 85-172, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

# Psalm 92

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

---

**TITLE.** *A Psalm or Song for the Sabbath day.* This admirable composition is both a Psalm and a Song, full of equal measures of solemnity and joy; and it was intended to be sung upon the day of rest. The subject is the praise of God; praise is Sabbatic work, the joyful occupation of resting hearts. Since a true Sabbath can only be found in God, it is wise to meditate upon him on the Sabbath day. The style is worthy of the theme and of the day, its inspiration is from the "fount of every blessing"; David spake as the Spirit gave him utterance. In the church of Christ, at this hour, no Psalm is more frequently sung upon the Lord's day than the present. The delightful version of Dr. Watts is familiar to us all—

"Sweet is the work, my God, my King,  
To praise thy name, give thanks, and sing;  
To shew thy love by morning light,  
And talk of all thy truth at night."

The Sabbath was set apart for adoring the Lord in his finished work of creation, hence the suitableness of this Psalm; Christians may take even a higher flight, for they celebrate complete redemption. No one acquainted with David's style will hesitate to ascribe to him the authorship of this divine hymn; the ravings of the Rabbis who speak of its being composed by Adam, only need to be mentioned to be dismissed. Adam in Paradise had neither harps to play upon, nor wicked men to contend with.

---

## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *It is a good thing to give thanks unto the Lord,* or JEHOVAH. It is good ethically, for it is the Lord's right; it is good emotionally, for it is pleasant to the heart; it is good practically, for it leads others to render the same homage. When duty and pleasure combine, who will be backward? To give thanks to God is but a small return for the great benefits wherewith he daily loadeth us; yet as he by his Spirit calls it a good thing we must not despise it, or neglect it. We thank men when they oblige us, how much more ought we to bless the Lord when he benefits us. Devout praise is always good, it is never out of season, never superfluous, but it is especially suitable to the Sabbath; a Sabbath without thanksgiving is a Sabbath profaned. And to sing praises unto thy name, O most High. It is good to give thanks in the form of vocal song. Nature itself teaches us thus to express our gratitude to God; do not the birds sing, and the brooks warble as they flow? To give his gratitude a tongue is wise in man. Silent worship is sweet, but vocal worship is sweeter. To deny the tongue the privilege of uttering the praises of God involves an unnatural strain upon the most commendable prompting of our renewed manhood, and it is a problem to us how the members of the Society

of Friends can deprive themselves of so noble, so natural, so inspiring a part of sacred worship. Good as they are, they miss one good thing when they decline to sing praises unto the name of the Lord. Our personal experience has confirmed us in the belief that it is good to sing unto the Lord; we have often felt like Luther when he said, "Come, let us sing a psalm, and drive away the devil."

**Verse 2.** *To shew forth thy loving kindness in the morning.* The day should begin with praise: no hour is too early for holy song. Loving kindness is a most appropriate theme for those dewy hours when morn is sowing all the earth with orient pearl. Eagerly and promptly should we magnify the Lord; we leave unpleasant tasks as long as we can, but our hearts are so engrossed with the adoration of God that we would rise betimes to attend to it. There is a peculiar freshness and charm about early morning praises; the day is loveliest when it first opens its eyelids, and God himself seems then to make distribution of the day's manna, which tastes most sweetly if gathered ere the sun is hot. It seems most meet that if our hearts and harps have been silent through the shades of night we should be eager again to take our place among the chosen choir who ceaselessly hymn the Eternal One. And thy faithfulness every night. No hour is too late for praise, the end of the day must not be the end of gratitude. When nature seems in silent contemplation to adore its Maker, it ill becomes the children of God to refrain their thanksgiving. Evening is the time for retrospect, memory is busy with the experience of the day, hence the appropriate theme for song is the divine *faithfulness*, of which another day has furnished fresh evidences. When darkness has settled down over all things, "a shade immense", then there comes over wise men a congenial, meditative spirit, and it is most fitting that they should take an expanded view of the truth and goodness of Jehovah—

"This sacred shade and solitude, what is it?  
It is the felt presence of the Deity."

"Every night, "clouded or clear, moonlit or dark, calm or tempestuous, is alike suitable for a song upon the faithfulness of God, since in all seasons, and under all circumstances, it abides the same, and is the mainstay of the believer's consolation. Shame on us that we are so backward in magnifying the Lord, who in the daytime scatters bounteous love, and in the night season walks his rounds of watching care.

**Verse 3.** *Upon an instrument of ten strings;* with the fullest range of music, uttering before God with the full compass of melody the richest emotions of his soul. And upon the psaltery; thus giving variety to praise: the Psalmist

felt that every sweet-sounding instrument should be consecrated to God. George Herbert and Martin Luther aided their private devotions by instrumental music; and whatever may have been the differences of opinion in the Christian church, as to the performance of instrumental music in public, we have met with no objection to its personal and private use. Upon the harp with a solemn sound, or upon *meditation with a harp*; as much as to say, my meditative soul is, after all, the best instrument, and the harp's dulcet tones comes in to aid my thoughts. It is blessed work when hand and tongue work together in the heavenly occupation of praise.

"Strings and voices, hands and hearts,  
In the concert bear your parts:  
All that breathe, your God adore,  
Praise him, praise him, evermore."

It is, however, much to be feared that attention to the mere mechanism of music, noting keys and strings, bars and crotchets, has carried many away from the spiritual harmony which is the soul and essence of praise. Fine music without devotion is but a splendid garment upon a corpse.

**Verse 4.** *For thou, Lord, hast made me glad through thy work.* It was natural for the psalmist to sing, because he was glad, and to sing unto the Lord, because his gladness was caused by a contemplation of the divine work. If we consider either creation or providence, we shall find overflowing reasons for joy; but when we come to review the work of redemption, gladness knows no bounds, but feels that she must praise the Lord with all her might. There are times when in the contemplation of redeeming love we feel that if we did not sing we must die; silence would be as horrible to us as if we were gagged by inquisitors, or stifled by murderers. I will triumph in the works of thy hands. I cannot help it, I must and I will rejoice in the Lord, even as one who has won the victory and has divided great spoil. In the first sentence of this verse he expresses the unity of God's work, and in the second the variety of his works; in both there is reason for gladness and triumph. When God reveals his work to a man, and performs a work in his soul, he makes his heart glad most effectually, and then the natural consequence is continual praise.

**Verse 5.** *O Lord, how great are thy works!* He is lost in wonder. He utters an exclamation of amazement. How vast! How stupendous are the doings of Jehovah! Great for number, extent, and glory and design are all the creations of the Infinite One. And thy thoughts are very deep. The Lord's plans are as marvellous as his acts; his designs are as profound as his doings are vast.

Creation is immeasurable, and the wisdom displayed in it unsearchable. Some men think but cannot work, and others are mere drudges working without thought; in the Eternal the conception and the execution go together. Providence is inexhaustible, and the divine decrees which originate it are inscrutable. Redemption is grand beyond conception, and the thoughts of love which planned it are infinite. Man is superficial, God is inscrutable; man is shallow, God is deep. Dive as we may we shall never fathom the mysterious plan, or exhaust the boundless wisdom of the all comprehending mind of the Lord. We stand by the fathomless sea of divine wisdom, and exclaim with holy awe, "O the depth!"

**Verse 6.** *A brutish man knoweth not; neither doth a fool understand this.* In this and the following verses the effect of the psalm is heightened by contrast; the shadows are thrown in to bring out the lights more prominently. What a stoop from the preceding verse; from the saint to the brute, from the worshipper to the boor, from the psalmist to the fool! Yet, alas, the character described here is no uncommon one. The boorish or boarish man, for such is almost the very Hebrew word, sees nothing in nature; and if it be pointed out to him, his foolish mind will not comprehend it. He may be a philosopher, and yet be such a brutish being that he will not own the existence of a Maker for the ten thousand matchless creations around him, which wear, even upon their surface, the evidences of profound design. The unbelieving heart, let it boast as it will, does not know; and with all its parade of intellect, it does not understand. A man must either be a saint or a brute, he has no other choice; his type must be the adoring seraph, or the ungrateful swine. So far from paying respect to great thinkers who will not own the glory or being of God, we ought to regard them as comparable to the beasts which perish, only vastly lower than mere brutes, because their degrading condition is of their own choosing. O God, how sorrowful a thing it is that men whom thou hast so largely gifted, and made in thine own image, should so brutify themselves that they will neither see nor understand what thou hast made so clear. Well might an eccentric writer say, "God made man a little lower than the angels at first, and he has been trying to get lower ever since."

**Verse 7.** *When the wicked spring as the grass, in abundance, and apparent strength, hastening on their progress like verdant plants, which come to perfection in a day, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; flowering in their prime and pride, their pomp and their prosperity; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever. They grow to die, they blossom to be blasted. They flower for a short space to wither without end. Greatness and glory are to them but the prelude of their overthrow. Little does their*

opposition matter, the Lord reigns on as if they had never blasphemed him; as a mountain abides the same though the meadows at its feet bloom or wither, even so the Most High is unaffected by the fleeting mortals who dare oppose him; they shall soon vanish for ever from among the living. But as for the wicked—how can our minds endure the contemplation of their doom "*for ever*." Destruction "*for ever*" is a portion far too terrible for the mind to realise. Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, the full terror of the wrath to come!

**Verse 8.** *But thou, Lord, art most high for evermore.* This is the middle verse of the Psalm, and the great fact which this Sabbath song is meant to illustrate. God is at once the highest and most enduring of all beings. Others rise to fall, but he is the Most High to eternity. Glory be to his name! How great a God we worship! Who would not fear thee, O thou High Eternal One! The ungodly are destroyed for ever, and God is most high for ever; evil is cast down, and the Holy One reigns supreme eternally.

**Verse 9.** *For, lo, thine enemies, O Lord.* It is a wonder full of instruction and warning, observe it, O ye sons of men; for, lo, thine enemies shall perish; they shall cease from among men, they shall be known no more. In that the thing is spoken twice it is confirmed by the Lord, it shall surely be, and that speedily. All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered; their forces shall be dispersed, their hopes broken, and themselves driven hither and thither like chaff before the tempest. They shall scatter like timid sheep pursued by the lion, they will not have the courage to remain in arms, nor the unity to abide in confederacy. The grass cannot resist the scythe, but falls in withering ranks, even so are the ungodly cut down and swept away in process of time, while the Lord whom they despised sits unmoved upon the throne of his infinite dominion. Terrible as this fact is, no true hearted heart would wish to have it otherwise. Treason against the great Monarch of the universe ought not to go unpunished; such wanton wickedness richly merits the severest doom.

**Verse 10.** *But my horn shalt thou exalt like the horn of an unicorn.* The believer rejoices that he shall not be suffered to perish, but shall be strengthened and enabled to triumph over his enemies, by the divine aid. The unicorn may have been some gigantic ox or buffalo now unknown, and perhaps extinct—among the ancients it was the favourite symbol of unconquerable power; the psalmist adopts it as his emblem. Faith takes delight in foreseeing the mercy of the Lord, and sings of what he will do as well as of what he has done. I shall be anointed with fresh oil. Strengthening shall be attended with refreshment and honour. As guests were anointed at feasts with perfumed unguents, so shall the saints be cheered and delighted



by fresh outpourings of divine grace; and for this reason they shall not pass away like the wicked. Observe the contrast between the happiness of the brutish people and the joy of the righteous: the brutish men grow with a sort of vegetable vigour of their own, but the righteous are dealt with by the Lord himself, and all the good which they receive comes directly from his own right hand, and so is doubly precious in their esteem. The psalmist speaks in the first person, and it should be a matter of prayer with the reader that he may be enabled to do the same.

**Verse 11.** *Mine eye also shall see MY DESIRE on mine enemies.* The words, "my desire", inserted by the translators, had far better have been left out. He does not say what he should see concerning his enemies, he leaves that blank, and we have no right to fill in the vacant space with words which look vindictive. He would see that which would be for God's glory, and that which would be eminently right and just. And mine ears shall hear MY DESIRE of the wicked that rise up *against me*. Here, again, the words "my desire" are not inspired, and are a needless and perhaps a false interpolation. The good man is quite silent as to what he expected to hear; he knew that what he should hear would vindicate his faith in his God, and he was content to leave his cruel foes in God's hands, without an expression concerning his own desire one way or the other. It is always best to leave Scripture as we find it. The broken sense of inspiration is better let alone than pieced out with additions of a translator's own invention; it is like repairing pure gold with tinsel, or a mosaic of gems with painted wood. The holy psalmist had seen the beginning of the ungodly, and expected to see their end; he felt sure that God would right all wrongs, and clear his Providence from the charge of favouring the unjust; this confidence he here expresses, and sits down contentedly to wait the issues of the future.

**Verse 12.** The song now contrasts the condition of the righteous with that of the graceless. The wicked "spring as the grass", but *The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree*, whose growth may not be so rapid, but whose endurance for centuries is in fine contrast with the transitory verdure of the meadow. When we see a noble palm standing erect, sending all its strength upward in one bold column, and growing amid the dearth and drought of the desert, we have a fine picture of the godly man, who in his uprightness aims alone at the glory of God; and, independent of outward circumstances, is made by divine grace to live and thrive where all things else perish. The text tells us not only what the righteous is, but what he shall be; come what may, the good man shall flourish, and flourish after the noblest manner. He shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. This is another noble and long lived tree. "As

the days of a tree are the days of my people", saith the Lord. On the summit of the mountain, unsheltered from the blast, the cedar waves its mighty branches in perpetual verdure, and so the truly godly man under all adversities retains the joy of his soul, and continues to make progress in the divine life. Grass, which makes hay for oxen, is a good enough emblem of the unregenerate; but cedars, which build the temple of the Lord, are none too excellent to set forth the heirs of heaven.

**Verse 13.** *Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God.* In the courtyards of Oriental houses trees were planted, and being thoroughly screened, they would be likely to bring forth their fruit to perfection in trying seasons; even so, those who by grace are brought into communion with the Lord, shall be likened to trees planted in the Lord's house, and shall find it good to their souls. No heart has so much joy as that which abides in the Lord Jesus. Fellowship with the stem begets fertility in the branches. If a man abide in Christ he brings forth much fruit. Those professors who are rooted to the world do not flourish; those who send forth their roots into the marshes of frivolous pleasure cannot be in a vigorous condition; but those who dwell in habitual fellowship with God shall become men of full growth, rich in grace, happy in experience, mighty in influence, honoured and honourable. Much depends upon the soil in which a tree is planted; everything, in our case, depends upon our abiding in the Lord Jesus, and deriving all our supplies from him. If we ever really grow in the courts of the Lord's house we must be planted there, for no tree grows in God's garden self sown; once planted of the Lord, we shall never be rooted up, but in his courts we shall take root downward, and bring forth fruit upward to his glory for ever.

**Verse 14.** *They shall still bring forth fruit in old age.* Nature decays but grace thrives. Fruit, as far as nature is concerned, belongs to days of vigour; but in the garden of grace, when plants are weak in themselves, they become strong in the Lord, and abound in fruit acceptable with God. Happy they who can sing this Sabbath Psalm, enjoying the rest which breathes through every verse of it; no fear as to the future can distress them, for their evil days, when the strong man faileth, are the subject of a gracious promise, and therefore they await them with quiet expectancy. Aged believers possess a ripe experience, and by their mellow tempers and sweet testimonies they feed many. Even if bedridden, they bear the fruit of patience; if poor and obscure, their lowly and contented spirit becomes the admiration of those who know how to appreciate modest worth. Grace does not leave the saint when the keepers of the house do tremble; the promise is still sure though

the eyes can no longer read it; the bread of heaven is fed upon when the grinders fail; and the voice of the Spirit in the soul is still melodious when the daughters of music are brought low. Blessed be the Lord for this! Because even to hoar hairs he is the I AM, who made his people, he therefore bears and carries them. They shall be fat and flourishing. They do not drag out a wretched, starveling existence, but are like trees full of sap, which bear luxuriant foliage. God does not pinch his poor servants, and diminish their consolations when their infirmities grow upon them; rather does he see to it that they shall renew their strength, for their mouths shall be satisfied with his own good things. Such an one as Paul the aged would not ask our pity, but invite our sympathetic gratitude; however feeble his outward man may be, his inner man is so renewed day by day that we may well envy his perennial peace.

**Verse 15.** This mercy to the aged proves the faithfulness of their God, and leads them to shew that the Lord is upright, by their cheerful testimony to his ceaseless goodness. We do not serve a Master who will run back from his promise. Whoever else may defraud us, he never will. Every aged Christian is a letter of commendation to the immutable fidelity of Jehovah. He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him. Here is the psalmist's own seal and sign manual; still was he building upon his God, and still was the Lord a firm foundation for his trust. For shelter, for defence, for indwelling, for foundation, God is our rock; hitherto he has been to us all that he said he would be, and we may be doubly sure that he will abide the same even unto the end. He has tried us, but he has never allowed us to be tempted above what we are able to bear: he has delayed our reward, but he has never been unrighteous to forget our work of faith and labour of love. He is a friend without fault, a helper without fail. Whatever he may do with us, he is always in the right; his dispensations have no flaw in them, no, not the most minute. He is true and righteous altogether, and so we weave the end of the psalm with its beginning, and make a coronet of it, for the head of our Beloved. It is a good thing to sing praises unto the Lord, for "*he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.*"

---

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**TITLE.** This is entitled *A Psalm to be sung on the day of the Sabbath*. It is known that the Jews appropriated certain Psalms to particular days. R. Selomo thinks that it refers to the future state of the blessed, which is a perpetual sabbath. Others pretend that it was composed by Adam, on the seventh day of the creation. It might, with more probability, have been

supposed to be put, by a poetic fiction, into the mouth of Adam, beholding, with wonder and gratitude, the recent creation. But Ps 92:2 seems to refer to the morning and evening sacrifice, which the psalmist considers as most proper for prayer and praise.—*D. Cresswell*.

**Title.** For the Sabbath day. Perchance, as *Lud. de Dieu* remarks on this place, every day of the week had its allotted psalms, according to what is said in the *Talmud*, lib. Myvdq. The songs which the Levites formerly sang in the sanctuary are these: on the first day, Ps 24:1-10; on the second, Ps 48:1-14; on the third, Ps 82:1-8; on the fourth, Ps 104:1-35; on the fifth, Ps 81:1-16; on the sixth, Ps 93:1-5; on the seventh, the Ps 92:1-15, the beginning of which is, *a psalm or a canticle for the Sabbath day*, that is to say, for the future age, which will be altogether a sabbath.—*Martin Geier*.

**Title.** For the Sabbath. It is observable that the name JEHOVAH occurs in the Psalms seven times—the sabbatical number (1,4,5,8,9,13,15).—*C. Wordsworth*.

**Verse 1.** *It is a good thing.* It is *bonum, honestum, jucundum, utile*; an honest, pleasant, and profitable good. The altar of incense was to be overlaid with pure gold, and to have a crown of gold round about it. Which (if we may allegorically apply it) intimates unto us, that the spiritual incense of prayers and praises is rich and precious, a golden and a royal thing.—*Henry Jeanes*, in "*The Works of Heaven upon Earth*," 1649.

**Verse 1.** *It is a good thing to give thanks*, etc. Giving of thanks is more noble and perfect in itself than petition; because in petition often our own good is eyed and regarded, but in giving of thanks only God's honour. The Lord Jesus said, "It is more blessed to give than to receive." Now, a subordinate end of petition is to receive some good from God, but the sole end of thanks is to give glory unto God.—*William Ames* (1576-1633), in "*Medulla Theologica*."

**Verse 1.** "*Give thanks; ""praises.*" We thank God for his benefits, and praise him for his perfections.—*Filliucius*, out of *Aquinas*.

**Verse 1.** *To sing praises.*

1. *Singing is the music of nature.* The Scriptures tell us, the mountains sing (Is 41:23); the valleys sing (Ps 65:13); the trees of the wood sing (1Ch 16:33). Nay, the air is the birds' music room, where they chant their musical notes.

2. *Singing is the music of ordinances.* Augustine reports of himself, that when he came to Milan and heard the people sing, he wept for joy in the church to hear that pleasing melody. And Beza confesses, that at his first entrance into the congregation, and hearing them sing Ps 91:1-16 he felt himself exceedingly comforted, and did retain the sound of it afterwards upon his heart. The Rabbis tell us, that the Jews, after the feast of the Passover was celebrated, sang Ps 91:1-16, and the five following psalms; and our Saviour and his apostles "sang an hymn" immediately after the blessed supper, (Mt 26:30).

3. *Singing is the music of saints.* (1) They have performed this duty in their greatest numbers, (Ps 149:1). (2) In their greatest straits, (Is 26:19). (3) In their greatest flight, (Is 42:10-11). (4) In their greatest deliverances, (Is 65:14). (5) In their greatest plenties. In all these changes singing hath been their stated duty and delight. And indeed it is meet that the saints and servants of God should sing forth their joys and praises to the Lord Almighty; every attribute of him can set both their song and their tune.

4. *Singing is the music of angels.* Job tells us, "The morning stars sang together", (Job 38:7). Now these morning stars, as Pineda tells us, are the angels; to which the Chaldee paraphrase accords, naming these morning stars, *aciem angelorum*, "a host of angels." Nay, when this heavenly host was sent to proclaim the birth of our dearest Jesus, they delivered their message in this raised way of duty, (Lu 2:13). They were a countless number, delivering their messages in a "laudatory singing", the whole company of angels making a musical choir. Nay, in heaven, there is the angels' joyous music, they there sing hallelujahs to the Most High, and to the Lamb who sits upon the throne, (Re 5:11-12).

5. *Singing is the music of heaven.* The glorious saints and angels accent their praises this way, and make one harmony in their state of blessedness; and this is the music of the bride chamber, (Re 15:3). The saints who were tuning here their psalms, are now singing hallelujahs in a louder strain, and articulating their joys, which here they could not express to their perfect satisfaction. Here they laboured with drowsy hearts, and faltering tongues; but in glory these impediments are removed, and nothing is left to jar their joyous celebrations.

—John Wells(-1676), in "*The Morning Exercises.*"

**Verse 2.** *In the morning.* When indeed the mind after the rest of the night is more active, devoted and constant. In other parts of the day, as at noon, or in

the afternoon, many sounds of business disturb, and greater lassitude oppresses. Compare Ps 5:4 59:17 58:2 88:14 Ps 119:147-148, where this same part of the day is celebrated as the fittest for sacred meditations. However, this ought not to be taken exclusively, as if, in the morning alone, and not also at noon or in the evening, it was suitable to celebrate divine grace.—*Martin Geier*.

**Verse 2.** *In the morning.* The Brahmins rise three hours before the sun, to pray. The Indians would esteem it a great sin to eat in the morning before praying to their gods. The ancient Romans considered it impious if they had not a little chamber, in their house, appropriated to prayer. Let us take a lesson from these Turks and heathen; their zealous ardour ought to shame us. Because we possess the true light, should their zeal surpass ours?—*Frederic Arndt*, in "*Lights of the Morning*", 1861.

**Verse 2.** *To shew forth thy lovingkindness in the morning.* Our praise ought to be suitably arranged. In the time of prosperity or the *morning* we should declare thy lovingkindness, because whatever of prosperity we have proceeds from the mercy and grace of God; and in the time of adversity or *night*, we should declare thy justice or faithfulness, because whatever adversity happens to us is ordained by the just judgment of God.—*J. Turrecremata*.

**Verse 2.** God's *mercy* is itself the *morning ray*, which scatters away darkness (Ps 3:5 59:16); his *faithfulness* the guardian, that assures us against *night peril*.—*F. Delitzsch*.

**Verse 2.** *In the morning, and...every night.* God is Alpha and Omega. It is fit we should begin and end the day with his praise, who begins and ends it for us with mercy. Well, thou seest thy duty plainly laid before thee. As thou wouldst have God prosper thy labour in the day, and sweeten thy rest in the night, clasp them both together with thy morning and evening devotions. He that takes no care to set forth God's portion of time in the morning, doth not only rob God of his due, but is a thief to himself all the day after, by losing the blessing which a faithful prayer might bring from heaven on his undertakings. And he that closes his eyes at night without prayer, lies down before his bed is made.—*William Gurnall*.

**Verse 2.** *Thy faithfulness* (Vulg. *veritas*, *every night*. Truth can be taken in its proper signification. Thus St. Jerome on our Psalm takes it, and says: "The truth of the Lord is announced in the night, as if it were wrapped up in some verbal obscurities. In an enigma it is spoken, and in parables; that

seeing, they should not see, and hearing, they should not understand. Moses ascended Mount Sinai, Ex 24:9, and passed into the tempest and into the blackness and darkness, and there spake with the Lord." Thus Jerome. Christ brings back the light to us, as Lactantius teaches. Shall we wait, says he, till Socrates shall know something? Or Anaxagoras find light in the darkness? Or Democritus draw forth the truth from a well? Or till Empedocles expands the paths of his soul? Or Ascesilas and Carneades see, feel, and perceive? Behold a voice from heaven teaches us the truth, and reveals it more clearly to us than the sun himself ...In the night truth is to be shown forth, that the night may be turned into day.—*Le Blanc*.

**Verse 3.** *Upon an instrument of ten strings.* Eusebius, in his comment on this psalm, says: "*The psalter of ten strings* is the worship of the Holy Spirit performed by means of the five senses of the body, and by the *five* powers of the soul." And to confirm this interpretation, he quotes the apostle, 1Co 14:15: "I will pray with the spirit, and with the understanding also; I will sing with the spirit, and with the understanding also." "As the mind has its influence by which it moves the body, so the spirit has its own influence by which it moves the soul." Whatever may be thought of this gloss, one thing is pretty evident from it, that *instrumental music* was not in use in the church of Christ in the time of Eusebius, which was near the middle of the *fourth* century. Had any such thing then existed in the Christian Church, he would have doubtless alluded to or spiritualized it; or, as he quoted the words of the apostle above, would have shown that *carnal usages* were substituted for *spiritual exercises*.—*Adam Clarke*.

**Verse 3.** In Augustine to Ambrose there is the following passage bearing on this same subject:—"Sometimes, from over jealousy, I would entirely put from me and from the church the melodies of the sweet chants that we use in the Psalter, lest our ears seduce us; and the way of Athanasius, bishop of Alexandria, seems the safe one, who, as I have often heard, made the reader chant with so slight a change of voice, that it was more like speaking than singing. And yet, when I call to mind the tears I shed when I heard the chants of thy church in the infancy of my recovered faith, and reflect that I was affected, not by the mere music, but by the subject, brought out as it were by clear voices and appropriate tune, then, in turn, I confess how useful is the practice."

**Verse 3.** We are not to conceive that God enjoyed the harp as feeling a delight like ourselves in mere melody of sounds; but the Jews, who were yet under age, were restricted to the use of such childish elements. The intention of them was to stimulate the worshippers, and stir them up more actively to

the celebration of the praise of God with the heart. We are to remember that the worship of God was never understood to consist in such outward services, which were only necessary to help forward a people, as yet weak and rude in knowledge, in the spiritual worship of God. A difference is to be observed in this respect between his people under the Old and under the New Testament; for now that Christ has appeared, and the church has reached full age, it were only to bury the light of the Gospel, should we introduce the shadows of a departed dispensation. From this, it appears that the Papists, in employing instrumental music, cannot be said so much to imitate the practice of God's ancient people, as to ape it in a senseless and absurd manner, exhibiting a silly delight in that worship of the Old Testament which was figurative, and terminated with the gospel.—*John Calvin*.

**Verse 3.** Chrysostom says, "Instrumental music was only permitted to the Jews, as sacrifice was, for the heaviness and grossness of their souls. God condescended to their weakness, because they were lately drawn off from idols; but now instead of organs, we may use our own bodies to praise him withal." Theodoret has many like expressions in his comments upon the Psalms and other places. But the author under the name of Justin Martyr is more express in his determination, as to matter of fact, telling us plainly, "that the use of singing with instrumental music was not received in the Christian churches as it was among the Jews in their infant state, but only the use of plain song."—*Joseph Bingham*.

**Verse 3.** Instrumental music, the more I think of it, appears with increasing evidence to be utterly unsuited to the genius of the gospel dispensation. There was a glare, if I may so express it, which characterized even the divine appointments of Judaism. An august temple, ornamented with gold and silver, and precious stones, golden candlesticks, golden altars, priests in rich attire, trumpets, cymbals, harps; all of which were adapted to an age and dispensation when the church was in a state of infancy. But when the substance is come, it is time that the shadows flee away. The best exposition of harps in singing is given by Dr. Watts—

"Oh may my heart in tune be found,  
Like David's harp of solemn sound."  
—*Andrew Fuller*.

**Verse 3.** (*last clause*). *On meditation with a harp.* (New translation.) By a bold but intelligible figure, meditation is referred to as an instrument, precisely as the lyre and harp are, the latter being joined with it as a mere accompaniment.—*J.A. Alexander*.



**Verse 3.** *With a solemn sound.* Let Christians abound as much as they will in the holy, heavenly exercise of singing in God's house and in their own houses; but let it be performed as a holy act, wherein they have immediately and visibly to do with God. When any social open act of devotion or solemn worship of God is performed, God should be revered as present. As we would not have the ark of God depart from us, her provoke God to make a breach upon us, we should take heed that we handle the ark with reverence.—*Jonathan Edwards, in "Errors connected with singing praises to God."*

**Verse 4.** *Thou LORD hast made me glad through thy work.* One of the parts of the well spending of the Sabbath, is the looking upon, and consideration of the works of creation. The consideration of the Lord's works will afford us much sweet refreshment and joy when God blesses the meditation; and when it is so we ought to acknowledge our gladness most thankfully and lift up our heart in his ways.—*David Dickson.*

**Verse 4.** *Thy work.* The "work of God" here is one no less marvellous than that of creation, which was the original ground of hallowing the Sabbath (see title of this Psalm)—namely, the final redemption of his people.—*A.R. Fausset.*

**Verse 4.** *Made me glad through thy work, etc.* Surely there is nothing in the world, short of the most undivided reciprocal attachment, that has such power over the workings of the human heart as the mild sweetness of Nature. The most ruffled temper, when emerging from the town, will subside into a calm at the sight of an extended landscape reposing in the twilight of a fine evening. It is then that the spirit of peace settles upon the heart, unfetters the thoughts, and elevates the soul to the Creator. It is then that we behold the Parent of the universe in his works; we see his grandeur in earth, sea, sky; we feel his affection in the emotions which they raise, and half mortal, half etherealized, forgot where we are in the anticipation of what that world must be, of which this lovely earth is merely the shadow.—*Miss Porter.*

**Verse 4.** *I will triumph in the works of thy hands.* Here it will be most fitting to remind the reader of those three great bursts of adoring song, which in different centuries have gushed forth from souls enraptured with the sight of nature. They are each of them clear instances of triumphing in the works of God's hands. How majestically Milton sang when he said of our unfallen parents,—

"Nor holy rapture wanted they to praise  
 Their Maker, in fit strains pronounced or sung  
 Unmeditated; such prompt eloquence  
 Flowed from their lips in prose or numerous verse,  
 More tunable than needed lute or harp  
 To add more sweetness."

Then he gives us that noble hymn, too well known for us to quote, the reader will find it in the fifth book of the *Paradise Lost*, commencing—

"These are thy glorious works, Parent of good, Almighty!"

Thomson also, in his *Seasons*, rises to a wonderful height, as he closes his poem with a hymn—

"These as they change, Almighty Father, these  
 Are but the varied God."

Coleridge in his "Hymn before Sunrise, in the Vale of Chamouni", equally well treads the high places of triumphant devotion, as he cries—

"Awake my soul! not only passive praise  
 Thou owest! not alone these swelling tears,  
 Mute thanks and secret ecstasy! Awake,  
 Voice of sweet song! Awake, my heart, awake!  
 Green vales and icy cliffs, all join my hymn."

**Verse 5.** *Thy thoughts.* The plural of *tbvrm*, from the verb *bvr*, to meditate, to count, to *weave*; and this last word gives a good idea of what is here made the subject of admiration and praise, the wonderful intricacy and contrivance with which the Divine Mind designs and executes his plans, till at length the result is seen in a beautifully woven tissue of many delicately mingled and coloured threads.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

**Verse 5.** *Thy thoughts are very deep.* Verily, my brethren, there is no sea so deep as these thoughts of God, who maketh the wicked flourish, and the good suffer: nothing so profound, nothing so deep; therein every unbelieving soul is wrecked, in that depth, in that profundity. Dost thou wish to cross this depth? Remove not from the wood of Christ's cross; and thou shalt not sink: hold thyself fast to Christ.—*Augustine.*

**Verse 6.** Expressively he wrote: "The *man brute* will not know; the fool will not understand this", viz., that when the wicked spring up with rapid and apparently vigorous growth as the summer flowers in Palestine, it is that they may ripen soon for a swift destruction. The *man brute* precisely translates the Hebrew words; one whom God has endowed with manhood, but who has debased himself to brutehood; a man as being of God's creation in his own image, but a brute as being self moulded (shall we say self made?) into the image of the baser animals!—*Henry Cowles*.

**Verse 6.** *A brutish man knoweth not*, etc. A sottish sensualist who hath his *soul for salt* only, to keep his body from putrefying (as we say of swine) he takes no knowledge of God's great works, but grunts and goes his ways, contenting himself with a natural use of the creatures, as beasts do.—*John Trapp*.

**Verse 6.** *A brutish man knoweth not*, etc. That is, he being a beast, and having no sanctified principle of wisdom in him, looks no further than a beast into all the works of God and occurrences of things; looks on all blessings as things provided for man's delight by God; but he extracts seldom holy, spiritual, and useful thoughts out of all, he wants the art of doing it.—*Thomas Goodwin*.

**Verse 6.** *A brutish man knoweth not*. How universally do men strive, by the putrid joys of sense and passion, to destroy the fineness of the sensibilities which God has given them. This mind, which might behold a world of glory in created things, and look through them as through a transparent veil to things infinitely *more* glorious, signified or contained within the covering, is as dull and heavy as a piece of anthracite coal. Who made it so? Alas, habits of sense and sin have done this. If from childhood the soul had been educated for God, in habits accordant with its spiritual nature, it would be full of life, love, and sensibility, in harmony with all lovely things in the natural world, beholding the spiritual world through the natural, alive to all excitement from natural and intellectual beauty, and as ready to its duty as a child to its play. What a dreadful destruction of the mind's inner sensibilities results from a sensual life! What a decline, decay, and paralysis of its intuitive powers, so that the very existence of such a thing as spiritual intuition, in reference to a spiritual world, may be questioned, if not denied! A man may be frightfully successful in such a process of destruction if long enough continued, upon his own nature. "Who can read without indignation of Kant", remarks De Quincey, "that at his own table in social sincerity and confidential talk, let him say what he would in his books, he exulted in the prospect of absolute and ultimate annihilation; that he planted his glory in

the grave, and was ambitious of rotting for ever! The King of Prussia, though a personal friend of Kant's, found himself obliged to level his State thunders at some of his doctrines, and terrified him in his advance; else I am persuaded that Kant would have formally delivered Atheism from the professor's chair, and would have enthroned the horrid ghoulisn creed, which privately he professed, in the University of Königsberg. It required the artillery of a great king to make him pause. The fact is, that as the stomach has been known by means of its natural secretion, to attack not only whatsoever alien body is introduced within it, but also (as John Hunter first showed), sometimes to attack itself and its own organic structure; so, and with the same preternatural extension of instinct, did Kant carry forward his destroying functions, until he turned them upon his own hopes, and the pledges of his own superiority to the dog, the ape, the worm."—*George B. Cheever, in "Voices of Nature", 1852.*

**Verse 6.** *A fool.* The simpleton is an automaton, he is a machine, he is worked by a spring; mere gravity carries him forward, makes him move, makes him turn, and that unceasingly and in the same way, and exactly with the same equable pace: he is uniform, he is never inconsistent with himself; whoever has seen him once, has seen him at all moments, and in all periods of his life; he is like the ox that bellows, or the blackbird which whistles; that which is least visible in him is his soul; it does not act, it is not exercised, it takes its rest.—*Jean de la Bruyère (1639-1696), quoted by Ramage.*

**Verse 6.** *Neither doth a fool understand this.*

He roved among the vales and streams,  
In the green wood and hollow dell;  
They were his dwellings night and day,—

But nature never could find the way  
Into the heart of Peter Bell.  
In vain, through every changeful year,  
Did Nature lead him as before;  
A primrose by a river's brim  
A yellow primrose was to him,  
And it was nothing more.

In vain, through water, earth, and air,  
The soul of happy sound was spread,  
When Peter on some April morn,

Beneath the broom or budding thorn,  
Made the warm earth his lazy bed.

At noon, when by the forest's edge  
He lay beneath the branches high,  
The soft blue sky did never melt  
Into his heart; he never felt  
The witchery of the soft blue sky!

There was a hardness in his cheek,  
There was a hardness in his eye,  
As if the man had fixed his face,  
In many a solitary place,  
Against the wind and open sky.

—*W. Wordsworth*, 1770-1850.

**Verse 7.** *When the wicked spring as the grass*, etc. Their felicity is the greatest infelicity.—*Adam Clarke*.

**Verse 7.** Little do they think that they are suffered to prosper that like beasts they may be fitter for slaughter. The fatter they are, the fitter for slaughter, and the sooner slain: "He slew the fattest of them." Ps 78:31.—*Zachary Bogan*.

**Verse 8.** Here is the central pivot of the Psalm. *But thou, Lord, art most high for evermore*, *lit.* "art height", & c., the abstract used for the concrete, to imply that the essence of all that is *high* is concentrated in Jehovah. When God and the cause of holiness *seem low*, God *is really* never higher than then; for out of seeming weakness he perfects the greatest strength. When the wicked seem *high*, they are then on the verge of being cast down for ever. The believer who can realize this will not despair at the time of his own depression, and of the seeming exaltation of the wicked. If we can feel "*Jehovah most high for evermore*", we can well be unruffled, however low we lie.—*A.R. Fausset*.

**Verse 9.** "*Lo thine enemies*"; "*lo thine enemies*." He represents their destruction as present, and as certain, which the repetition of the words implies.—*Matthew Pool*.

**Verse 9.** *Thine enemies shall perish*. This is the only Psalm in the Psalter which is designated a Sabbath song. The older Sabbath was a type of our rest

in Christ from sin; and therefore the final extirpation of sin forms one of the leading subjects of the psalm.—*Joseph Francis Thrupp*.

**Verse 9.** *All the workers of iniquity shall be scattered.* The wicked may unite and confederate together, but the bands of their society are feeble. It is seldom that they long agree together; at least as to the particular object of their pursuit. Though they certainly harmonize in the general one, that of working iniquity. But God will soon by his power, and in his wrath, confound and scatter them even to destruction.—*Samuel Burder*.

**Verse 10.** *Thou shalt lift up, as a Reêym, my horn,* seems to point to the mode in which the *bovidoe* use their horns, lowering the head and then tossing it up.—*William Houghton, in Smith's Bible Dictionary*.

**Verse 10.** *The horn of an unicorn.*—After discussing the various accounts which are given of this animal by ancient and modern writers, Winer says, I do not hesitate to say, it is the *Antelope Leucoryx*, a species of goat with long and sharp horns.—*William Walford*.

**Verse 10.** *If shall be anointed with fresh oil.* Montanus has, instead of "*fresh oil*", given the literal meaning of the original *virido oleo*, "*with green oil*." Ainsworth also renders it: "*fresh or green oil*." The remark of Calmet is: "The plants imparted somewhat of their colour, as well as of their fragrance, hence the expression, '*green oil*.'" Harmer says, "I shall be anointed with green oil." Some of these writers think the term *green*, as it is in the original, signifies "precious fragrant oil"; others, literally "green" in colour; and others, "fresh" or newly made oil. But I think it will appear to mean "cold drawn oil", that which has been expressed or squeezed from the nut or fruit without the process of boiling. The Orientals prefer this kind to all others for anointing themselves; it is considered the most precious, the most pure and efficacious. Nearly all their medicinal oils are thus extracted; and because they cannot gain so much by this method as by the boiling process, oils so drawn are very dear. Hence their name for the article thus prepared is also *patche*, that is, "*green oil*." But this term, in Eastern phraseology, is applied to other things which are not boiled or raw: thus unboiled water is called *patchi-tameer*, "*green water*"; *patche-pal*, likewise, "*green milk*", means that which has not been boiled, and the butter made from it is called "*green butter*"; and uncooked meat or yams are known by the same name. I think, therefore, the Psalmist alludes to that valuable article which is called "*green oil*", on account of its being expressed from the nut or fruit, without the process of boiling.—*Joseph Roberts's Oriental Illustrations*.

**Verse 10.** *Anointed with fresh oil.* Every kind of benediction and refreshment I have received, do receive, and shall receive, like one at a feast, who is welcomed as a friend, and whose *head* is copiously anointed with oil or fragrant balm. In this way, the spirits are gently refreshed, an inner joyousness excited, the beauty of the face and limbs, according to the custom of the country, brought to perfection. Or, there is an allusion to the custom of *anointing* persons at their solemn installation in some splendid office. Compare Ps 23:5 "*Thou anointest my head with oil,*" and Ps 45:7, "*God, thy God, hath anointed thee with the oil of gladness.*"—*Martin Geier.*

**Verse 10.** (*last clause*). The phrase is not "I am anointed", hvm; but ytlb, *imbutus sum—perfusus sum*; apparently in reference to the abundance of perfume employed on the occasion, viz., his being elected King over all the tribes, as indicative of the greater popularity of the act, or the higher measure of Jehovah's blessing on his people. The difference, indeed, between the first anointing of David and that of Saul, as performed by Samuel, is well worthy of notice on the present occasion. When Samuel was commanded to anoint Saul, he "took a *vial* of oil, and poured it upon his head." in private, 1Sa 16:13. Here we find the horn again made use of and apparently full to the brim—*David was soaked or imbued with it.*—*John Mason Good.*

**Verse 11.** *Mine enemies.*—The word here used rwv *shur*—occurs nowhere else. It means, properly, a liar in wait, one who *watches*; one who is in ambush; and refers to persons who *watched* his conduct; who *watched* for his ruin.—*A. Barnes.*

**Verse 12.** *Like the palm tree.* Look now at those stately palm trees, which stand here and there on the plain, like military sentinels, with feathery plumes nodding gracefully on their proud heads. The stem, tall, slender, and erect as Rectitude herself, suggests to the Arab poets many a symbol for their lady love; and Solomon, long before them, has sung, "How fair and how pleasant art thou, O love, for delights! This thy stature is like a palm tree" (So 7:6-7). Yes; and Solomon's father says, "*The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree*", etc. The royal poet has derived more than one figure from the customs of men, and the habits of this noble tree, with which to adorn his sacred ode. The palm grows slowly, but steadily, from century to century uninfluenced by those alternations of the seasons which affect other trees. It does not rejoice over much in winter's copious rain, nor does it droop under the drought and the burning sun of summer. Neither heavy weights which men place upon its head, nor the importunate urgency of the wind, can sway it aside from perfect uprightness. There it stands, looking calmly down upon the world below, and patiently yielding its large clusters

of golden fruit from generation to generation. They *bring forth fruit in old age*. The allusion to being *planted in the house of the Lord* is probably drawn from the custom of planting beautiful and long lived trees in the courts of temples and palaces, and in all "high places" used for worship. This is still common; nearly every palace, and mosque, and convent in the country has such trees in the courts, and being well protected there, they flourish exceedingly. Solomon covered all the walls of the "Holy of Holies" round about with palm trees. They were thus planted, as it were, within the very house of the Lord; and their presence there was not only ornamental, but appropriate and highly suggestive. The very best emblem, not only of patience in well doing, but of the rewards of the righteous—a fat and flourishing old age—a peaceful end—a glorious immortality.—*W.M. Thomson.*

**Verse 12.** *The palm tree.* The palms were entitled by Linnaeus, "the princes of the vegetable world"; and Von Martius enthusiastically says, "The common world atmosphere does not become these vegetable monarchs: but in those genial climes where nature seems to have fixed her court, and summons around her of flowers, and fruits, and trees, and animated beings, a galaxy of beauty,—there they tower up into the balmy air, rearing their majestic stems highest and proudest of all. Many of them, at a distance, by reason of their long perpendicular shafts, have the appearance of columns, erected by the Divine architect, bearing up the broad arch of heaven above them, crowned with a capital of gorgeous green foliage." And Humboldt speaks of them as "the loftiest and stateliest of all vegetable forms." To these, above all other trees, the prize of beauty has always been awarded by every nation, and it was from the Asiatic palm world, or the adjacent countries, that human civilization sent forth the first rays of its early dawn. On the northern borders of the Great Desert, at the foot of the Atlas mountains, the groves of date palms form the great feature of that parched region, and few trees besides can maintain an existence. The excessive dryness of this arid tract, where rain seldom falls, is such that wheat refuses to grow, and even barley, maize, and Caffre corn, (*Holcus sorghum*,) afford the husbandman only a scanty and uncertain crop. The hot blasts from the south are scarcely supportable even by the native himself, and yet here forests of date palms flourish, and form a screen impervious to the rays of the sun, beneath the shade of which the lemon, the orange, and the pomegranate, are cherished, and the vine climbs up by means of its twisted tendrils; and although reared in constant shade, all these fruits acquire a more delicious flavour than in what would seem a more favourable climate. How beautiful a comment do these facts supply to the words of Holy Writ,



*"The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree!"* Unmoved by the scorching and withering blasts of temptations or persecutions, the Christian sustained by the secret springs of Divine grace, lives and grows in likeness to his Divine Master, when all others are overcome, and their professions wither. How striking is the contrast in the psalm. The wicked and worldlings are compared to grass, which is at best but of short duration, and which is easily withered; but the emblem of the Christian is the palm tree, which stands for centuries. Like the grateful shade of the palm groves, the Christian extends around him a genial, sanctified, and heavenly influence; and just as the great value of the date palm lies in its abundant, wholesome, and delicious fruit, so do those who are the true disciples of Christ abound in "fruits of righteousness", for, said our Saviour, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples."—"The Palm Tribes and their Varieties." *R.T. Society's Monthly Volume*.

**Verse 12.** *The righteous shall flourish.* David here tells us *how* he shall flourish. "He shall flourish *like the palm tree*: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon." Of the wicked he had said just before, "When the wicked spring as the grass, and when all the workers of iniquity do flourish; it is that they shall be destroyed for ever." They flourish as the *grass*, which today is, and tomorrow is cast into the oven. What a contrast with the worthlessness, the weakness, transitoriness, and destiny, of grass—in a warm country too—are the palm tree and cedar of Lebanon! They are evergreens. How beautifully, how firmly, how largely, they grow! How strong and lofty is the cedar! How upright, and majestic, and tall, the palm tree. The palm also bears fruit, called dates, like bunches of grapes. It sometimes yields a hundredweight at once. He tells us *where* he shall flourish. "Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God." The allusion is striking. It compares the house of God to a garden, or fine well watered soil, favourable to the life, and verdure, and fertility, of the trees fixed there. The reason is, that in the sanctuary we have the communion of saints. *There* our fellowship is with the Father, and with his Son Jesus Christ. *There* are dispensed the ordinances of religion, and the word of truth. *There* God commandeth the blessing, even life for evermore. He also tells us *when* he shall flourish. "They shall still bring forth fruit in old age." This is to show the permanency of their principles, and to distinguish them from natural productions.

"The plants of grace shall ever live;  
Nature decays, but grace must thrive;

Time, that doth all things else impair,  
Still makes them flourish strong and fair."

The young Christian is lovely, like a tree in the blossoms of spring: the aged Christian is valuable, like a tree in autumn, bending with ripe fruit. We therefore look for something superior in old disciples. More deadness to the world, the vanity of which they have had more opportunities to see; more meekness of wisdom; more disposition to make sacrifices for the sake of peace; more maturity of judgment in divine things; more confidence in God; more richness of experience. He also tells us *why* he shall flourish. "They shall be fat and flourishing; to shew that the Lord is upright." We might rather have supposed that it was necessary to shew that *they* were upright. But by the grace of God they are what they are—not they, but the grace of God which is in them. From *him* is their fruit found. Their preservation and fertility, therefore, are to the praise and glory of God; and as what he does for them he had *engaged* to do, it displays his truth as well as his mercy, and proves that he is upright.—*William Jay*.

**Verse 12.** *The righteous shall flourish like a palm tree.*

1. *The palm tree grows in the desert.* Earth is a desert to the Christian; true believers are ever refreshed in it as a palm is in the Arabian desert. So *Lot* amid Sodom's wickedness, and *Enoch* who walked with God amongst the antediluvians.

2. *The palm tree grows from the sand, but the sand is not its food;* water from below feeds its tap roots, though the heavens above be brass. Some Christians grow, not as the lily, Ho 14:5, by green pastures, or the willow by water courses, Isa 44:4, but as the palm of the desert; so *Joseph* among the Cat-worshippers of Egypt, *Daniel* in voluptuous Babylon. Faith's penetrating root reaches the fountains of living waters.

3. *The palm tree is beautiful,* with its tall and verdant canopy, and the silvery flashes of its waving plumes; so the Christian virtues are not like the creeper or bramble, tending downwards, their palm branches shoot upwards, and seek the things above where Christ dwells, Co 3:1: some trees are crooked and gnarled, but the Christian is a tall palm as a son of the light, Mt 3:12; Php 2:15. The Jews were called a crooked generation, De 32:5, and Satan a crooked serpent, Isa 27:1, but the Christian is upright like the palm. Its beautiful, unfading leaves make it an emblem of victory; it was twisted into verdant booths at the feast of Tabernacles; and the multitude, when escorting Christ to his coronation in Jerusalem, spread leaves on the way, Mt 21:8; so

victors in heaven are represented as having palms in their hands, Re 7:9. No dust adheres to the leaf as it does with the *battree*; the Christian is in the world, not of it; the dust of earth's desert adheres not to his palm leaf. The leaf of the palm is the same—it does not fall in winter, and even in the summer it has no holiday clothing, it is an evergreen; the palm trees' rustling is the desert orison.

4. *The palm tree is very useful.* The Hindus reckon it has 360 uses. Its shadow shelters, its fruit refreshes the weary traveller, it points out the place of water, such was Barnabas, a son of consolation, Ac 4:36; such Lydia, Dorcas, and others, who on the King's highway showed the way to heaven, as Philip did to the Ethiopian eunuch, Ac 9:34. Jericho was called the City of Palms, De 34:3.

5. *The palm tree produces even to old age.* The best dates are produced when the tree is from thirty to one hundred years old; 300 pounds of dates are annually yielded: so the Christian grows happier and more useful as he becomes older. Knowing his own faults more, he is more mellow to others: he is like the sun setting, beautiful, mild, and large, looking like Elim, where the wearied Jews found twelve wells and seventy palm trees.—*J. Long, in "Scripture Truth in Oriental Dress", 1871.*

**Verse 12.** *Palm trees.* The open country moreover wears a sad aspect now: the soil is rent and dissolves into dust at every breath of wind; the green of the meadows is almost entirely gone,—the *palm tree* alone preserves in the drought and heat its verdant root of leaves.—*Gotthelf H. von Schubert, 1780-1860.*

**Verse 12.** *A cedar in Lebanon.* Laying aside entirely any enquiry as to the palm tree, and laying aside the difficulty contained in the Ps 92:13, I have only to compare this description of the cedar in Lebanon with the accounts of those who have visited them in modern days. Without believing (as the Maronites or Christian inhabitants of the mountains do), that the seven very ancient cedars which yet remain in the neighbourhood of the village of Eden in Lebanon are the remains of the identical forest which furnished Solomon with timber for the Temple, full three thousand years ago, they can yet were be proved to be of very great antiquity. These very cedars were visited by Belonius in 1550, nearly three hundred years ago, who found them twenty-eight in number. Rawolf, in 1575, makes them twenty-four. Dandini, in 1600, and Thevenot about fifty years after, make them twenty-three. Maundrell, in 1696, found them reduced to sixteen. Pococke, in 1738, found fifteen standing, and a sixteenth recently blown down, or (may we not

conjecture?) shivered by the voice of God. In 1810, Burckhardt counted eleven or twelve; and Dr. Richardson, in 1818, states them to be no more than seven. There cannot be a doubt, then, that these cedars which were esteemed ancient nearly three hundred years ago, must be of a very great antiquity; and yet they are described by the last of these travellers as "large, and tall, and beautiful, the most picturesque productions of the vegetable world that we had seen." The oldest are large and massy, rearing their heads to an enormous height, and spreading their branches afar. Pococke also remarks, that "the young cedars are not easily known from pines. I observed, they bear a *greater quantity* of fruit than the large ones." This shows that the old ones still bear fruit, though not so abundantly as the young cedars, which, according to Richardson, are very productive, and cast many seeds annually. How appropriate, then, and full of meaning, is the imagery of the Psalmist: "The righteous shall flourish like the palm tree: he shall grow like a cedar in Lebanon. They shall still bring forth fruit in old age; they shall be fat and flourishing."—*R.M. Macheyne*.

**Verses 12-15.** The life and greenness of the branches in an honour to the root by which they live. Spiritual greenness and fruitfulness is in a believer an honour to Jesus Christ who is his life. The fulness of Christ is manifested by the fruitfulness of a Christian.—*Ralph Robinson*.

**Verse 13.** *Those that be planted in the house of the Lord shall flourish in the courts of our God*, are not distinctive of some from others, as though some only of the flourishing righteous were so planted; but they are descriptive of them all, with an addition of the way and means whereby they are caused so to grow and flourish. And this is their implantation in the house of the Lord,—that is, in the church, which is the seat of all the means of spiritual life, both as unto growth and flourishing, which God is pleased to grant unto believers. To be planted in the house of the Lord, is to be fixed and rooted in the grace communicated by the ordinances of divine worship. Unless we are planted in the house of the Lord, we cannot flourish in his courts. See Ps 1:3. Unless we are partakers of the grace administered in the ordinances, we cannot flourish in a fruitful profession.—*John Owen*.

**Verse 13.** *Those that be planted in, the house of the Lord*, etc. Saints are planted in the house of God; they have a kind of rooting there: but though the tabernacle be a good rooting place, yet we cannot root firmly there, unless we are rooted in Jesus Christ. To root in tabernacle work, or in the bare use of ordinances, as if that would carry it, and commend us to God, when there is no heart work, when there is no looking to the power of godliness, and to communion with Christ, what is this but building upon the

sand? Many come often to the tabernacle, who are more strangers to Christ; they use pure ordinances, but are themselves impure. These may have a great name in the tabernacle for a while, but God blots their names, and roots their hopes out of the tabernacle; yea, he puts them from the horns of the altar, or slays them there, as Solomon gave commandment concerning Joab.—

*Abraham Wright.*

**Verse 13.** *In the house of the Lord.* As if in a most select viridarium or as if in a park, abounding in trees dedicated to God. And as in Ps 5:12 he had made mention of Lebanon, where the cedars attain their highest perfection, so now he tacitly opposes to Lebanon the *house of God*, or church, wherein we bloom, grow, and bring forth fruit pleasing to God.—*Martin Geier.*

**Verse 14.** *They shall still bring forth fruit in, old age.* The point on which the Psalmist in this passage fixes, as he contemplates the blessedness of God's own children, is the beauty and happiness of their old age. The court or open area in the centre of an eastern dwelling, and especially the court of any great and stately dwelling, was often adorned with a tree, or sometimes with more than one, for beauty, for shade, and, as it might be, for fruit. There sometimes the palm tree, planted by the cool fountain, shot up its tall trunk toward the sky, and waved its green top, far above the roof, in the sunlight and the breeze. There sometimes the olive, transplanted from the rocky hill side, may have flourished under the protection and culture of the household, and may have rewarded their care with the rich abundance of its nutritious berries. With such images in his mind, the Psalmist, having spoken of the brief prosperity of the wicked, and having compared it with the springing and flourishing of the grass, which grows to its little height only to be immediately cut down, naturally and beautifully compares the righteous, not with the deciduous herbage, but with the hardy tree that lives on through the summer's drought and the winter's storms, and from season to season still renews its growth. These trees of righteousness, as the poet conceives of them, are "planted in the house of the Lord"; they stand fair and "flowering in the courts of our God"—even "in old age they bring forth fruit"—they are "full of sap and flourishing"—they are living memorials "to show that the Lord is faithful", and that those who trust in him shall never be confounded.—*Leonard Bacon*, 1845.

**Verse 14.**—There be three things which constitute a spiritual state, or belong to the life of God.

1. That believers be fat; that is, by the heavenly juice, sap, or fatness of the true olive, of Christ himself, as Ro 11:17. This is the principle of spiritual

life and grace derived from him. When this abounds in them, so as to give them strength and rigour in the exercise of grace, to keep them from decays and withering, they are said to be fat; which, in the Scripture phrase, is strong and healthy.

2. That they flourish in the greenness (as the word is) and verdure of profession; for vigorous grace will produce a flourishing profession.

3. That they still bring forth fruit in all duties of holy obedience. All these are promised unto them even in old age.

Even trees, when they grow old (the palm and the cedar), are apt to lose a part of their juice and verdure: and men in old age are subject unto all sorts of decays, both outward and inward. It is a rare thing to see a man in old age naturally vigorous, healthy, and strong; and would it were not more rare to see any spiritually so at the same season! But this is here promised unto believers as an especial grace and privilege, beyond what can be represented in the growth or fruit bearing of plants and trees. The grace intended is, that when believers are under all sorts of bodily and natural decays, and, it may be, have been overtaken with spiritual decays also, there is provision made in the covenant to render them fat, flourishing, and fruitful,—vigorous in the power of internal grace, and flourishing in the expression of it in all duties of obedience; which is that which we now inquire after. Blessed be God for this good word of his grace, that he hath given us such encouragement against all the decays and temptations of old age which we have to conflict withal! And the Psalmist, in the next words, declares the greatness of the privilege: "To shew that the Lord is upright: he is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him." Consider the oppositions that lie against the flourishing of believers in old age, the difficulties of it, the temptations that must be conquered, the acting of the mind above its natural abilities which are decayed, the weariness that is apt to befall us in a long spiritual conflict, the cries of the flesh to be spared, and we shall see it to be an evidence of the faithfulness, power, and righteousness of God in covenant; nothing else could produce this mighty effect. So the prophet, treating of the same promise, Ho 14:4-8, closes his discourse with that blessed remark, Ho 14:9, "Who is wise, and he shall understand these things? prudent, and he shall know them? for the ways of the Lord are right, and the just shall walk in them." Spiritual wisdom will make us to see that the faithfulness and power of God are exerted in this work of preserving believers flourishing and fruitful unto the end.—*John Owen*.

**Verse 14.** Constancy is an ingredient in the obedience Christ requires. His trees bring forth fruit in old age. Age makes other things decay, but makes a Christian flourish. Some are like hot horses, mettlesome at the beginning of a journey, and tired a long time before they come to their journey's end. A good disciple, as he would not have from God a temporary happiness, so he would not give to God a temporary obedience; as he would have his glory last as long as God lives, so he would have his obedience last as long as he lives. Judas had a fair beginning, but destroyed all in the end by betraying his Master.—*Stephen Charnook.*

**Verse 14.** *Flourishing.* Here is not only mention of growing but of *flourishing*, and here's flourishing three times mentioned, and it is growing and flourishing not only like a tree, but like a *palm tree*, (which flourisheth under oppression), and like a *cedar* (not growing in ordinary places, but) "in *Lebanon*", where were the goodliest cedars. Nor doth the Spirit promise here a flourishing in boughs and leaves only (as some trees do, and do no more), but in fruit; and this not only fruit for once in a year, or one year, but they *still bring forth fruit*, and that not only in the years of their youth, or beginnings in grace, but *in old age*, and that not only in the entrance of that state which is called *old age*, threescore years, but that which the Scripture calls the perfection of *old age*, threescore years and ten, as the learned Hebrews observe upon the word used in the psalm. What a *divine climax* doth the Spirit of God make in this Scripture, to show that the godly man as to his state, is so far from declining, that he is still climbing higher and higher.—*Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 15.** *He is my rock, and there is no unrighteousness in him.* Implying that God can no more be moved or removed from doing righteously, than a rock can be removed out of its place.—*Joseph Caryl.*

---

#### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

##### **Verse 1.**

1. It is a good thing to have cause for gratitude. Every one has this.
2. It is a good thing to have the principle of gratitude. This is the gift of God.
3. It is a good thing to give expression to gratitude. This may excite gratitude in others.

—*G.R.*

**Verses 1-3.** The blessedness of praise,

Ps 92:1. The theme of praise,

Ps 92:2. The ingenuity of praise,

Ps 92:3. Inanimate nature enlisted in the holy work.

—*C.A. Davis.*

**Verse 2.**

1. Our praises of God should be *intelligent*, declaring his varied attributes.
2. *Seasonable*, declaring each attribute in appropriate time.
3. *Continual*, every night, and every day.

**Verse 3.**

1. All the powers of the soul shall be praise. "Upon an instrument of ten strings", all the chords of the mind, affections, will, etc.
2. All the utterances of the lips should be praise.
2. All the actions of the life should be praise.

**Verse 3.** In our praise of God there should be,

1. *Preparation*—for instruments should be tuned.
2. *Breadth of thought*—"upon an instrument of ten strings."
3. *Absorption of the whole nature*—"ten strings."
4. *Variety*—psaltery, harp, etc.
5. *Deep reverence*—"solemn sound."

**Verse 4.** (*first sentence*).

1. My state—"glad."
2. How I arrived at it—"thou hast made me glad."



3. What is the ground of it?—"through thy work."
4. What, then, shall I do?—ascribe it all to God, and bless him for it.

**Verse 4.**

1. The most divine gladness—of God's creation, having God's work for its argument.
2. The most divine triumph—caused by the varied works of God in creation, providence, redemption, & c. The first is for our own hearts, the second is for the convincing of those around us.

**Verse 5.** The unscalable mountains and the fathomless sea: or the divine works and the divine thoughts (God revealed and hidden) equally beyond human apprehension.—*C.A. Davis.*

**Verse 7.** Great prosperity the frequent forerunner of destruction to wicked men, for it leads them to provoke divine wrath—

1. By hardness of heart, as Pharaoh.
2. By pride, as Nebuchadnezzar.
3. By haughty hatred of the saints, as Haman.
4. By carnal security, as the rich fool.
5. By self exaltation, as Herod.

**Verses 7-10.** Contrasts. Between the wicked and God, Ps 92:7-8. Between God's enemies and his friends, Ps 92:9-10.—*C.A. Davis.*

**Verses 7, 12-14.** The wicked and the righteous portrayed.—*C.A. Davis.*

**Verse 10.** (*last clause*). Christian illumination, consecration, gladness, and graces, are all of them the anointing of the Spirit.—*William Garrett Lewis, 1872.*

**Verse 10.** (*last clause*). The subject of David's confidence was—

1. Very comprehensive, including renewed strength, fresh tokens of favour, confirmation in office, qualification for it, and new joys.
2. Well grounded, since it rested in God, and his promises.
3. Calming all fears.

4. Exciting hopes.
5. Causing pity for those who have no such confidence.

**Verse 12.**

1. The righteous flourish in all places. Palm in the valley, cedar on the mountain.
2. In all seasons. Both trees are evergreen.
3. Under all circumstances. Palm in drought, cedar in storm and frost.—*G.R.*

**Verses 14-16.**

1. Regeneration—"planted."
2. Growth in grace—"flourish."
3. Usefulness—"fruit."
4. Perseverance—"old age."
5. The reason of it all—"to shew that the Lord", etc.

**Verse 15-16.** The reason and the pledge of final perseverance.—*C.A. Davis.*

## Psalm 93

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

---

This brief Psalm is without title or name of author, but its subject is obvious enough, being stated in the very first line. It is the Psalm of Omnipotent Sovereignty: Jehovah, despite all opposition, reigns supreme. Possibly at the time this sacred ode was written, the nation was in danger from its enemies, and the hopes of the people of God were encouraged by remembering that the Lord was still King. What sweeter and surer consolation could they desire?

---

### EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *The LORD reigneth*, or Jehovah reigns. Whatever opposition may arise, his throne is unmoved; he has reigned, does reign, and will reign for ever and ever. Whatever turmoil and rebellion there may be beneath the clouds, the eternal King sits above all in supreme serenity; and everywhere he is really Master, let his foes rage as they may. All things are ordered according to his eternal purposes, and his will is done. In the verse before us it would seem as if the Lord had for a while appeared to vacate the throne, but on a sudden he puts on his regal apparel and ascends his lofty seat, while his happy people proclaim him with new joy, shouting "The Lord reigneth." What can give greater joy to a loyal subject than a sight of the king in his beauty? Let us repeat the proclamation, "the Lord reigneth," whispering it in the ears of the desponding, and publishing it in the face of the foe. He is clothed with majesty. Not with emblems of majesty, but with majesty itself: everything which surrounds him is majestic. His is not the semblance but the reality of sovereignty. In nature, providence, and salvation the Lord is infinite in majesty. Happy are the people among whom the Lord appears in all the glory of his grace, conquering their enemies, and subduing all things unto himself; then indeed is he seen to be clothed with majesty.

The LORD is clothed with strength. His garments of glory are not his only array, he wears strength also as his girdle. He is always strong, but sometimes he displays his power in a special manner, and may therefore be said to be clothed with it; just as he is always majestic essentially, but yet there are seasons when he reveals his glory, and so wears his majesty, or shows himself in it. May the Lord appear in his church, in our day in manifest majesty and might, saving sinners, slaying errors, and honouring his own name. O for a day of the Son of man, in which the King Immortal and Almighty shall stand upon his glorious high throne, to be feared in the

great congregation, and admired by all them that believe. Wherewith he hath girded himself. As men gird up their loins for running or working, so the Lord appears in the eyes of his people to be preparing for action, girt with his omnipotence. Strength always dwells in the Lord Jehovah, but he hides his power full often, until, in answer to his children's cries, he puts on strength, assumes the throne, and defends his own. It should be a constant theme for prayer, that in our day the reign of the Lord may be conspicuous, and his power displayed in his church and on her behalf. "Thy kingdom come" should be our daily prayer: that the Lord Jesus does actually reign should be our daily praise.

The world also is stablished, that it cannot be moved. Because Jehovah reigns terrestrial things for a while are stable. We could not be sure of anything if we were not sure that he has dominion. When he withdraws his manifest presence from among men all things are out of order; blasphemers rave, persecutors rage, the profane grow bold, and the licentious increase in wantonness; but when the divine power and glory are again manifested order is restored, and the poor distracted world is at peace again. Society would be the football of the basest of mankind if God did not establish it, and even the globe itself would fly through space, like thistle down across the common, if the Lord did not hold it in its appointed orbit. That there is any stability, either in the world or in the church, is the Lord's doings, and he is to be adored for it. Atheism is the mother of anarchy; the reigning power of God exhibited in true religion is the only security for the human commonwealth. A belief in God is the foundation and cornerstone of a well ordered state.

**Verse 2.** *Thy throne is established of old.* Though thou mayest just now appear in more conspicuous sovereignty, yet thine is no upstart sovereignty: in the most ancient times thy dominion was secure, yea, before time was thy throne was set up. We often hear of ancient dynasties, but what are they when compared with the Lord? Are they not as the bubble on the breaker, born an instant ago and gone as soon as seen? Thou art from everlasting. The Lord himself is eternal. Let the believer rejoice that the government under which he dwells has an immortal ruler at its head, has existed from all eternity and will flourish when all created things shall have for ever passed away. Vain are the rebellions of mortals, the kingdom of God is not shaken.

**Verse 3.** *The floods have lifted up, O LORD.* Men have raged like angry waves of the sea, but vain has been their tumult. Observe that the psalmist turns to the Lord when he sees the billows foam, and hears the breakers roar; he does not waste his breath by talking to the waves, or to violent men; but like Hezekiah he spreads the blasphemies of the wicked before the Lord. The

floods have lifted up their voice; the floods lift up their *waves*. These repetitions are needed for the sake both of the poetry and the music, but they also suggest the frequency and the violence of wicked assaults upon the government of God, and the repeated defeats which they sustain. Sometimes men are furious in words—they lift up their voice, and at other times they rise to acts of violence—they lift up their waves; but the Lord has control over them in either case. The ungodly are all foam and fury, noise and bluster, during their little hour, and then the tide turns or the storm is hushed, and we hear no more of them; while the kingdom of the Eternal abides in the grandeur of its power.

**Verse 4.** *The LORD on high is mightier than the noise of many waters.* The utmost of their power is to him but a sound and he can readily master it, therefore he calls it a noise by way of contempt. When men combine to overthrow the kingdom of Jesus, plot secretly, and by and by rage openly, the Lord thinks no more of it than of so much noise upon the sea beach. Jehovah, the self-existent and omnipotent, cares not for the opposition of dying men, however many or mighty they may be.

"Loud the stormy billows spoke,  
Loud the billows raised their cry;  
Fierce the stormy billows broke,  
Sounding to the echoing sky.  
Strong the breakers tossing high,  
Stronger is Jehovah's might.  
True thy words; and sanctity  
Well becomes thy temple bright."

Yea, than the mighty waves of the sea. When the storm raises Atlantic billows, and drives them on with terrific force, the Lord is still able to restrain them, and so also when impious men are haughty and full of rage the Lord is able to subdue them and overrule their malice. Kings or mobs, emperors or savages, all are in the Lord's hands, and he can forbid their touching a hair of the heads of his saints.

**Verse 5.** *Thy testimonies are very sure.* As in providence the throne of God is fixed beyond all risk, so in revelation his truth is beyond all question. Other teachings are uncertain, but the revelations of heaven are infallible. As the rocks remain unmoved amid the tumult of the sea, so does divine truth resist all the currents of man's opinion and the storms of human controversy; they are not only sure, but *very sure*. Glory be to God, we have not been deluded by a cunningly devised fable: our faith is grounded upon the eternal

truth of the Most High. Holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever. Truth changes not in its doctrines, which are very sure, nor holiness in its precepts, which are incorruptible. The teaching and the character of God are both unaltered. God has not admitted evil to dwell with him, he will not tolerate it in his house, he is eternally its enemy, and is for ever the sworn friend of holiness. The church must remain unchanged, and for ever be holiness unto the Lord; yea, her King will preserve her undefiled by the intruder's foot. Sacred unto the Lord is the church of Jesus Christ, and so shall she be kept evermore. "Jehovah reigns, "is the first word and the main doctrine of the psalm, and holiness is the final result; a due esteem for the great King will lead us to adopt a behaviour becoming his royal presence. Divine sovereignty both confirms the promises as sure testimonies, and enforces the precepts as seemly and becoming in the presence of so great a Lord. The whole psalm is most impressive, and is calculated to comfort the distressed, confirm the timorous, and assist the devout. O thou who art so great and gracious a King, reign over us for ever! We do not desire to question or restrain thy power, such is thy character that we rejoice to see thee exercise the rights of an absolute monarch. All power is in thine hands, and we rejoice to have it so. Hosanna! Hosanna!

---

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Whole Psalm.** This is one of those magnificent psalms which describe Jehovah's reign. Even Jewish interpreters say of them: "these all treat of the things which will take place in the times of Messiah." Throughout it reads like a commentary and application of the great fundamental truth, "Jehovah reigneth." Already he hath laid the foundations of his kingdom in his Church, and anon shall he in his faithfulness and power establish it. Those elements which have hitherto resisted shall not be allowed to continue. Right royally he manifests himself. *"He is clothed with majesty; clothed is Jehovah, might hath he girt about him."* The present state of things is connected with Christ's humiliation. But when he puts on his royal mantle of majesty, and girds about him the sword of his might: *"thus the world shall be established; it cannot be moved."* And yet, though seemingly the enemy has long prevailed, *"Thy throne is established of old: thou art from everlasting."* The establishment of his throne is the ground and the pledge of the establishment of the world and of his kingdom. "Jesus Christ, the same yesterday, and today, and for ever." In view of all this the Church stands a wondering spectator, first struck with awe, and then filled with adoring, gratitude. *"The floods have lifted up, O Jehovah, they have lifted up their*

*roaring; the floods are lifting up their dashing noise.*" The latter term refers to the sound of the waves as they break, and in connexion with it the change of tense is very marked. The enemies of God and his kingdom have risen like the floods or waves of the sea, lashed by the storm; with roaring noise have they advanced; but as they near the vessel which bears the King, their noise is that of waves dashing into foam. Their utmost nearness is—to their destruction; their utmost noise is—in breaking. And even now, and in the height of the storm also far overtopping not only all danger, but even its threatening noise, is Jehovah. "*Jehovah on high*" (even there) "*is mightier than the roaring of many waters and mighty, than the breaking waves of the sea*" (the word here rendered "*breaking waves*" being literally a *derivative* from the verb to break). What a picture this of our safety; what an epitome of the history of God's government and of his church! Thus the calming of the storm on the lake of Galilee was not only a parabolic representation of the history of the Kingdom of God, but also typical of the final consummation of all things; a summary of the past, a prophecy of the future, a type of the end. And what applies to the Church as a whole, holds equally true of individual believers. Let us ever remember that the noise is that of the breaking wave. Our greatest dangers are only breaking waves; waves which break at his feet. The same expression is also sometimes applied to the waves of God's wrath or judgments threatening to engulf the believer, as in Ps 42:7 88:7. These also, blessed be his name, are only breaking waves. Meanwhile, while waiting for the manifestation of his majesty and might, "we have the more sure word of prophecy." "*Thy testimonies are very sure*" (very reliable, literally very *Amen*-ed): and, so far as we are concerned, our faith and patience are tried and proved: "*Holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.*"

Thus we have here the history of the Church of God deduced from the text, "*Jehovah reigneth.*" Those words are to us as "a light that shineth in a dark place, until the day dawn and the daystar arise in our hearts." So long as they are left us, all that threatens us from without is only like the noise of the breaking wave. The unspeakable comfort conveyed in this assurance is ever tested in the experience of God's people. There is no truth more precious to the heart of the Christian than that "*the LORD reigneth.*" The conviction of this must carry us far above all cares and fears. A personal God, a living God, a reigning God—alike in the armies of heaven and among the inhabitants of the earth—and this God the Father of our Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ,—such are the steps by which we reach a height, where, far removed from the turmoil of men, we gain a comprehensive and clear view of earth and its concerns. I would not exchange the assurance which these

two words, "*Jehovah reigneth*," convey, for all the wisdom, combined with all the power, of this world. Received into my heart, they are the solution of every difficulty, the end of all perplexity. It seems to me as if, after puzzling over the cross writing and hieroglyphics of men, I turned a fresh leaf, on the top of which stood these words, as the text to be preached out in all history, whether of the individual, the family, or the nation, the Church or the world. It seems as if, after revolving sorrowfully and helplessly all the difficulties and wants which distress my heart, I were at once rising above those floating clouds into clear atmosphere: as if all at once I were unburdened; as if I had reached a haven of rest; as if I had found a firm foundation, an ultimate principle. After all, in every real trial there is but this one final and full comfort. What matters the opinion of men,—who may be for and who against me; who may be with me, or who may leave me. Who would speak of prospects or probabilities, of the support to be derived from wealth or power, or of the defections of friends on whose sympathy and help we had counted? "*Jehovah reigneth!*" There is light here across my every path, provided I follow Christ, walking in the narrow way. Only let me be sure that, in any and every respect, I am on the Lord's side and in the Lord's way, and I ask no more. My God has all the silver and all the gold in his own hand. He holdeth the hearts of all men at his disposal; he directeth all events, from the least to the greatest. If I want power with God or with men, let me pray; for, *Jehovah reigneth*. Nor let me think that special interpositions are either impossible or rare. They are constant. The course of God's providence is one of constant interposition; for "all things work together for good to them that love God." Only these interpositions are not violent, and therefore not noticed by the superficial observer; they are the interpositions of all wise and almighty God, not of poor, weak man; they are the *interpositions*, not *interferences*; they are the working of the machinery by the Mastermind which designed, and the Master hand which framed it. They are not the stoppage, but the working of the machinery, whereby its real object is wrought out.

Lastly, let me note in the Psalm these three things: In *creation and nature*: preestablished law *along with* continuous, personal government,—not as opposed to, but as presupposing one another (Ps 93:1-2). In *Providence*: "The LORD on *high* is mightier than the noise of many waters"—which would otherwise strike terror, even as their swelling would threaten constant danger. And in *grace*: "His testimonies are *very* sure." I can rest on them. Not one tittle or iota shall fall to the ground. Wherever I have a word of promise, I can safely plant my steps. The conclusion and inference from the whole matter is that "*holiness*"—not fear nor man serving, but



separation unto the Lord—"becometh, "or is the right, wise, and proper attitude of his house and people. *Alfred Edersheim, in "The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms, "1866.*

**Whole Psalm.** It is mentioned in the Babylonian Talmud that it was the custom of the Jews to sing this psalm on the sixth day of the week, to which it is well suited as celebrating the reestablishing and founding again of the world in the new creation (Ps 93:1): which is confirmed by a title given to it in the Septuagint—"On the day before the Sabbath, when the earth was founded: A Psalm of thanksgiving to (or for) David"—adopted by the Vulgate and the Oriental Version in general. And thus is this Psalm identified in subject with the preceding: as also Hengstenberg observes—"The reference, which it is impossible not to notice, in which 'The Lord on high is mightier, 'here (Ps 93:4) stands to 'But Thou, Lord, art most high for evermore' (Ps 92:8)—the kernel and middle point of the whole psalm—has already led commentators to notice a near connexion between these two psalms... which is decidedly favoured by the contents; both psalms minister consolation to the Church, exposed to danger by the might of the world." He might have added—in the promise they give of "the *rest the Sabbatism* that remains to the people of God, "when both shall be fulfilled. *W. De Burgh.*

**Verse 1. The LORD reigneth.** It is a kind of proclamation in which God's people are invited to declare before men and angels that the Lord is King, He and He only. It is the response of the Church to the preaching of the gospel—so rapturously hailed in Isaiah—the preaching of the messenger "that bringeth good tidings, that publisheth peace; that bringeth good tidings of good, that publisheth salvation; that saith unto Zion, Thy God reigneth!" *William Binnie.*

**Verse 1. The LORD.** He describes God by the name *Jehovah*, partly, to lead us to think of the God of Israel, accustomed by this name to be distinguished from the gods of the nations; partly, to call to mind the virtues of veracity, grace and justice, comprehended by this name, and now clearly made known... When he says, *Jehovah reigns*, without adding any restriction, or mentioning any people, it would seem that the *Kingdom of Jehovah* is to be taken absolutely and generally, with equal reference to the government of *the world* and *the church*. In the *former* sense *Jehovah* may be said to *reign*, not as if He then at last begun to reign, but because He proved himself to be the King of the world in an extraordinary way, by giving public and manifest signs; by which it was clearly established that *Jehovah* is the true God, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord and Ruler of the whole universe, and a just and equitable judge, in inflicting notable judgements upon sinners, in

casting down the idols, and vindicating the cause of true religion and virtue. This meaning I regard as contained in the general proposition: yet directly in its primary signification I understand the Kingdom of God in His Church, partly, because God is here said to vindicate the cause of religion, and of his people; partly, he is said, in Ps 99:1 to show himself *exalted in Zion*, and *there to undertake the Kingdom*, Isa 24:23, and often elsewhere in the Prophetic word; and lastly, because Jehovah, the King of his people, he himself *who reigns*, is set forth as the *ruler* of the universe. He is the King therefore of his people, He has his *Kingdom* in their midst, but to Him all things in heaven and earth are subject as well. In this latter sense, therefore, the phrase, *Jehovah has reigned*, will stand for, *He has undertaken the Kingdom*, *He is become King*, as it is often used in the histories of the Kings of Judah and Israel; so also in Isa 28:23, and elsewhere... When He is said to *have taken* the Kingdom in the midst of his people, it must not be understood absolutely, but in a restricted sense, in reference partly to the *manner* and form of rule, being more or less *theocratic*; partly, to the displays of the Divine Majesty, being more or less conspicuous; and partly, to the servile or afflicted state of his people, as extending from the Babylonish exile to the time of the Maccabees. In which times God is said *to have taken the Kingdom*, in many other prophecies beside this, Isa 24:21-23, Obad., ult. Mic 4:6-8. *Venema*.

**Verse 1.** *The LORD reigneth.* These are the initial words of Ps 97:1 and Ps 99:1 also. Perhaps a threefold manner of reigning is suggested, namely, over things subjected to God by a natural necessity, over those that resist his will and as far as in them lies withdraw themselves from his dominion, and over those who spontaneously and freely obey. For in this place the Kingdom is declared to be coextensive with the foundation of the world: in Ps 97:1 it is hinted at for the exultation of the earth, and for the gladness of the isles; in Ps 99:1 God is said to reign, although the people are angry, and the earth is filled with commotion. *Zorinus*.

**Verse 1.** *The LORD reigneth.* Having considered in all quarters the worldly rule of idols, and earthly deities or kings, the Psalmist at last bursts forth into the words which attribute supreme government to none other, but to Jehovah the true God. Let it be granted that the monarchs of Assyria, the kings of Egypt, and the masters of other nations, extend their empire far and wide; let it be allowed that royal majesty is ascribed to the idols by their worshippers; yet all these are as nothing to the kingdom and majesty of Jehovah. *Martin Geier*.

**Verse 1.** *The LORD reigneth, i.e.,* the Lord has become King (Ps 96:10 97:1 99:1). The formula proclaimed at the accession of earthly sovereigns (2Sa 15:10 1Ki 1:11,13; *margin*, 2Ki 9:13, "Jehu reigneth"). The reference is not to the *ordinary and constant* government of God, but to his *assuming* a new and glorious kingdom. The arrogant proclamation of the world power was virtually "the Assyrian reigneth"; the overthrow of him was God's counter proclamation: "The Lord (Jehovah) reigneth." The antitypical sense is, the world powers under Antichrist, energized by Satan (Re 16:14 17:12-14,17), shall make one last desperate stroke, seemingly for the moment successful, for the dominion of the earth, in defiance of the Lord, (2Th 2:3-12) But Christ will take his great power and reign as King of kings and Lord of lords, having overthrown utterly the antichristian enemy. (Isa 24:23 Ob 1:21; Zec 14:9 Re 11:15,17 19:6.) *A. R. Fausset.*

**Verse 1.** *The LORD reigneth.* The very first words of this psalm seem to indicate a morning of calm repose after a night of storm, a day of stillness after the tumult of battle. "The LORD reigneth." "He hath put all enemies under his feet." *Barton Bouchier.*

**Verse 1.** *The world also is established.* The word *world* is properly taken for the habitable globe, and metonymically for the inhabitants of the earth. This is clear from Ps 24:1-2 89:12 9:9; Ps 96:1,3 98:9. In this passage the former signification seems to obtain, because this majestic King has fortified no tower or palace strongly, but the whole world, by the word of his power, that therein there might be a constant habitation for the men who worship Him, even to the destined day of the last judgment. *Martin Geier.*

**Verse 2.** *Thy throne is established.* The invariable perpetuity of the divine kingdom is celebrated in these words. No vicissitudes are apprehended there, as in earthly monarchies and kingdoms, where thrones are not infrequently shaken, either on account of the death of their kings or principal men, or by reason of the unfaithfulness of subjects or ministers, or because of the schemes or attacks of enemies; none of which can disturb the divine rule. *Martin Geier.*

**Verse 2.** *Thy throne is established of old.* Lest any one should suspect that the royal dignity depicted and demonstrated in the previous verse by the creation of the world, which was the effect of kingly power and majesty, was a new thing or came into existence yesterday or the day before, or that God had recently obtained the office of ruling and governing, or that by long use and experience he had acquired skill, or held a somewhat foreign throne as other kings are wont, he says that this dignity is as ancient as creation itself,

so that the throne of this kingdom was founded at the very time when the foundations of the earth were laid; and as the earth was established by him as his *footstool*, so the heaven was his throne, (Isa 66:1), which endures for ever. Especially does he teach that from eternity, before the formation of the world, God always remained the same in himself, not needing creation or any creature, thereby to obtain any new perfection. *Lorinus*.

**Verse 2.** *Of old.* The Italian, *from all eternity*; Hebrew, *from then*; an Hebrew phrase to signify an eternity without any beginning, Pr 8:22: as eternity without end is signified by another term, which is as much as, *until then*. *Diodati*.

**Verse 3.** *The floods have lifted up*, etc. Advisedly in this place does he make mention of floods, in order better to depict the effects of war. For when rivers are raised and swollen with inundations, they burst the restraining banks, and sweep far and wide over the neighbouring plains, carrying everything in their course. Such is the manner of war; when armies are despatched into countries, they lay waste and fill all places with slaughter. Whence Virgil employs this simile (Aeneid 2) in describing the violence of the Grecian army breaking into the citadel of Priam,—*rendered by Dryden thus*—

"In rush the Greeks, and all the apartments fill;  
Those few defendants whom they find, they kill.  
Not with so fierce a rage the foaming flood  
Roars, when he finds his rapid course withstood;  
Bears down the dittos with unresisted sway,  
And sweeps the cattle and the cots away." *Mollerus*.

**Verse 3.** *Their waves.* The word *k* signifies a wave; because the water being dashed against a rock, or the shore, or another wave, is broken into spray. For the central idea of the word is breaking. And this aptly serves to picture the issue of those commotions and wars which are undertaken for the overthrow of empires and the church. For as mighty waves fill the beholders with horror, so great and powerful armies fill all things with fear and terror. But as the waves striking, in a moment are broken, and disappear, so the mighty power of kings and princes is often dissolved at one glance of God. The Church dwells in this life, as a rock in the waves, beaten by the waves of every tempest; but yet remains immutable, because the Son of God confirms and sustains her. *Mollerus*.

**Verse 4.** *The LORD on high.* "On high" is not to be regarded in the sense of locality, as none compete with God in that, but in reference to dominion and glory. *Martin Geier.*

**Verse 4.** *The LORD on high is mightier,* etc. Therefore consider not so much thy distress, as thy Deliverer; and when men's malicious combination may affright thee, let Divine association support thee. The danger may exceed thy resistance, but not God's assistance; the enemies' power may surpass thy strength, their subtlety outwit thy prudence, but neither can excel the wisdom and might of God that is with thee. O learn therefore to try God in his strength, to trust him in difficulties; and when the merciless waves are ready to swallow thee; commit thyself to his custody. The mariner in straits looks up to heaven, do thou so; and remember that when the waters of affliction are never so high, yet "*the Lord on high is mightier than they.*" *Abraham Wright.*

**Verse 5.** *Thy testimonies, i.e.,* thy words; either, 1. Thy precepts, which are commonly called God's *testimonies*. And so having spoken of God's kingdom, he now sheweth that the laws of that kingdom are just, and true, and holy; which is a singular commendation of it. Or, 2. Thy promises, as may be gathered from the following words, "*are sure, "or true, or faithful;* which attribute properly belongs, and everywhere in Scripture is ascribed, to promises rather than to precepts. And the promises no less than the precepts are God's *testimonies*, or the witnesses or declarations of his mind and will to mankind. And he seems here to speak of those great and precious promises concerning the erection and establishment of his kingdom in the world by the Messiah; which, saith he, are infallibly true, and shall certainly be accomplished in thy time. *Matthew Pool.*

**Verse 5.** *Holiness becometh thine house, O LORD.* Singular things are expected of all that draw nigh to God in any duty, but especially in the office of the ministry; they must sanctify themselves with a singular care above that of the rest of the people. Those that stand in the presence of princes must be exact in their carriage. God appointed both the weights and measures of the sanctuary to be twice as large as those of the commonwealth, to shew that he expects much more of those that serve him there, than he doth of others. Holiness becomes every house well, but best God's; and every man, but most of all the minister, who is the mirror in which the people behold heaven, and the convoy to direct them thither. Now if the glass be spotted, instead of an angel they look upon a fury; and if the conduct be false, there is more danger in the guide than the way. None, therefore, are to walk so strictly as the ministry. *Abraham Wright.*

**Verse 5.** *Holiness becometh thine house, O LORD, for ever.* No hangings, no tapestry become God's house so well as holiness; and no place is so proper as the house of God for this costly, comely furniture... The blind heathen were choice and devout in the service of dumb idols; they served them in white, an emblem of purity; they thought nothing too good for those false gods, for whom the worst was not bad enough. Solon, the Athenian lawgiver, enacted, that none should serve the gods *obiter*, or by the by, that their sacrificers should purify themselves some days beforehand. *George Swinnock.*

---

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Whole Psalm.** Revivals of religion described.

1. God reigns.
2. His power is felt.
3. His kingdom is established.
4. Opposition is overcome.
5. The word is valued.
6. Holiness is cultivated.

**Verses 1-2.** The prophet in the first verse describes our King:

1. From his office.

(a) He "reigns." He is the great and chief Monarch; he is no idle spectator of things below; but wisely, and justly, and powerfully administers all things.

(b) He is a glorious King: "He is clothed with majesty."

(c) He is a potent King: "The Lord is clothed with strength."

(d) He is a warlike King: "He hath girded himself, " buckled his sword upon his armour; for offence towards his enemies, for defence of his kingdom.

2. From his kingdom.

(a) It is universal: "The world."

(b) It is fixed, firm, and stable: "The world also is stablished, and cannot be moved."

(c) It is an everlasting kingdom: "From everlasting to everlasting; thy throne is established of old; thou art from everlasting." *Adam Clarke*.

**Verses 1-2.** Shew,

1. The royal proclamation.
2. The imperial robe.
3. The stable kingdom.
4. The ancient throne.
5. The Eternal King. *C.A.D.*

**Verses 1-2.**

1. Make the great proclamation. The right, stability, antiquity, extent, perpetuity of the Lord's dominion.
2. Note the different emotions it inspires. In the rebellious, condemned, loyal, &c.
3. Negotiate for submission to the King. *C. A. D.*

**Verse 3.** The voice of the floods.

1. The voice of Nature is the voice of God.
2. It is a voice from God.
3. It is a voice for God. "God hath a voice that ever is heard, In the peal of the thunder, the chirp of the bird: It comes in the torrent, all rapid and strong, In the streamlet's soft gush, as it ripples along; In the waves of the ocean, the furrows of land, In the mountain of granite, the atom of sand; Turn where ye may, from the sky to the sod, Where can ye gaze that ye see not a God?" *G. R. Poetry by Eliza Cook*.

**Verse 4.**

1. God is mighty in creation.
2. He is mightier in providence.
3. He is mightiest in redemption. *G. R.*

**Verse 5.**

1. Faithfulness becometh the word of God.
2. Holiness becometh the house of God. *G. R.*

**Verse 5** (last clause).

1. Holiness becometh God's typical house, the temple.
2. His greater spiritual house, the church.
3. His smaller spiritual house, the believer.
4. His eternal house, heaven. *C. A. D.*



## Psalm 94

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

---

**SUBJECT.** The writer sees evil doers in power, and smarts under their oppressions. His sense of the divine sovereignty, of which he had been singing in the previous Psalm, leads him to appeal to God as the great Judge of the earth; this he does with much vehemence and importunity, evidently tingling under the lash of the oppressor. Confident in God's existence, and assured of his personal observation of the doings of men, the psalmist rebukes his atheistic adversaries, and proclaims his triumph in his God: he also interprets the severe dispensation of Providence to be in very deed most instructive chastisements, and so he counts those happy who endure them. The Psalm is another pathetic form of the old enigma—"Wherefore do the wicked prosper?" It is another instance of a good man perplexed by the prosperity of the ungodly, cheering his heart by remembering that there is, after all, a King in heaven, by whom all things are overruled for good.

**DIVISION.** In Ps 94:1-7 the psalmist utters his complaint against wicked oppressors. From Ps 94:8-11 he reasons against their sceptical notion that God did not notice the actions of men. He then shows that the Lord does bless his people and will deliver them, though for a while they may be chastened, Ps 94:12-15. He again pleads for help in Ps 94:16, and declares his entire dependence upon God for preservation, Ps 94:17-19; yet a third time urges his complaint, Ps 94:20-21; and then concludes with the confident assurance that his enemies, and all other wicked men, would certainly be made to reap the due reward of their deeds,—“yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off.”

---

### EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth; O God, to whom vengeance belongeth, shew thyself: or, God of retribution, Jehovah, God of retribution, shine forth!* A very natural prayer when innocence is trampled down, and wickedness exalted on high. If the execution of justice be a right thing,—and who can deny the fact?—then it must be a very proper thing to desire it; not out of private revenge, in which case a man would hardly dare to appeal to God, but out of sympathy with right, and pity for those who are made wrongfully to suffer. Who can see a nation enslaved, or even an individual downtrodden, without crying to the Lord to arise and vindicate the righteous cause? The toleration of injustice is here attributed to the Lord's being hidden, and it is implied that the bare sight of him will suffice to alarm the tyrants into ceasing their oppressions. God has but to show himself, and the good cause wins the day. He comes, he sees, he conquers! Truly in these evil days we need a manifest display of his power, for the ancient enemies of God and man are again struggling for the mastery, and if they gain it, woe unto the saints of God.

**Verse 2.** *Lift up thyself, thou judge of the earth.* Ascend thy judgment seat and be acknowledged as the ruler of men: and, moreover, raise thyself as men do who are about to strike with all their might; for the abounding sin of mankind requires a heavy blow from thy hand. Render a reward to the proud, give them measure for measure, a fair retaliation, blow for blow. The proud look down upon the gracious poor and strike them from above, as a giant might hurl down blows upon his adversary; after the same manner, O Lord, lift up thyself, and "return a recompense upon the proud, "and let them know that thou art far more above them than they can be above the meanest of their fellow men. The psalmist thus invokes the retribution of justice in plain speech, and his request is precisely that which patient innocence puts up in silence, when her looks of anguish appeal to heaven.

**Verse 3.** *LORD, how long shall the wicked, how long shall the wicked triumph?* Shall wrong for ever rule? Are slavery, robbery, tyranny, never to cease? Since there is certainly a just God in heaven, armed with almighty power, surely there must be sooner or later an end to the ascendancy of evil, innocence must one day find a defender. This "*how long?*" of the text is the bitter complaint of all the righteous in all ages, and expresses wonder caused by that great enigma of providence, the existence and predominance of evil. The sound "*how long?*" is very akin to howling, as if it were one of the saddest of all the utterances in which misery bemoans itself. Many a time has this bitter complaint been heard in the dungeons of the Inquisition, at the whipping posts of slavery, and in the prisons of oppression. In due time God will publish his reply, but the full end is not yet.

**Verse 4.** *How long shall they utter and speak hard things?* The ungodly are not content with deeds of injustice, but they add hard speeches, boasting, threatening, and insulting over the saints. Will the Lord for ever endure this? Will he leave his own children much longer to be the prey of their enemies? Will not the insolent speeches of his adversaries and theirs at last provoke his justice to interfere? Words often wound more than swords, they are as hard to the heart as stones to the flesh; and these are poured forth by the ungodly in redundancy, for such is the force of the word translated utter; and they use them so commonly that they become their common speech (they utter and speak them)—will this always be endured? And all the workers of iniquity boast themselves?—they even soliloquise and talk to themselves, and of themselves, in arrogance of Spirit, as if they were doing some good deed when they crush the poor and needy, and spit their spite on gracious men. It is the nature of workers of iniquity to boast, just as it is a characteristic of good men to be humble—will their boasts always be

suffered by the great Judge, whose ear hears all that they say? Long, very long, have they had the platform to themselves, and loud, very loud, have been their blasphemies of God, and their railings at his saints—will not the day soon come when the threatened heritage of shame and everlasting contempt shall be meted out to them? Thus the oppressed plead with their Lord, and shall not God avenge his own elect? Will he not speak out of heaven to the enemy and say, "Why persecutest thou me"?

**Verse 5.** *They break in pieces thy people, O LORD, grinding them with oppression, crushing them with contempt.* Yet the men they break in pieces are God's own people, and they are persecuted because they are so; this is a strong plea for the divine interposition. And afflict thine heritage, causing them sorrowful humiliation and deep depression of heart. The term, "thine heritage," marks out the election of the saints, God's peculiar interest and delight in them, his covenant relation, of long standing, to them and their fathers; this also is a storehouse of arguments with their faithful God. Will he not defend his own? Will a man lose his inheritance, or permit it to be contemptuously despoiled? Those who are ground down, and trampled on, are not strangers, but the choice and chosen ones of the Lord; how long will he leave them to be a prey to cruel foes

**Verse 6.** *They slay the widow and the stranger, and murder the fatherless.* They deal most arrogantly with those who are the most evident objects of compassion. The law of God especially commends these poor ones to the kindness of good men, and it is peculiar wickedness which singles them out to be the victims not only of fraud but of murder. Must not such inhuman conduct as this provoke the Lord? Shall the tears of widows, the groans of strangers, and the blood of orphans be poured forth in vain? As surely as there is a God in heaven, he will visit those who perpetrate such crimes; though he bear long with them, he will yet take vengeance, and that speedily.

**Verse 7.** *Yet they say, the Lord shall not see.* This was the reason of their arrogance, and the climax of their wickedness: they were blindly wicked because they dreamed of a blind God. When men believe that the eyes of God are dim, there is no reason to wonder that they give full license to their brutal passions. The persons mentioned above not only cherished an infidel unbelief, but dared to avow it, uttering the monstrous doctrine that God is too far away to take notice of the actions of men. Neither shall the God of Jacob regard it. Abominable blasphemy and transparent falsehood If God has actually become his people's God, and proved his care for them by a thousand acts of grace, how dare the ungodly assert that he will not notice the wrongs done to them? There is no limit to the proud man's profanity,

reason itself cannot restrain him; he has broken through the bounds of common sense. Jacob's God heard him at the brook Jabbok; Jacob's God led him and kept him all his life long, and said concerning him and his family, "Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm; "and yet these brutish ones profess to believe that he neither sees nor regards the injuries wrought upon the elect people! Surely in such unbelievers is fulfilled the saying of the wise, that those whom the Lord means to destroy he leaves to the madness of their corrupt hearts.

**Verse 8.** *Understand, ye brutish among the people.* They said that God did not note, and now, using the same word in the original, the psalmist calls on the wicked to note, and have regard to the truth. He designates them as boors, boarish, swinish men, and well was the term deserved; and he bids them understand or consider, if they can. They thought themselves to be wise, and indeed the only men of wit in the world, but he calls them "boars among the people": wicked men are fools, and the more they know, the more foolish they become. "No fool like a learned fool" is a true proverb. When a man has done with God, he has done with his manhood, and has fallen to the level of the ox and the ass, yea, beneath them, for "the ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib." Instead of being humbled in the presence of scientific infidels, we ought to pity them; they affect to look clown upon us, but we have far more cause to look down upon them. And ye fools, when will ye be wise? Is it not high time? Ye know the ways of folly, what profit have ye in them? Have ye no relics of reason left? no shreds of sense? If as yet there lingers in your minds a gleam of intelligence, hearken to argument, and consider the questions now about to be proposed to you.

**Verse 9.** *He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?* He fashioned that marvellous organ, and fixed it in the most convenient place near to the brain, and is he deaf himself? Is he capable of such design and invention, and yet can he not discern what is done in the world which he made? He made you hear, can he not himself hear? Unanswerable question! It overwhelms the sceptic, and covers him with confusion. He that formed the eye, shall he not see? He gives us vision; is it conceivable that he has no sight himself? With skilful hand he fashioned the optic nerve, and the eyeball, and all its curious mechanism, and it surpasses all conception that he can himself be unable to observe the doings of his creatures. If there be a God, he must be a personal intelligent being, and no limit can be set to his knowledge.

**Verse 10.** *He that chastiseth the heathen, shall not he correct?* He reproves whole nations, can he not reprove individuals? All history shows that he visits national sin with national judgment, and can he not deal with single

persons? The question which follows is equally full of force, and is asked with a degree of warmth which checks the speaker, and causes the inquiry to remain incomplete. It begins, He that teacheth man knowledge, and then it comes to a pause, which the translators have supplied with the words, *shall not he know?* but no such words are in the original, where the sentence comes to an abrupt end, as if the inference were too natural to need to be stated, and the writer had lost patience with the brutish men with whom he had argued. The earnest believer often feels as if he could say, "Go to, you are not worth arguing with! If you were reasonable men, these things would be too obvious to need to be stated in your hearing. I forbear." Man's knowledge comes from God. Science in its first principles was taught to our progenitor Adam, and all after advances have been due to divine aid; does not the author and revealer of all knowledge himself know?

**Verse 11.** Whether men admit or deny that God knows, one thing is here declared, namely, that The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are vanity. Not their words alone are heard, and their works seen, but he reads the secret motions of their minds, for men themselves are not hard to be discerned of him, before his glance they themselves are but vanity. It is in the Lord's esteem no great matter to know the thoughts of such transparent pieces of vanity as mankind are, he sums them up in a moment as poor vain things. This is the sense of the original, but that given in the authorised version is also true—the thoughts, the best part, the most spiritual portion of man's nature, even these are vanity itself, and nothing better. Poor man! And yet such a creature as this boasts, plays at monarch, tyrannises over his fellow worms, and defies his God! Madness is mingled with human vanity, like smoke with the fog, to make it fouler but not more substantial than it would have been alone. How foolish are those who think that God does not know their actions, when the truth is that their vain thoughts are all perceived by him! How absurd to make nothing of God when in fact we ourselves are as nothing in his sight.

**Verse 12.** *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD.* The psalmist's mind is growing quiet. He no longer complains to God or argues with men, but tunes his harp to softer melodies, for his faith perceives that with the most afflicted believer all is well. Though he may not feel blessed while smarting under the rod of chastisement, yet blessed he is; he is precious in God's sight, or the Lord would not take the trouble to correct him, and right happy will the results of his correction be. The psalmist calls the chastened one a "*man*" in the best sense, using the Hebrew word which implies strength. He is a man, indeed, who is under the teaching and training

of the Lord. And teachest him out of thy law. The book and the rod, the law and the chastening, go together, and are made doubly useful by being found in connection. Affliction without the word is a furnace for the metal, but there is no flux to aid the purifying: the word of God supplies that need, and makes the fiery trial effectual. After all, the blessing of God belongs far rather to those who suffer under the divine hand than to those who make others suffer: better far to lie and cry out as a "man" under the hand of our heavenly Father, than to roar and rave as a brute, and to bring down upon one's self a death blow from the destroyer of evil. The afflicted believer is under tuition, he is in training for something higher and better, and all that he meets with is working out his highest good, therefore is he a blessed man, however much his outward circumstances may argue the reverse.

**Verse 13.** *That thou mayest give him rest from the days of adversity, until the pit be digged for the wicked.* The chastening hand and instructive book are sanctified to us, so that we learn to rest in the Lord. We see that his end is our everlasting benefit, and therefore abide quiet under all trying providences and bitter persecutions, waiting our time. The Mighty Hunter is preparing the pit for the brutish ones; they are prowling about at this time, and tearing the sheep, but they will soon be captured and destroyed, therefore the people of the Lord learn to rest in days of adversity, and tarry the leisure of their God. Wicked men may not yet be ripe for punishment, nor punishment ready for them: hell is a prepared place for a prepared people; as days of grace ripen saints for glory, so days of wantonness help sinners to rot into the corruption of eternal destruction.

**Verse 14.** *For the LORD will not cast off his people.* He may cast them down, but he never can cast them off. During fierce persecutions the saints have been apt to think that the Lord had left his own sheep, and given them over to the wolf; but it has never been so, nor shall it ever be, for the Lord will not withdraw his love, neither will he forsake his inheritance. For a time he may leave his own with the design of benefiting them thereby, yet never can he utterly desert them.

"He may chasten and correct,  
But he never can neglect;  
May in faithfulness reprove,  
But he never can cease to love."

**Verse 15.** *But judgment shall return unto righteousness.* The great Judge will come, the reign of righteousness will commence, the course of affairs will yet be turned into the right channel, and then all the godly will rejoice.

The chariot of right will be drawn in triumph through our streets, and all the upright in heart shall follow it, as in happy procession. A delightful hope is here expressed in poetic imagery of much beauty. The government of the world has been for a while in the hands of those who have used it for the basest and most vicious ends; but the cry of prayer will bring back righteousness to the throne, and then every upright heart will have its portion of joy.

**Verse 16.** Notwithstanding the psalmist's persuasion that all would be well eventually, he could not at the time perceive any one who would stand side by side with him in opposing evil; no champion of the right was forthcoming, the faithful failed from among men. This also is a bitter trial, and a sore evil under the sun; yet it has its purpose, for it drives the heart still more completely to the Lord, compelling it to rest alone in him. If we could find friends elsewhere, it may be our God would not be so dear to us; but when, after calling upon heaven and earth to help, we meet with no succour but such as comes from the eternal arm, we are led to prize our God, and rest upon him with undivided trust. Never is the soul safer or more at rest than when, all other helpers failing, she leans upon the Lord alone. The verse before us is an appropriate cry, now that the church sees error invading her on all sides, while faithful ministers are few, and fewer still are bold enough to "stand up" and defy the enemies of truth. Where are our Luthers and our Calvins? A false charity has enfeebled the most of the valiant men of Israel. Our John Knox would be worth a mint at this hour, but where is he? Our grand consolation is that the God of Knox and Luther is yet with us, and in due time will call out his chosen champions.

**Verse 17.** *Unless the Lord had been my help, my soul had almost dwelt in silence.* Without Jehovah's help, the psalmist declares that he should have died outright, and gone into the silent land, where no more testimonies can be borne for the living God. Or he may mean that he would not have had a word to speak against his enemies, but would have been wrapped in speechless shame. Blessed be God, we are not left to that condition yet, for the Almighty Lord is still the helper of all those who look to him. Our inmost soul is bowed down when we see the victories of the Lord's enemies—we cannot brook it, we cover our mouths in confusion; but he will yet arise and avenge his own cause, therefore have we hope.

**Verse 18.** *When I said, My foot slippeth*—is slipping even now: I perceived my danger, and cried out in horror, and then, at the very moment of my extremity, came the needed help, thy mercy, O LORD, held me up. Often enough is this the case, we feel our weakness, and see our danger, and in fear

and trembling we cry out. At such times nothing can help us but *mercy*; we can make no appeal to any fancied merit, for we feel that it is our inbred sin which makes our feet so ready to fail us; our joy is that mercy endureth for ever, and is always at hand to pluck us out of the danger, and hold us up, where else we should fall to our destruction. Ten thousand times has this verse been true in relation to some of us, and especially to the writer of this comment. The danger was imminent, it was upon us, we were going; the peril was apparent, we saw it, and were aghast at the sight; our own heart was failing, and we concluded that it was all over with us; but then came the almighty interposition: we did not fail, we were held up by an unseen hand, the devices of the enemy were frustrated, and we sang for joy. O faithful Keeper of our souls, be thou extolled for ever and ever. We will bless the Lord at all times, his praise shall continually be in our mouths.

**Verse 19.** *In the multitude of my thoughts within me.* When I am tossed to and fro with various reasonings, distractions, questions, and forebodings, I will fly to my true rest, for thy comforts delight my soul. From my sinful thoughts, my vain thoughts, my sorrowful thoughts, my griefs, my cares, my conflicts, I will hasten to the Lord; he has divine *comforts*, and these will not only console but actually *delight* me. How sweet are the comforts of the Spirit! Who can muse upon eternal love, immutable purposes, covenant promises, finished redemption, the risen Saviour, his union with his people, the coming glory, and such like themes, without feeling his heart leaping with joy? The little world within is, like the great world without full of confusion and strife; but when Jesus enters it, and whispers "Peace be unto you, "there is a calm, yea, a rapture of bliss. Let us turn away from the mournful contemplation of the oppression of man and the present predominance of the wicked, to that sanctuary of pure rest which is found in the God of all comfort. Good will to us, and to give us some evidence and assurance of his love and favour towards us; these are his comforts.

*"Delight."* This is a transcendent expression, which the Holy Ghost in the pen of the prophet David comes up unto. It had been a great matter to have said, they satisfy my soul, or, they quiet me, no more but so, that is the highest pitch which a perplexed spirit can wish to itself. Those which are in great pain, they would be glad if they might have but ease, they cannot aspire so high as *pleasure and delight*, this is more than can be expected by them; but see here now the notable efficacy of these Divine comforts; they do not only *pacify* the mind, but they *joy* it; they do not only *satisfy* it, but *ravish* it; they not only *quiet*, but *delight* it. *Thy comforts delight my soul.* That is, not only take away the present grief, but likewise put in the room and place of it most unspeakable comfort and consolation; as the *sun* does



not only dispel darkness, but likewise brings in a glorious light in the stead of it.

**Verse 20.** *Shall the throne of iniquity have fellowship with thee?* Such thrones there are, and they plead a right divine, but their claim is groundless, a fraud upon mankind and a blasphemy of heaven. God enters into no alliance with unjust authority, he gives no sanction to unrighteous legislation. Which frameth mischief by a law? They legalise robbery and violence, and then plead that it is the law of the land; and so indeed it may be, but it is a wickedness for all that. With great care men prepare enactments intended to put down all protests, so as to render wrong-doing a permanent institution, but one element is necessary to true Conservatism, viz., righteousness; and lacking that, all their arrangements of the holders of power must come to an end, and all their decrees must in process of time be wiped out of the statute book. Nothing can last for ever but impartial right. No injustice can be permanent, for God will not set his seal upon it, nor have any fellowship with it, and therefore down it must come, and happy shall be the day which sees it fall.

**Verse 21.** *They gather themselves together against the soul of the righteous,* so many are there of them that they crowd their assemblies, and carry their hard measures with enthusiasm; they are the popular party, and are eager to put down the saints. In counsel, and in action, they are unanimous; their one resolve is to hold their own tyrannical position, and put down the godly party. And condemn the innocent blood. They are great at slander and false accusation, nor do they stick at murder; no crime is too great for them, if only they can trample on the servants of the Lord. This description is historically true in reference to persecuting times; it has been fulfilled in England, and may be again if Popery is to advance in future time at the same rate as in the past few years. The dominant sect has the law on its side, and blasts that it is the national church; but the law which establishes and endows one religion rather than another is radically an injustice. God has no fellowship with it, and therefore the synagogue of Ritualism will yet be a stench in the nostrils of all sane men. What evil times are in store for us it is not for us to prophesy; it is ours to leave the matter in the hands of him who cannot be in fellowship with an oppressive system, and will not always endure to be insulted to his face by Popish idols, and their priests.

**Verse 22.** Let the wicked gather as they may, the psalmist is not afraid, but sweetly sings, The Lord is my defence, and my God is the rock of my refuge. Firm as a rock is Jehovah's love, and there do we betake ourselves for shelter. In him, even in him alone, we find safety, let the world rage as it

may; we ask not aid from man, but are content to flee into the bosom of omnipotence.

**Verse 23.** The natural result of oppression is the destruction of the despot; his own iniquities crush him ere long. Providence arranges retaliations as remarkable as they are just. High crimes in the end bring on heavy judgments, to sweep away evil men from off the face of the earth; yea, God himself interposes in a special manner, and cuts short the career of tyrants while they are in the very midst of their crimes. Wicked men are often arrested by the pursuivants of divine justice red handed, with the evidences of their guilt upon them. He shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off *in their own wickedness*. While the stolen bread is in their mouths wrath slays them, while the ill gotten wedge of gold is yet in their tent judgment overtakes them. God himself conspicuously visits them, and reveals his own power in their overthrow, yea, the Lord our God shall cut them off. Here, then, the matter ends; faith reads the present in the light of the future, and ends her song without a trembling note.

---

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Verse 1.** *O LORD God, to whom vengeance belongeth.* It may perhaps seem to accord too little with a lover of piety, so strenuously to urge upon God to show himself an avenger against the wicked, and to rouse Him as if He were lingering and procrastinating. But this supplication must be regarded in its proper bearing; for David does not pray, neither should we pray, that God would take vengeance on the wicked in the same way that men, inflamed with anger and hatred, are wont often to avenge themselves of their enemies, but that He would punish them after his own divine manner and measure. The vengeance of God is for the most part a medicine for the evil; but ours is at times destruction even to the good. Therefore truly the Lord is alone the God of revenges. For we, when we think we have inflicted a penalty upon our enemy, are often much mistaken. What injury to us was the body of our enemy? in depriving him of which we nevertheless express all our bitterness. What wounded thee and wrought thee harm and shame, was the spirit of thine enemy, and that thou art not able to seize and hold, but God is able; and He alone has such power that in no way can the spirit escape his strength and force. Leave vengeance with Him, and He will repay. He admonishes us, that if we ourselves wish to be avengers of our own pains and injuries we may hurt ourselves more deeply than our enemy: for when we take vengeance on him, we indeed wound and do violence to his body, which in itself is vile and of little regard; but in our own best and most precious part,

that is, in our spirit; we ourselves, by losing patience, receive a deep stain, because when virtue and humanity have been expelled thence, we meanwhile incur faults to be atoned for therein. Wherefore God is entreated to become Himself the avenger of our injuries, for He alone knows aright and is able to avenge; and to become such an avenger that only the very thing which injured us may be punished. Some greedy man has cheated thee in money, may He punish avarice in him. A proud man has treated thee with scorn, may He destroy his pride, etc... This is vengeance most worthy to be inflicted of God, and by us to be sought. *Jacopo Sadoletto. 1477-1547.*

**Verse 1.** I do not think that we sufficiently attend to the distinction that exists between revenge and vengeance. "Revenge," says Dr. Johnson, "is an act of passion, vengeance of justice; injuries are revenged, crimes avenged." And it is from not attending to this essential distinction that the scorner has been led into such profane remarks, as if there were a vindictive spirit in the Almighty, and as if he found delight in wreaking vengeance on an adversary. The call which the psalmist here makes on God as a God to whom vengeance belongeth, is no other than if he had said, "O God, to whom justice belongeth!" Vengeance indeed is not for man, because with man's feelings and propensities it would ever degenerate into revenge. "I wilt be even with him," says nature; "I will be above him," says grace. *Barton Bouchier.*

**Verse 1.** The two divine names (*El* and *Jehovah*,—*God* and *Lord*) recognize God as almighty, eternal, self-existent, bound by covenant to his people, and alone entitled to take vengeance. *J. A. Alexander.*

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

"Avenge, O Lord, thy slaughtered saints, whose bones  
Lie scattered on the Alpine mountains cold;  
Even them who kept thy truth so pure of old,  
When all our fathers worshipped stocks and stones,  
Forget not: in thy book record their groans  
Who were thy sheep, and in their ancient fold  
Slain by the bloody Piemontese that rolled  
Mother with infant down the rocks. Their moans  
The vales redoubled to the hills, and they  
To heaven. Their martyred blood and ashes sow  
Over all the Italian fields, where still doth sway  
The triple Tyrant; that from these may grow

A hundredfold, who having learned the way,  
Early may fly the Babylonian woe." *John Milton*.

**Verse 3.** *How long shall the wicked, how long*, etc. Twice he saith it, because the wicked boast day after day, with such insolence and outrage, as if they were above control. *John Trapp*.

**Verse 3.** *How long shall the wicked triumph?* For "*triumph*," the Hebrew word is *wzley* which signifies to exalt. That is, they give themselves vain applause on account of their prosperity, and declare their success both with words and with the gestures of their body, like peacocks spreading their feathers. *How long shall they utter?* etc. For "*utter*" the Hebrew is *weyby*, they shall flow, they shall cast forth. The metaphor is taken from fountains springing out of the rock with a rush and abundance of water. Where the abundance of words is noted, their rashness, their waste and profusion, their sound and eagerness, their continuance and the difficulty of obstructing them. *Le Blanc*.

**Verse 3.** *How long shall the wicked triumph?* What answer shall we give, what date shall we put to this, "*How long?*" The answer is given in Ps 94:23, "*He shall bring upon them their own iniquity, and shall cut them off in their own wickedness*," etc. As if he had said, Except the Lord cut them off in their wickedness, they will never leave off doing wickedly. They are men of such a kind that there is no curing of them, they will never have done doing mischief until they be cut off by death, therefore God threatens death to deter men from sin. A godly man saith, "If God kill me, yet will I trust in him; "and some wicked men say (in effect, if not in the letter), Till God kills us we will sin against him. *Joseph Caryl*.

**Verses 3-4.** Triumph, utter and speak, boast. In the very terms wherein the Psalmist complains of the continued prevalence of the wicked, there is matter of comfort, for we have three (rather four, as in the authorised version) words to denote speaking, and only one, *workers*, to denote action, showing us that they are far more powerful with their tongues than with their hands. *Hugo Cardinalis, quoted by Neale*.

**Verse 5.** *They break in pieces thy people*. They tread down; they grind; they crush. The Hebrew word is often used as meaning to crush under foot; to trample on; and hence it means to oppress. La 3:34, Isa 3:15. *Albert Barnes*.

**Verse 6.** *Widow; fatherless*. An old Jewish writer (Philo Judaeus) has pointed out how aptly the titles of *widow* and *orphan* befitted the Hebrew

nation, because it had no helper save God only, and was cut off from all other people by its peculiar rites and usages, whereas the Gentiles, by their mutual alliances and intercourse, had, as it were, a multitude of kindred to help them in any strait. *J. M. Neale.*

**Verse 7.** *They say, the Lord shall not see.* As if they had said, Though God should set himself to search us out, and would greatly wish to see what we are doing, yet he shall not. We will carry it so closely and cunningly, that the eye of God shall not reach us. Their works were so foul and bloody, that the sun might be ashamed to look upon them, and they were so secret that they believed God could not look upon them, or bring them to shame for them. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 7.** *The LORD... the God of Jacob.* The divine names are, as usual, significant. That the self-existent and eternal God should not see, is a palpable absurdity; and scarcely less so, that the God of Israel should suffer his own people to be slaughtered without even observing it. The last verb means to mark, note, notice. *J. A. Alexander.*

**Verses 8-11.** In these words the following particulars are to be observed.

1. A certain spiritual *disease* charged on some persons, *viz.* darkness, and *blindness* of mind, appearing in their ignorance and folly.
2. The great *degree* of this disease; so as to render the subjects of it *fools*. *Ye fools, when will ye be wise?* And so as to reduce them to a degree of *brutishness*. *Ye brutish among the people.* This ignorance and folly were to such a degree as to render men like beasts.
3. The *obstinacy* of this disease; expressed in that interrogation, *When will ye be wise?* Their blindness and folly were not only very great, but deeply rooted and established, resisting all manner of cure.
4. Of what *nature* this blindness is. It is especially in things pertaining to God. They were strangely *ignorant* of his perfections, like beasts: and had *foolish* notions of him, as though he did not see, nor know: and as though he would not execute justice, by chastising and punishing wicked men.
5. The *unreasonableness* and *sottishness* of the notion they had of God, that he did not hear, did not *observe* their reproaches of him and his people, is shown by observing that he *planted* the ear. It is very *unreasonable* to suppose that he who gave power of perceiving words to others, should not

perceive them himself. And the sottishness of their being insensible of God's all seeing eye, and particularly of his seeing their wicked actions, appears, in that God is the being who *formed* the eye, and gave others a *power* of seeing. The sottishness of their apprehension of God, as though he did not know what they did, is argued from his being the *fountain* and original of all knowledge. The unreasonableness of their expecting to escape God's just chastisement and judgments for sin, is set forth by his chastising even the *heathen*, who did not sin against that light, or against so great mercies, as the wicked in Israel did; nor had ever made such a profession as they.

6. We may observe, that this dreadful disease is ascribed to *mankind in general*. *The Lord knoweth the thoughts of MAN, that they are vanity*. The psalmist had been setting forth the vanity and unreasonableness of the thoughts of *some* of the children of men; and immediately upon it he observes, that this vanity and foolishness of thought is *common* and *natural to mankind*. From these particulars we may fairly deduce the following doctrinal observation: *That there is an extreme and brutish blindness in things of religion, which naturally possesses the hearts of mankind*. Jonathan Edwards.

**Verses 8-15.** God hath ability, bowels, verity. Ability, *He that made the eye, cannot he see? He that planted the ear, cannot he hear?* Ps 94:8-11. Bowels, *He doth but chasten his, not cast them off*, Ps 94:12-14. Verity, *this is but until a pit be made for the wicked*, Ps 94:13. Mordecai is frowned upon, but till a gallows be made for Haman, and then judgment returns unto righteousness. Nicholas Lockyer.

**Verse 9.** *He that planted the ear, shall he not hear?* etc. The psalmist does not say, *He that planteth the ear, hath he not an ear?* *He that formed the eye, hath he not eyes?* No; but, *Shall he not hear?* *Shall he not see?* And why does he say so? To prevent the error of humanizing God, of attributing members or corporeal parts to the infinite Spirit. Adam Clarke.

**Verse 9.** *Planted the ear.* The mechanism of the ear, like a root planted in the earth, is sunk deep into the head, and concealed from view. Bagster's *Comprehensive Bible*.

**Verse 9.** The *planting* or deep seated position of the ear, as well as its wonderful construction, are illustrated by the following extract:—"The organ or instrument of hearing is in all its most important parts so hidden within the head, that we cannot perceive its construction by a mere external inspection. What in ordinary language we call the ear, is only the outer porch

or entrance vestibule of a curious series of intricate, winding passages, which, like the lobbies of a great building, lead from the outer air into the inner chambers. Certain of these passages are full of air; others are full of liquid; and their membranes are stretched like parchment curtains across the corridors at different places, and can be thrown into vibration, or made to tremble, as the head of a drum or the surface of a tambourine does when struck with a stick or the fingers. Between two of these parchment like curtains, a chain of very small bones extends, which serves to tighten or relax these membranes, and to communicate vibrations to them. In the innermost place of all, rows of fine threads, called nerves, stretch like the strings of a piano from the last points to which the tremblings or thrillings reach, and pass inwards to the brain. If these threads or nerves are destroyed, the power of hearing as infallibly departs as the power to give out sound is lost by a piano or violin when its strings are broken." We know far less, however, of the ear than of the eye. The eye is a single chamber open to the light, and we can see into it, and observe what happens there. But the ear is many chambered, and its winding tunnels traversing the rock like bones of the skull are narrow, and hidden from us as the dungeons of a castle are, like which, also, they are totally dark. Thus much, however, we know, that it is in the innermost recesses of these unilluminated ivory vaults, that the mind is made conscious of sound. Into these gloomy cells, as into the bright chamber of the eye, the soul is ever passing and asking for news from the world without; and ever and anon, as of old in hidden subterranean caverns where men listened in silence and darkness to the utterance of oracles, reverberations echo along the surrounding walls, and responses come to the waking spirit, while the world lifts up its voice and speaks to the soul. The sound is that of a hushed voice, a low but clear whisper; for as it is but a dim shadow of the outer world we see; so it is but a faint echo of the outer world we hear. *George Wilson, in "The Five Gateways of Knowledge," 1861.*

**Verse 9.** *He that planted the ear, &c.* Shall the Author of these senses be senseless? Our God is not as that Jupiter of Crete, who was pictured without ears, and could not be at leisure to attend upon small matters. He is *onv kai nou*; he is also *olofyalmov*, all eye, all ear. We read of a people called *Panotii*; God only is so, to speak properly *John Trapp*.

**Verse 9.** *Formed the eye.* The term used of the creation of the eye, is not merely "*made*," as the Prayer Book version reads, but "*formed*," *plasav, finxit*, directing our attention to the wonderful mechanism of the organs of sight, and thence to the marvellous skill of the Artificer. *J. M. Neale*.

**Verse 9.** *He that formed the eye.* The word here used is frequently employed in reference to a *potter*; and the idea is that God has moulded or formed the eye as the potter fashions the clay. The more the eye is studied in its structure, the more deeply shall we be impressed with the wonderful skill and wisdom of God. *Albert Barnes.*

**Verse 9.** *The eye.* As illustrating the wisdom displayed in the eye we have selected the following. "Our physical good demands that we should have the power of comprehending the world in all the respects in which it is possible for matter or its forces to affect our bodies." The senses completely meet this want... We are too apt to confine ourselves to the mere mechanism of the eye or ear, without considering how the senses supplement each other, and without considering the provision made in the world that it may be a fit place for the exercise of the senses. The eye would be useless without all the properties of light; the ear would have no power in a world without an atmosphere. Sight enables us to avoid danger, and seek distant needful objects. What a vast length of time and wearisome labour would it require for a blind man to learn what one glance of the eye may give to one blessed with sight. A race of blind men could not exist on this globe.

The sense of sight alone, as a means of adapting us to the world, would strike us as wonderful in its results, and worthy of the conception of the highest intelligence in adapting means to ends, if we knew nothing of the adjustments by which sight is secured. We can conceive of the power of sight as direct perception, without the aid of light, or of a special organ corresponding to the eye. But constituted as we are, we see only through the agency of light; and we perceive light only by a special organ; and objects only in consequence of a peculiar structure of that organ. Of all these relationships of light to objects, and of light to the eye, and of the parts of the eye to each other, not one of them is a necessary condition of matter. The arrangement of so many things by which this wonderful power of perceiving distant objects is secured, is the only one that will secure the end desired, out of an endless number of arrangements that can be conceived of... Whoever contrived the organ through which we are to perceive, understood perfectly all the properties of light, and the wants of the being that was to use it. The eye of man, though limited in its power to a certain range, gives all that the common wants of life demand. And if man needs greater range of vision, he has but to study the eye itself, and fashion instruments to increase its power; as he is able when the proper time has come in his civilization, to increase by science and art the efficacy of nearly all his physical powers. For the



ordinary purposes of life, neither telescopic nor microscopic adjustment of the eye is needful.

But the eye has not only the power of vision so necessary to man, but it is an instrument of power, an instrument made up of distinct parts, of solids and liquids, of transparent and opaque tissues, of curtains, and lenses, and screens. Its mechanism can be accurately examined and the use of each part as perfectly understood as any of the works of man. We examine every part of it as we would a microscope. We have first the solid case which is to hold all the machinery, and upon which are to be fastened the cords and pulleys of its skilful mounting. This covering, opaque, white, and glistening, like silver on the back and sides of the eye, in front, where the light must enter, suddenly becomes transparent as the clearest crystal. Within this is a second coating that coming to the front changes just as suddenly into an opaque screen, through the tissues of which no ray of light can pass. That screen is self adjusting, with a network that no art of man ever equalled. Whether expanding or contracting, its opening in the centre always remains a perfect circle, adapted in size to the intensity of the light. How much light shall enter the eye it determines without aid from us. Next there must be connection with the brain, the seat of the being for whom the provision is made. These two coatings are pierced upon the back part of the eye, and a thread draw out from the brain is passed through this opening and spread out within the eye as a delicate screen upon which all impressions are to be made. To fill the larger portion of the cavity, there is packed into it a clear jelly, and imbedded in this a lens, fashioned with a skill that no artist can equal, to refract the light and throw the image on the perceptive screen. In front of this lens is another humour, not like jelly as the other, because in this, that delicate fringe the iris, is to float, and nothing but a watery fluid will answer its purpose. Here then we have a great variety of materials all brought together, of the exact quality and in the quantity needed, placed in the exact position which they ought to occupy, so perfectly adjusted that the most that man can do is to imitate the eye without ever hoping to equal it.

Nor is the curious structure of the eye itself all that is worthy of our attention. The instrument when finished must be mounted for use. A cavity is formed in solid bone, with grooves and perforations for all the required machinery. The eye, when placed, is packed with soft elastic cushions and fastened by strings and pulleys to give it variety and rapidity of motion. Its outer case is to cover it when not in use, and protect it when in danger. The delicate fringe upon its border never needs clipping; and set like a well arranged defence, its points all gracefully turned back, that no ray of light

may be obstructed. Above the protecting brow is another defence to turn aside the acrid fluids from the forehead, while near the eye is placed a gland that bathes the whole organ with a clear soothing fluid, to prevent all friction and keep its outward lens free from dust, and polished for constant use.

When we consider all this, the perfect adaptation of the eye to our wants, the arrangement of every part of its structure on strict mechanical and optical principles, and all the provisions for its protection, we pronounce the instrument perfect, the work of a Being like man, but raised immeasurably above the most skilful human workman. What shall we say when we learn that this instrument was prepared in long anticipation of its use; that there is a machinery within it to keep it in constant repair; that the Maker not only adjusted the materials, but that he was the chemist who formed all these substances from the dust of the earth? We may be told that the architect found this dust ready at hand, existing from all eternity. We may not be able to prove the contrary, nor do we need to do so for this argument. It is enough for our present purpose to know that the eyes with which we now see, these wonderfully complex and perfect instruments, were not long since common earth, dust upon which we perchance have trod. We can understand the mechanism of the eye, we can comprehend the wisdom that devised it; but the preparation of materials, and the adjustment of parts, speak of a power and skill to which man can never hope to attain. When he sees his most cunning workmanship surpassed both in plan and execution, shall he fail to recognise design? "Shall we fail to recognise a builder when we contemplate such a work?" *P. A. Chadbourne, in "Lectures on Natural Theology"; or, Nature and the Bible from the same Author. New York, 1867.*

**Verse 9.** *Shall he not see?* A god or a saint that should really cast the glance of a pure eye into the conscience of the worshipper would not long be held in repute. The grass would grow again around that idol's shrine. A seeing god would not do: the idolater wants a blind god. The first cause of idolatry is a desire in an impure heart to escape from the look of the living God, and none but a dead image would serve the turn. *William Arnot.*

**Verse 9.** He who made the sun itself, and causes it to revolve, being a small portion of his works, if compared with the whole, is he unable to perceive all things? *Epictus.*

**Verse 9.** That is wise counsel of the Rabbins, that the three best safeguards against falling into sin are to remember, first, that there is an ear which hears everything; secondly, that there is an eye which sees everything; thirdly, that there is a hand which writes everything in the Book of Knowledge, which shall be opened at the Judgment. *J. M. Neale.*

**Verses 9-10.** It was no limited power that could make this eye to see, this ear to hear, this heart to understand; and, if that eye which he hath given us, can see all things that are within our prospect, and that ear, that he hath planted, can hear all sounds that are within our compass, and that heart, that he hath given us, can know all matters within the reach of our comprehension; how much more shall the sight, and hearing, and knowledge of that Infinite Spirit, which can admit of no bounds, extend to all the actions and events of all the creatures, that lie open before him that made them! *Joseph Hall.*

**Verse 10.** *He that teacheth man knowledge.* The question posts midway (for the words in Italics are not Scripture), the point of application being too obvious to need mention. "He that teacheth man all his knowledge." (Fill out the rest yourselves; think, What then?) *Henry Cowles.*

**Verse 10.** *He that teacheth man knowledge.* What knowledge have we but that which is derived from himself or from the external world?—and what is that world, but his Creation?—and what is creation, but the composition, structure, and arrangement of all things according to his previous designs, plans, intentions, will, and mandate? In studying creation in any of its departments, we therefore study his mind: and all that we can learn from it must be his ideas, his purposes, and his performances. No author, in his compositions—no artificer, in his mechanisms, can more truly display their talents and ideas to others, than the unseen Creator manifests his thoughts and intelligence to us in the systems and substances which he has formed, and presents to our continual contemplation. In this sense, Nature is an unceasing revelation of them to us. *Sharon Turner.*

**Verse 11.** *The LORD knoweth the thoughts.* The thoughts of man's heart—what millions are there of them in a day! The twinkling of the eye is not so sudden a thing as the twinkling of a thought; yet those thousands and thousands of thoughts which pass from thee, that thou canst not reckon, they are all known to God. *Anthony Burgess.*

**Verse 11.** The Lord knoweth the thoughts of man, that they are *vanity*. What a humbling thought is here suggested to us! Let us examine it.

1. If vanity had been ascribed to the meaner parts of the creation—if all inanimate and irrational beings, whose days are as a shadow, and who know not whence they came nor whither they go, had thus been characterized—it had little more than accorded with our own ideas. But the humiliating truth belongs to man, the *lord* of the lower creation—to man, that distinguished link in the chain of being which unites in his person mortality and

immortality, heaven and earth. "The LORD knoweth the thoughts of *man*, that they are vanity."

2. Had vanity been ascribed only to the exercise of our sensual or mortal part, or of that which we possess in common with other animals, it had been less humiliating. But the charge is pointed at that which is the peculiar glory of man the intellectual part, his *thoughts*. It is here, if anywhere, that we excel the creatures which are placed around us. We can contemplate our own existence, dive into the past and the future, and understand whence we came and whither we go. Yet in this tender part; we are touched. Even the "*thoughts*" of man are vanity.

3. If vanity had been ascribed merely to those loose and trifling excursions of the imagination which fall not under the influence of choice, a kind of comers and goers, which are ever floating in the mind, like insects in the air on a summer's evening, it had been less affecting. The soul of man seems to be necessarily active. Everything we see, hear, taste, feel, or perceive, has some influence upon thought, which is moved by it as leaves on the trees are moved by every breeze of wind. But "*thoughts*" here include those exercises of the mind in which it is voluntarily or intensely engaged, and in which we are in earnest; even all our schemes, contrivances, and purposes. One would think, if there were anything in man to be accounted of, it should be those exercises in which his intellectual faculty is seriously and intensely employed. Yet the Lord knoweth that even these are vanity.

4. If during our state of childhood and youth only vanity had been ascribed to our thoughts, it would have been less surprising. This is a truth of which numberless parents have painful proof; yea, and of which children themselves, as they grow up to maturity, are generally conscious. Vanity at this period, however, admits of some apology. The obstinacy and folly of some young people, while they provoke disgust, often excite a tear of pity. But the charge is exhibited against *man*. "*Man at his best estate* is altogether vanity."

5. The decision proceeds from a quarter from which there can be no appeal. "*The LORD knoweth*" it. Opinions dishonourable to our species may sometimes arise from ignorance, sometimes from spleen and disappointment, and sometimes from a gloomy turn of mind, which views mankind through a distorted medium. But the judgment given in this passage is the decision of Him who cannot err; a decision therefore to which, if we had no other proof, it becomes us to accede. *Andrew Fuller*.

**Verse 11.** *They are vanity.* The Syriac version is, *For they are a vapour.* Compare Jas 4:14. *John Gill.*

**Verse 12.** *Blessed is the man, &c.* I shall show the various benefits of affliction, when it is sanctified by the Spirit of God to those persons who are exercised by it. (1.) The Great God has made affliction the occasion of converting sinners, and bringing them into a spiritual acquaintance with Christ his Son. See Isa 48:10. (2.) God not only makes affliction the occasion of converting sinners at first, but after conversion he sanctifies an afflicted state to the saints, to weaken the remains of indwelling sin in them, and make them afraid of sinning against him in future time. (3.) God, in afflicting the saints, increases that good work of grace, which his Spirit has implanted in them. God causes his saints to grow in grace, when he corrects them with the rod of sorrow; God assimilates and makes the saints like unto himself, in a greater degree, by temporal troubles and distresses. Heb 12:10-11. (4.) God afflicts the saints for the improvement of their knowledge in divine things. The Psalmist says, in the words of the text, *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law.* See also Ps 119:71. (5.) The great God, by afflicting the saints, brings them unto him with greater nearness and frequency, by prayer and supplication. (6.) God afflicts the saints, to make them better acquainted with the perfections of his nature. (7.) To make them more conformed to Christ his Son. (8.) To subdue the pride of their hearts, and make them more humble. (9.) God oftentimes discovers to the saints, in the season of their affliction, in a clearer manner, that grace which he has implanted in them, and refreshes their souls with the consolations of his Spirit. (10.) God afflicts the saints, to divide their hearts more from the love of the world, and to make them more meet for heaven. *Outline of a Sermon by John Farmer, 1744.*

**Verse 12.** Here observe generally, what it is which afflictions, or God by afflictions, teacheth his children; even the self same thing which he teacheth in his word; as the schoolmaster teacheth his scholars the same thing by the rod, which he teacheth by words. The word, then, is the storehouse of all instruction. Look not for any new diverse doctrine to be taught thee by affliction, which is not in the word. For, in truth, herein stands our teaching by affliction, that it fits and prepares us for the word, by breaking and subdividing the stubbornness of our hearts, and making them pliable, and capable of the impression of the word. Wherefore, as the Apostle saith, that the law is our schoolmaster to Christ, Ga 3:24. Because the law, by showing unto us our disease, forces us to the physician. So likewise it may be said that afflictions are schoolmasters to the law. For whilst we are at ease and in

prosperity, though the sons of thunder terrify never so much with the fearful cracks of legal menaces, yet are we as deaf men, nothing moved therewith. But when we are humbled and meekened by affliction, then is there way made for the terrors of the law; then do we begin with some reverence of attention to listen and give ear unto them. When therefore God sends us any affliction, we must know that then he sends us to the law and to the testimony. For he teaches us indeed in our affliction, but it is in his law. And therefore if in our affliction we will learn anything, we must take God's book into our hands, and carefully and seriously peruse it. And hereby shall it appear that our afflictions have been our teachers, if by them we have felt ourselves stirred up to greater diligence, zeal, and reverence in reading and hearing the word... After that the prophet had preferred his complaint to the Lord against the adversaries of the church, from the first verse to the eighth, he leaveth God, and in a sudden conversion of speech, turns himself from the party complained unto, to the parties complained of, the cruel oppressors of the church, terrifying them by those just judgments of God, which in fine must overtake them, and so consequently cheering and comforting the distressed church. But because the distress of the church's enemies of itself could be no sufficient matter of comfort unto her, therefore a second argument of further and that far more effectual consolation is added in this twelfth verse, drawn from the happy condition of the church, even while she is thus overborne with those tigerly and tyrannical persecutors. And the argument is propounded by the prophet, not directing his speech to the church, but rather in his own person, bringing in the church suddenly turning her speech from her enemies, with whom she was expostulating, to God himself, and breaking forth into this pathetic expostulation, *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest, O LORD, and teachest him out of thy law*. From the coherence of which words with the former, we may observe, that the outward miseries of our enemies is but cold comfort, unless withal we have a persuasion of our own inward happiness... It would do the child little good to see the rod cast into the fire, if he himself should be cast in after it. Therefore the church having in this place meditated of the just judgments of God, which should in due time befall her adversaries, and not finding sufficiency of comfort therein, here in this verse proceedeth to a further meditation of her own case and condition. Wherein she seemeth thus to reason to herself. What though these mine enemies be brought to their deserved ends? what though I know they be reserved for shame and confusion? What ease can this bring to my mind now dejected, and happy thinking itself as miserable as these my foes? Now these doubtful thoughts something disquieting her, further comfort is ministered unto her by the Spirit of God in this verse, whereby she is enabled to answer that objection she made against herself,

namely, that she is assured, that as her adversaries' case is wretched, so is her own most happy and blessed. *Daniel Dyke, in "The Schoole of Affliction," 1633.*

**Verse 12.** *Blessed is the man whom thou chastenest*, etc. If by outward afflictions thy soul be brought more under the inward teachings of God, doubtless thy afflictions are in love. All the chastening in the world, without divine teaching, will never make a man blessed; that man that finds correction attended with instruction, and lashing with learning, is a happy man. If God, by the affliction that is upon thee, shall teach thee how to loathe sin more, how to trample upon the world more, and how to walk with God more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to die to sin more, and how to die to thy relations more, and how to die to thy self interest more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to live to Christ more, how to lift up Christ more, and how to long for Christ more, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions to get assurance of a better life, and to be still in a gracious readiness and preparedness for the day of thy death, thy afflictions are in love. If God shall teach thee by afflictions how to mind heaven more, and how to fit for heaven more, thy afflictions are in love. If God by afflictions shall teach thy proud heart how to lie more low, and thy hard heart how to grow more humble, and thy censorious heart how to grow more charitable, and thy carnal heart how to grow more spiritual, and thy froward heart how to grow more quiet, &c., thy afflictions are in love. Pambo, an illiterate dunce, as the historian terms him, was learning that one lesson, "I said I will take heed to my ways, that I sin not with my tongue," nineteen years, and yet had not learned it. Ah! it is to be feared that there are many who have been in this school of affliction above this nineteen years and yet have not learned any saving lesson all this while. Surely their afflictions are not in love, but in wrath. Where God loves, he afflicts in love, and wherever God afflicts in love, there he will first and last teach such souls such lessons as shall do them good to all eternity. If you enjoy the special presence of God with your spirits in your affliction, then your affliction is in love. Hast thou a special presence of God with thy spirit, strengthening of that, stilling of that, satisfying of that, cheering and comforting of that? *"In the multitude of my thoughts,"*—that is, of my troubled, intricate, ensnared, intertwined, and perplexed thoughts, as the branches of a tree by some strong wind are twisted one within another, as the Hebrew word properly signifies,—*"Thy comforts delight my soul."* Here is a presence of God with the soul, here are comforts and delights that reach the soul, here is a cordial to strengthen the spirit. *Thomas Brooks.*

**Verse 12.** You may and ought to get especial rejoicing faith out of sanctified afflictions. Thus: "Whom God doth correct and teach, *him* he loves, *he* is blessed: (Ps 94:12 Heb 12:6:) but God doth so to me: *ergo*." Here are bills and prayers for mercies; but who looks after the issue, the teaching, the holy use? Sanctified afflictions are very good evidences, and so very comfortable. There are those who would not have lost their sufferings, temptations, afflictions, for any good. The blessed Spirit hath taught them that way many a divine truth by heart out of the word; they are sensible of it, and from it conclude the love of God in Christ to them; and thence they have joy and comfort,—that joy that angels cannot give, and devils cannot take. Sanctified troubles are tokens of special love. *Christopher Fowler (1610-1678), in "The Morning Exercises."*

**Verse 12.** If we have nothing but the rod, we profit not by the rod; yea, if we have nothing but the word, we shall never profit by the word. It is the Spirit given with the word, and the Spirit given with the rod, by which we profit under both, or either. Chastening and divine teaching must go together, else there will be no profit by chastening. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 12.** God sees that the sorrows of life are very good for us; for, as seeds that are deepest covered with snow in winter flourish most in spring; or as the wind by beating down the flame raiseth it higher and hotter; and as when we would have fires flame the more, we sprinkle water upon them; even so, when the Lord would increase our joy and thankfulness, he allays it with the tears of affliction. *H. G. Salter.*

**Verse 12.** *And teachest.* Teaching implies both a schoolmaster, a *teacher*, instructing and *lessons taught*. In this *teaching* both these points are here noted out. And for the first, namely, the *schoolmaster*, it is twofold: 1. The outward affliction and chastisement, "*Whom you chastise, teach*," that is, whom by chastising you teach. 2. God himself, who is the chief and principal head schoolmaster, the other being but an inferior and subordinate one: "*Whom thou teachest.*" And for the second point, *the lessons taught*, they are included generally in those words, "*in thy law.*" To begin then with the schoolmasters, and first with the first.

The first schoolmaster is affliction. A sharp and severe and swingeing schoolmaster indeed, and so much the fitter for such stout and stubborn scholars as we are; who because we will not be overcome by fair means, must needs therefore be dealt withal by foul. For God doth not willingly afflict us, but being necessarily thereunto enforced, by that strength of corruption in us, which otherwise will not be subdued. So physicians and



surgeons are constrained to come to cutting, lancing, and burning, when milder remedies will not prevail. Let us therefore hereby take notice of the hardness of our hearts, the fallow ground whereof cannot be broken up but by this sharp plough of affliction. See what dullards and blockheads we are, how slow to understand spiritual things, not able to conceive of them by the instruction of words, unless they be even beaten and driven into our brains by blows. So thick and brawny is that foreskin which is drawn over our uncircumcised ears and hearts, that no doctrine can enter, unless it be pegged, and hammered, and knocked into us by the fists of this sour and crabbed *schoolmaster*.

The second schoolmaster is God himself. Afflictions of themselves, though severe schoolmasters, yet can do us no good, unless God come by his Spirit, and teach our hearts inwardly. Let us therefore pray that as in the ministry of God's word, so also of his works and judgments, we may be *all taught of God*. For it is his Spirit that quickens and animates the outward means, which otherwise are a dead letter. And this is the reason that many men have rather grown worse by their afflictions, than anything better; because God's Spirit hath not gone with the affliction, to put life and spirit into it, as Moses observed in the Israelites, De 29:24. *David Dyke*.

**Verse 13.** *That thou mayest give him rest.* Here usually, but hereafter certainly. *Mors aerumnarum requies*, was Chaucer's motto: those that die in the Lord *shall rest from their labours*. Meanwhile they are chastened of the Lord, that they may not be condemned with the world. 1Co 11:32. *John Trapp*.

**Verse 13.** *To give him rest.* This is the end of God's teaching, that his servant may wait in patience, unmoved by, safe *from, the days of evil* (comp. Ps 49:5) seeing the evil all round lifting itself up, but seeing also the secret, mysterious retribution, slowly but surely accomplishing itself. In this sense the "rest" is the rest of a calm, self possessed spirit, as Isa 7:4 30:15 32:17 57:20; and "to give him" signifies "that thou mayest give him." *J. J. S. Perowne*.

**Verse 13.** *Rest.* Let there be a revival of the passive virtues. Mr. Hume calls them the "monkish virtues." Many speak of them slightingly, especially as compared with the dashing qualities so highly esteemed in the world. But quietness of mind and of spirit, like a broken heart, is of great price in the sight of God. Some seem to have forgotten that silence and meekness are graces. *William S. Plumer*.

**Verse 13.** *Rest from the days of adversity. To rest from the days of adversity* is not to be disturbed by them to such an extent as to murmur, or despond in spirit, but to trust in God, and in silence of the mind and affections expect from God deliverance. See Isa 7:4; Isa 26:20, &c. Moreover he says not ymyk *in*, but ymym *from the days* of adversity, an expression of greater elegancy and wider range of meaning. For there is a reference to the primary form of the verb vqv *to sink, to settle down*, as when the dregs of disturbed liquor fall to the bottom; when it is applied to the mind when shaken with a great agitation of cares, and full of bitterness. The dregs, therefore, sprung *from the days of adversity*, are pointed out as settling down. Besides, not only is rest of mind while the evils continue indicated, but also while they are ceasing, since m, *from*, has here, as not infrequently elsewhere, a *negativ force*. Venema.

**Verse 13.** *Until the pit be digged for the wicked.* Behold, thou hast the counsel of God, and the reason why he spareth the wicked; the pit is being digged for the sinner. You wish to bury him at once: the pit is as yet being dug for him: do not be in haste to bury him. Augustine.

**Verse 15.** My text contains two parts; the providence of God to his people, and the prosperity of the providence among them. The providence of God to his people lies much in after games: God seems to go away from his, and then the wicked have the better: anon he returns, and then his people carry the day. *Judgment shall return unto righteousness; or justice shall return unto judgment*; a phrase of speech frequent in the Old Testament to note retaliation, *quid* for *quo*, like for like. The term is distinct as well as the phrase, and helps to give the sense of the Spirit of God here; qru from qru, *se asseruit*, justice shall assert herself; Christ shall assert his people, his promises, his threatenings. "Shall *return*, "*retro-agi*: what evil men do to good shall be redone to them, done back again upon them by God. Or this root, here rendered "*return*, "may be rendered to abide and rest. In Ps 23:6, it is so rendered: "I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for ever." Justice doth, as it were, go from home sometimes, when it visits the saints; but it returns to its home and dwelling, *i.e.*, the wicked. Justice is, as it were, from home, till it returns to the wicked, there it abides and dwells. "*Justice shall dwell and rest in judgment*, "*i.e.*, in the execution of punishments upon wicked men. jpvm, from jpv, *judicium exercuit*, notes the exercise and execution of justice: a thing rests in its end; justice dwells and rests in judgment, *i.e.*, in its execution, in its end for which, and unto which and whom it is appointed. Nicholas Lockyer, 1612-1684-5.

**Verse 15.** *Shall follow it.* The right reading is in the margin,—*shall be after it*, or *after that*; that is, (1) *shall observe it*. "He poureth contempt upon princes; he setteth the poor on high from affliction; whose is wise *shall observe these things*, "etc., Ps 107:43: this Scripture, I think, in part explains the text. (2) *"Shall be after it*, "that is, shall confess and acknowledge it. It is not a small thing to bring men to confess the justice of God in his dealings. (3) *"Shall be after it*, "that is, shall triumph in it, and so to be compared with and opened by Ps 58:10-11. (4) *"Shall be after it*; "that is, the works of God shall be of effectual operation, to bring such as are upright in heart more to love and obey God, and so it is to be compared with Ps 31:23. *Nicholas Lockyer.*

**Verse 16.** *Who will rise up*, etc. I think we ought to look upon David here in a public capacity, as a prince or magistrate; and then as such he deplores the increase and confidence of the wicked; and having fortified himself in God by prayer, he resolves, in the words of the text, to do the duty of his station, to employ all the power God had given him for the extirpation of wickedness, and the reformation of an impious people; and earnestly invites and calls in to his assistance all that had either heart or ability for such a work, as being well aware of the great difficulty of it. This is the sense I prefer, because it best becomes the zeal and faith of David, best suits the spirit and genius of several other parallel psalms, and seems plainly to me, to have the countenance of the Targum and the Septuagint. In the words thus explained we have these three things:

1. *The deplorable state of Israel.* This is easily to be collected from the form and manner of David's expressing himself here, *Who will stand up for me?* or *who will take my part?* As if he should have said, Such is the number and power of the wicked, that how much soever my heart is set upon a reformation, I can hardly hope to effect it, without the concurrence and joint endeavours of good men. And yet, alas! how little is the assistance I can reasonably expect of this kind? How few are the sincere friends of goodness? How great and how general is the coldness and indifference which possesses men in the things of God?

2. *The duty of the magistrate.* This is plainly implied here, and is, to curb and restrain wickedness, and to promote a general reformation.

3. *The duty of all good people.* Which is, as far as in them lies, to assist and encourage the magistrate in this good work. *Richard Lucas, 1697.*

**Verse 16.** *Who will rise up for me against the wicked?* In all ages, men who neither feared God nor regarded man have combined together and formed confederacies, to carry on the works of darkness. And herein they have shown themselves wise in their generation, for by this means they more effectually promoted the kingdom of their father the devil, than otherwise they could have done. On the other hand, men who did fear God, and desire the happiness of their fellow creatures, have in every age found it needful to join together in order to oppose the works of darkness, to spread the knowledge of God their Saviour, and to promote his kingdom upon earth. Indeed he himself instructed them so to do. From the time that men were upon the earth, he hath taught them to join together in his service, and has united them in one body by one Spirit. And for this very end he has joined them together, "that he might destroy the works of the devil; "first in them that are already united, and by them that are round about them. *John Wesley, in a Sermon on these words, preached before the Society for Reformation of Manners, Jan. 30, 1763.*

**Verse 17.** *Had been my help.* The word signifieth not only *help*, but *summum et plenum auxilium*, an *helpfulness*, or *full help*: the Hebrew hath a letter more than ordinary, to increase the signification, as learned Mr. Leigh observeth: there is the sufficiency of help. *Nathaniel Whiting, in "The Saints' Dangers, Deliverances, and Duties, "1659.*

**Verse 19.** *In the multitude of my thoughts,* etc. That is, just when they were come to their height and extremity in me. The comforts of God are seasonable, and observe the proper time for their coming, neither too soon, nor too late but, *"in,* "that is, just in the very point and nick of time. There is another thing here spoken of. In the *"thoughts,* "and in the *"multitude"* of the *"thoughts;* "not in the indifference of thoughts, but in the perplexity; not in the paucity of thoughts, but in the plurality: our extremity is God's opportunity. "In the mount will the Lord be seen, "when we have thought and thought and thought all we could, and know not what to think more, then does God delight to tender and exhibit his comforts to us. . . . In the words *"within me"* we have, next, the intimacy or closeness, of this grief. The Hebrew word is *ykrk*, in *medio mei*. The Arabic *be-kalbi*, in *corde meo*. And so likewise the Septuagint, *en th kardia mou*, in *my very heart*. This is added by way of further intention and aggravation of the present evil and distress.

*First,* To show the *secrecy* of this grief. Those evils which are external, and in the body, every one is ready to bemoan them, and to bewail them, and to take notice of them, and to shew a great deal of bowels towards those which

are afflicted with them; but these griefs which are inward, and in the mind, they are such as are known but to God himself. "The heart knoweth his own bitterness," saith Solomon, Pr 14:10.

Secondly, Here is hereby denoted the *settledness* and *radication* of this evil: it was within him and it was within his heart, that is, it was deeply rooted and fastened, and such as had a strong groundwork and foundation in him, such were these troublesome "*thoughts*," they were got into his very inwards and bowels, and so were not easily got out again.

Thirdly, Here is hereby also signified the impression which they had upon him, and the *sense* which he himself had of them. They were such as did grievously afflict him, and pierce him, and went near unto him, they went to his very heart, and touched him, as it were, to the quick, through the grievousness of them, as he speaks in another place concerning the reproaches of his enemies, Ps 42:10: "As with a sword (or killing) in my bones mine enemies reproach me; while they say daily unto me, Where is thy God?"

Now what are these "*comforts*" of God which the psalmist does more especially intend here in this place? In a word, they are the comforts which do flow from our *communion* with him. The comforts of his attributes, and the comforts of his promises, and the comforts of his gracious presence drawing near unto our souls, when it pleases him to shine upon us, and to express his "My soul." We showed before how the grief was in the mind, and therefore the comfort must be so also, that the remedy may answer the malady. Bodily pleasure will not satisfy for mind distraction: nothing will ease the soul but such comforts as are agreeable to itself, and such are these present comforts of God, they delight the *soul*. *Thomas Horton*.

**Verse 19.** *Thoughts* considered simply in themselves do not contain any matter of grief or evil; they are the proper and natural issue and emanations of the soul which come from it with a great deal of easiness, and with a great deal of delight; but it is the *exorbitance and irregularity* of them which is here intended, when they do not proceed *evenly and fairly*, as they ought to do, but with some kind of *interruption*; and so the word which is here used in the text seems to import; the Hebrew *sagnaphim* carrying an affinity with *segnaphim*, which is derived from a root which signifies properly a bough. Now we know that in a bough there are two things especially considerable, as pertinent to our present purpose. First, there's the *perplexity* of it. And, secondly, there's the *agitation*. Boughs usually catch, and entangle one another, and boughs they are easily shaken, and moved up and down by the

wind. If there be never so little *air* or *breath* stirring abroad, the boughs presently discover it, and are made sensible of it. So that this expression does serve very well to imitate and set forth unto us the perplexity and inconstancy of thoughts, which David was now troubled withal, and whereof he now complains, as grievous and offensive to him. They were not thoughts *in any consideration*, but *thoughts of distraction*, such thoughts as did bring some grief and trouble with them. This the Septuagint translators were so fully apprehensive of, that they quite leave out *thoughts*, and render it only by *griefs*, kata to pkhyov tw n odunwn mou: *according to the multitude of my sorrows*. But it is more full and agreeable to the word to put them both together—*my grievous and sorrowful thoughts*—such thoughts as in regard of the carriage and ordering of them, do bring grief and sorrow with them. And here we may by the way observe thus much, that God need not go far to punish and afflict men when he pleases; he can do it even with *their own thoughts*, no more but so. He can gather a rod of these boughs, and make a scourge of these twistings, wherewith to lash them, and that to purpose. If he does but raise a tempest in the mind, and cause these thoughts to bluster and bustle one with another, there will be trouble and affliction enough, though there were nothing else. It is no matter whether there be any *ground* or *occasion* for it in the things themselves; it is enough that there be so but in the *conceit and apprehension*. God can so use a *fancy*, a mere toy and imagination itself, and so set it on upon the soul, that there shall be no quiet nor rest for it. *Thomas Horton*.

**Verse 19.** Observe the greatness of this man's distress. This is forcibly expressed in the text, though in our translation it is scarcely obvious. The word in it rendered "*thoughts*," scholars tell us, signifies originally the small branches of trees. The idea in the psalmist's mind appears to be this: 'Look at a tree, with its branches shooting in every direction, entangling and entwining themselves one with another; let the wind take them—see how they feel it, how restless they become and confused, beating against and striving one with another. Now my mind is like that tree. I have a great many thoughts in it; and thoughts which are continually shifting and changing; they are perplexed and agitated thoughts, battling one with another'. There is no keeping the mind quiet under them; they bring disorder into it as well as sorrow. And mark the word "*multitude*" in the text; there is exactly the same idea in that. It signifies more than number; confusion. Think of a crowd collected and hurrying about: 'so,' says the psalmist, 'are my thoughts. I have a crowd of them in my mind, and a restless confused crowd. One painful thought is bad enough, but I have many; a multitude of them; and almost countless, a disturbed throng.' We now, then, understand the case we have

before us. The man's sorrow arose, at this time, from disquieting thoughts within his own breast; and his sorrow was great, because these thoughts were many, and at the same time tumultuous. When the psalmist says, "*Thy comforts*," he means more than comforts of which God is the author or giver. God is the author and giver of all our comforts—of all the earthly comforts that surround us; they are all the work and gift of his gracious hand... We are to understand *here* such comforts as are peculiarly and altogether God's, such as flow at once from God; not from him through creatures to us, but from him immediately to us without the intervention of creatures. The comforts that we get from his attributes—from meditating on, and what we call realising them; the comforts we get from his promises—believing and hoping in him; and the comforts of his presence, he drawing near to our souls and shining into them—we knowing he is near us, conscious of it by the light and happiness and renewed strength within us. "*Thy comforts*"—the comforts we get from the Lord Jesus Christ; from looking at him, considering him; thinking of his person, and offices, and blood, and righteousness, and intercession, and exaltation, and glory, and his second coming; our meeting him, seeing him, being like him. "*Thy comforts*"—the comforts which come from the Holy Spirit, "the Comforter": when he opens the Scriptures to us, or speaks through ceremonies and ordinances, or witnesses within us of our adoption of God; shining in on his own work of grace in our hearts; enabling us to see that work, and to see in it God's peculiar, eternal love to us; not opening to us the book of life, and showing us our names there, but doing something that makes us almost as joyful as though that book were opened to us; showing us the hand of God in our own souls—his converting, saving hand—his hand apprehending us as his own; making us feel as it were, his grasp of love, and feel, too, that it is a grasp which he will never loosen. *Charles Bradley*.

**Verse 19.** *Thy comforts delight my soul* Xerxes offered great rewards to him that could find out a new pleasure; but the comforts of the Spirit are satisfactory, they recruit the heart. There is as much difference between heavenly comforts and earthly, as between a banquet that is eaten and one that is painted on the wall. *Thomas Watcom*.

**Verse 19.** *Thy comforts.* Troubles may be of our own begetting; but true comforts come only from that infinite fountain, the God of consolation; for so he hath styled himself. *Thomas Adams*.

**Verse 19.** *Delight my soul.* The original word wevevy, signifies "*to cause to leap or dance for joy*"; "but the English language will not bear an application

of this image to the soul; though we say "to make the *heart* leap for joy."  
*Samuel Horsley.*

**Verse 19.** Because the malignant host is first entered into the ground of my text, consider with me: 1. The rebels, or mutineers, "*thoughts*." 2. The number of them, no less than a "*multitude*." 3. The captain whose colours they bear; a disquieted mind; "*my thoughts*." 4. The field where the battle is fought; in the heart; *apud me*, "within me." In the other army we find, 1. *Quanta*, how puissant they are; *comforts*. 2. *Quota*, how many they are; indefinitely set down; abundant comfort. 3. *Cujus*, whose they are; the Lord's, he is their general; *thy comforts*. 4. *Quid operantur*, what they do; they delight the soul. In the nature of them being comforts, there is tranquillity; in the number of them, being many comforts, there is sufficiency; in the owner of them, being *thy comforts*, there is omnipotence; and in the effect of them, delighting the soul, there is security. *From Thomas Adams' Sermon entitled "Man's comfort."*

**Verse 19.** A text of this kind shows us forcibly the power of Divine grace in the human heart: how much it can do to sustain and cheer the heart. The world may afflict a believer, and pain him; but if the grace which God has given him is in active exercise in his soul, the world cannot make him unhappy. It rather adds by its ill treatment to his happiness; for it brings God and his soul nearer together—God the fountain of all happiness, the rest and satisfaction of his soul. This psalm was evidently written by a deeply afflicted man. The wicked, he says, were triumphing over him; and had been so for a long while. He could find no one on earth to take his part against them. *Who will rise up for me against the evildoers?* he asks in Ps 94:16; *or who will stand up for me against the workers of iniquity?* And it seemed, too, as though God had abandoned him. His enemies thought so, and he seems to have been almost ready to think so himself. But what was the fact? All this time the Lord was secretly pouring consolation into his soul, and in the end made that consolation abundant. In appearance a wretched, he was in reality a happy man; suffering, yet comforted; yea, the text says *delighted*—*Thy comforts delight my soul.* *Charles Bradley, 1845.*

**Verse 20.** *The throne of iniquity... which frameth mischief by a law.* The first pretext of wicked men to colour their proceedings against innocent men is their throne; the second is the law; and the third is their council. What tyrant could ask more? But God has prepared an awful hell for impenitent tyrants, and they will be in it long before they now expect to leave the world.  
*William Nicholson.*



**Verse 20.** *The throne of iniquity... which frameth mischief by a law.* If there never had been such thrones in the world, there would not have been that mention made of them in the Scripture. But such there have been. That of Jeroboam was one, who would not suffer the people, according to the divine command, to go up to Jerusalem to worship God, who had there placed his name; but spread, for them that went, nets upon Mizpah, and set snares upon Mount Tabor. (Ho 5:1) And such thrones there have been since, too many of them. Well saith the Psalmist, *Shall they have fellowship with thee?* No, no; God keeps his distance from them. Those that we call "stinking dunghills" are not so offensive to God as thrones of iniquity are, which shall neither be approved by him nor secured. Stay a while, Christians, and "in patience possess your souls; "for the world shall see that in due time he will overturn them all. *Samuel Slater, in "The Morning Exercises."*

**Verse 20.** *Which frameth mischief by a law, i.e., frame wicked laws, or under the colour of law and justice, oppress the innocent.* *Summum jus, summa injuria*, the higher the law, the greater the injustice, and injuries may and are too often done *ex prava interpretatione legis*, from a wicked interpretation of the law. With those who do injustice with the sword of justice, God will have no fellowship. *William Nicholson.*

**Verse 23.** *He shall bring upon them their own iniquity,* etc. It is an ill work wicked ones are about, they make fetters for their own feet, and build houses for to fall upon their own heads; so mischievous is the nature of sin that it damnifies and destroys the parents of it. *William Greenhill.*

---

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

### Verse 1.

1. Retribution the prerogative of God alone.
2. Under what aspects may we desire his rendering it.
3. How, and when he will surely fulfil this righteous wish.

### Verse 1.

1. Vengeance belongs to God and not to man.
2. Vengeance is better in the hands of God than of man. *Let us fall into the hands of God,* etc. *G. R.*

**Verse 2.** The peculiar provocation of the sin of pride and its kindred vices. Its influence on the proud, on their fellow men, and upon God himself.

**Verse 3.**

1. The sweet potion of the wicked—present triumph.
2. The gall which embitters it—it is but temporary, and is prayed against. *C. A. Davis.*

**Verses 5-10.**

1. High handed oppression by the wicked (Ps 94:5-6).
2. Hard hearted indifference to Divine supervision (Ps 94:7).
3. Clear headed demonstration of the Divine cognisance and vengeance (Ps 94:8-10). *C.A.D.*

**Verses 6-9.**

1. Conspicuous sin.
2. Absurd supposition.
3. Overwhelming argument.

**Verse 8.** The duration of the reign of evil.

1. Till it has filled up its measure of guilt.
2. Till it has proved its own folly.
3. Till it has developed the graces and prayers of saints.
4. Till it has emptied man of all human trust and driven us to look to the Lord alone, his Spirit, and his advent.

**Verse 8.** Practical Atheists.

1. Truly described.
2. Wisely counselled. *C.A.D.*

**Verses 8-11.**

1. The Exhortation (Ps 94:8).
2. The Expostulation (Ps 94:9-10).
3. The Affirmation (Ps 94:11). *G. R.*

**Verses 9-10.** True Rationalism; or, Reason's Revelation of God. *U.A.D.*

**Verse 11.**

1. With respect to the present world, consider what multitudes of thoughts are employed in vain.

(a) In seeking satisfaction where it is not to be found.

(b) In poring on events which cannot be recalled.

(c) In anticipating evils which never befall us.

(d) To these may be added the valuing ourselves on things of little or no account.

(e) In laying plans which must be disconcerted.

2. Let us see what are man's thoughts with regard to religion, and the concerns of a future life.

(a) What are the thoughts of the heathen world about religion?

(b) What are all the thoughts of the Christian world, where God's thoughts are neglected?

(c) What is all that practical atheism which induces multitudes to act as if there were no God?

(d) What are all the unbelieving, self flattering imaginations of wicked men, as though God were not in earnest in his declarations and threatenings?

(e) What are the conceits of the self righteous, by which they buoy up their minds with vain hopes, and refuse to submit to the righteousness of God?

*Andrew Fuller.*

**Verse 11.** God's intimate knowledge of man. A startling truth. A humiliating truth.

**Verses 12-13.** Christ's College. The Master, the Book, the Rod, the blessed Scholar, and the result of his education.

**Verses 12-13.**

1. The Blessed. (a) Divinely taught. (b) Divinely chastised.
2. The Blessing. (a) Rest in Affliction. (b) Rest from Affliction. *G. R.*

**Verse 14.**

1. Fear implied. That God will cast off, forsake, etc.
2. Fear denied. God will not cast off—will not forsake. *G. R.*

**Verse 14.**

1. Display his bright doctrine on a dark background. What if the converse were true? Considerations that might lead us to apprehend it true.
2. Joyfully regard the glowing truth itself. The doctrine declared. The reasons hinted (His people. His inheritance). The confidence expressed. *C.A.D.*

**Verse 15.**

1. Judgment suspended.
2. Judgment returned.
3. Judgment acknowledged. *G. R.*

**Verse 16.**

1. The question asked by the church of her champions.
2. The answer of every true hearted man.
3. The yet more encouraging answer of her Lord.

**Verses 16-17.** The sole source of succour.

1. A loud cry for help. As from a champion, or advocate.
2. Earth's answer. A dead silence, disturbed only by echo (Ps 94:17).
3. The succouring voice that breaks the silence—the Lord's (Ps 94:17). *C.A.D.*

**Verse 18.** The blessedness of the confession of weakness.

1. The confession.
2. The succour.
3. The time.
4. The acknowledgment. *C.A.D.*

**Verse 19.**

1. In the multitude of my unbelieving thoughts thy comforts delight my soul.
2. In the multitude of my penitential thoughts thy comforts, etc.
3. In the multitude of my worldly thoughts, etc.
4. In the multitude of my family or social thoughts, etc.
5. Of my desponding thoughts, etc.
6. Of my prospective thoughts, etc.

Or

1. There is no consolation for man in himself.
2. There is no consolation for him in other creatures.
3. His only consolation is in God. *G.R.*

**Verse 19.**

1. The soul jostled in the thoroughfare of anxious thoughts.
2. The delectable company nevertheless enjoyed. *C.A.D.*

**Verse 20.** "It is the law of the land, you know, "—the limit of this authority both in temporal and spiritual matters.

**Verse 20.**

1. God can have no fellowship with the wicked.
2. The wicked can have no fellowship with God. *G. R.*

**Verse 20.** Divine politics.

1. There are thrones erected in opposition to the throne of God, "thrones of iniquity, "e.g. which trespass on civil liberty, which infringe religious equality, which derive revenue from evil commerce, etc.
2. Such thrones, whatever their pretensions, are excluded from divine fellowship; between them and God a great gulf is fixed. *C.A.D.*

### **Verses 21-22.**

1. The Danger of the righteous (Ps 94:21).
2. Their Defence (Ps 94:22). *G. R.*

### **Verse 21-23.**

1. Sentence passed in the court of injustice (Ps 94:21).
2. An element in the case not considered by the court (Ps 94:22).
3. The sentence consequently alighting on the right heads (Ps 94:23). (This passage, under a very thin veil, exhibits Christ. Mt 27:1) *C.A.D.*

### **Verse 23.**

1. None may punish God's enemies but himself. "He shall bring, "etc.
2. None need punish them but himself. (a) It will be complete,— "shall cut them off." (b) Certain. "Yea, "etc. *G.R.*

---

## **WORK UPON THE NINETY-FOURTH PSALM**

In the Works of Cardinal Sadoletto (1477-1547), pp. 895-972, there is an Exposition of this Psalm, 8 volume edition, Anno Domini 1607.

# Psalm 95

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

---

**TITLE.** This Psalm has no title, and all we know of its authorship is that Paul quotes it as "*in David.*" (Heb 4:7.) It is true that this may merely signify that it is to be found in the collection known as David's Psalms; but if such were the Apostle's meaning it would have been more natural for him to have written, "saying in the Psalms; "we therefore incline to the belief that David was the actual author of this poem. It is in its original a truly Hebrew song, directed both in its exhortation and warning to the Jewish people, but we have the warrant of the Holy Spirit in the epistle to the Hebrews for using its appeals and entreaties when pleading with Gentile believers. It is a psalm of invitation to worship. It has about it a ring like that of church bells, and like the bells it sounds both merrily and solemnly, at first ringing out a lively peal, and then dropping into a funeral knell as if tolling at the funeral of the generation which perished in the wilderness. We will call it THE PSALM OF THE PROVOCATION.

**DIVISION.** It would be correct as to the sense to divide this psalm into an invitation and a warning so as to commence the second part with the last clause of Ps 95:7: but upon the whole it may be more convenient to regard Ps 95:6 as "the beating heart of the psalm, "as Hengstenberg calls it, and make the division at the end of Ps 95:5. Thus it will form (1) an invitation with reasons, and (2) an invitation with warnings.

---

## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *O come, let us sing unto the LORD.* Other nations sing unto their gods, let us sing unto Jehovah. We love him, we admire him, we reverence him, let us express our feelings with the choicest sounds, using our noblest faculty for its noblest end. It is well thus to urge others to magnify the Lord, but we must be careful to set a worthy example ourselves, so that we may be able not only to cry "Come", but also to add "*let us sing*", because we are singing ourselves. It is to be feared that very much even of religious singing is not unto the Lord but unto the ear of the congregation: above all things we must in our service of song take care that all we offer is with the heart's sincerest and most fervent intent directed toward the Lord himself. Let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. With holy enthusiasm let us sing, making a sound which shall indicate our earnestness; with abounding joy let us lift up our voices, actuated by that happy and peaceful spirit which trustful love is sure to foster. As the children of Israel sang for joy when the smitten rock poured forth its cooling streams, so let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation. The author of this song had in his mind's eye the rock, the tabernacle, the Red Sea, and the mountains of Sinai, and he alludes to them all in this first part of his hymn. God is our abiding, immutable, and

mighty rock, and in him we find deliverance and safety, therefore it becomes us to praise him with heart and with voice from day to day; and especially should we delight to do this when we assemble as his people for public worship.

"Come let us to the Lord sing out  
With trumpet voice and choral shout."

it becomes us to praise him with heart and with voice from day to day; and especially should we delight to do this when we assemble as his people for public worship.

"Come let us to the Lord sing out  
With trumpet voice and choral shout."

it becomes us to praise him with heart and with voice from day to day; and especially should we delight to do this when we assemble as his people for public worship.

"Come let us to the Lord sing out  
With trumpet voice and choral shout."

**Verse 2.** *Let us come before his presence with thanksgiving.* Here is probably a reference to the peculiar presence of God in the Holy of Holies above the mercy seat, and also to the glory which shone forth out of the cloud which rested above the tabernacle. Everywhere God is present, but there is a peculiar presence of grace and glory into which men should never come without the profoundest reverence. We may make bold to come before the immediate presence of the Lord—for the voice of the Holy Ghost in this psalm invites us, and when we do draw near to him we should remember his great goodness to us and cheerfully confess it. Our worship should have reference to the past as well as to the future; if we do not bless the Lord for what we have already received, how can we reasonably look for more. We are permitted to bring our petitions, and therefore we are in honour bound to bring our thanksgivings. And make a joyful noise unto him with psalms. We should shout as exultingly as those do who triumph in war, and as solemnly as those whose utterance is a psalm. It is not always easy to unite enthusiasm with reverence, and it is a frequent fault to destroy one of these qualities while straining after the other. The perfection of singing is that which unites joy with gravity, exultation with humility, fervency with sobriety. The invitation given in the first verse (Ps 95:1) is thus repeated in the second (Ps 95:2) with the addition of directions, which indicate more fully the intent of



the writer. One can imagine David in earnest tones persuading his people to go up with him to the worship of Jehovah with sound of harp and hymn, and holy delight. The happiness of his exhortation is noteworthy, the noise is to be *joyful*; this quality he insists upon twice. It is to be feared that this is too much overlooked in ordinary services, people are so impressed with the idea that they ought to be serious that they put on the aspect of misery, and quite forget that joy is as much a characteristic of true worship as solemnity itself.

**Verse 3.** *For the LORD is a great God, and a great King above all gods.* No doubt the surrounding nations imagined Jehovah to be a merely local deity, the god of a small nation, and therefore one of the inferior deities; the psalmist utterly repudiates such an idea. Idolaters tolerated gods many and lords many, giving to each a certain measure of respect; the monotheism of the Jews was not content with this concession, it rightly claimed for Jehovah the chief place, and the supreme power. He is great, for he is all in all; he is a great King above all other powers and dignitaries, whether angels or princes, for they owe their existence to him; as for the idol gods, they are not worthy to be mentioned. This verse and the following supply some of the reasons for worship, drawn from the being, greatness, and sovereign dominion of the Lord.

**Verse 4.** *In his hand are the deep places of the earth.* He is the God of the valleys and the hills, the caverns, and the peaks. Far down where the miners sink their shafts, deeper yet where lie the secret oceans by which springs are fed, and deepest of all in the unknown abyss where rage and flame the huge central fires of earth, there Jehovah's power is felt, and all things are under the dominion of his hand. As princes hold the mimic globe in their hands, so does the Lord in very deed hold the earth. When Israel drank of the crystal fount which welled up from the great deep, below the smitten rock, the people knew that in the Lord's hands were the deep places of the earth. The strength of the hills is his also. When Sinai was altogether on a smoke the tribes learned that Jehovah was God of the hills as well as of the valleys. Everywhere and at all times is this true; the Lord rules upon the high places of the earth in lonely majesty. The vast foundations, the gigantic spurs, the incalculable masses, the untrodden heights of the mountains are all the Lord's. These are his fastnesses and treasure houses, where he stores the tempest and the rain; whence also he pours the ice torrents and looses the avalanches. The granite peaks and adamantine aiguilles are his, and his the precipices and the beetling crags. Strength is the main thought which strikes the mind when gazing on those vast ramparts of cliff which front the raging sea, or peer into the azure sky, piercing the clouds, but it is to the devout

mind the strength of God; hints of Omnipotence are given by those stern rocks which brave the fury of the elements, and like walls of brass defy the assaults of nature in her wildest rage.

**Verse 5.** *The sea is his.* This was seen to be true at the Red Sea when the waters saw their God, and obediently stood aside to open a pathway for his people. It was not Edom's sea though it was red, nor Egypt's sea though it washed her shores. The Lord on high reigned supreme over the flood, as King far ever and ever. So is it with the broad ocean, whether known as Atlantic or Pacific, Mediterranean or Arctic; no man can map it out and say "It is mine"; the illimitable acreage of waters knows no other lord but God alone. Jehovah rules the waves. Far down in vast abysses, where no eye of man has gazed, or foot of diver has descended, he is sole proprietor; every rolling billow and foaming wave owns him for monarch; Neptune is but a phantom, the Lord is God of ocean. And he made it. Hence his right and sovereignty. He scooped the unfathomed channel and poured forth the overflowing flood; seas were not fashioned by chance, nor their shores marked out by the imaginary finger of fate; God made the main, and every creek, and bay, and current, and far sounding tide owns the great Maker's hand. All hail, Creator and Controller of the sea, let those who fly in the swift ships across the wonder realm of waters worship thee alone! And his hands formed the dry land. Whether fertile field or sandy waste, he made all that men called *terra firma*, lifting it from the floods and fencing it from the overflowing waters. "The earth is the Lord's, and the fulness thereof." He bade the isles upraise their heads, he levelled the vast plains, upreared the table lands, cast up the undulating hills, and piled the massive Alps. As the potter moulds his clay, so did Jehovah with his hands fashion the habitable parts of the earth. Come ye, then, who dwell on this fair world, and worship him who is conspicuous wherever ye tread! Count it all as the floor of a temple where the footprints of the present Deity are visible before your eyes if ye do but care to see. The argument is overpowering if the heart be right; the command to adore is alike the inference of reason and the impulse of faith.

**Verse 6.** Here the exhortation to worship is renewed and backed with a motive which, to Israel of old and to Christians now, is especially powerful; for both the Israel after the flesh and the Israel of faith may be described as the people of his pasture, and by both he is called "our God." O come, let us worship and bow down. The adoration is to be humble. The "joyful noise" is to be accompanied with lowliest reverence. We are to worship in such style that the bowing down shall indicate that we count ourselves to be as nothing

in the presence of the all glorious Lord. Let us kneel before the Lord our maker. As suppliants must we come; joyful, but not presumptuous; familiar as children before a father, yet reverential as creatures before their maker. Posture is not everything, yet is it something; prayer is heard when knees cannot bend, but it is seemly that an adoring heart should show its awe by prostrating the body, and bending the knee.

**Verse 7.** *For he is our God.* Here is the master reason for worship. Jehovah has entered into covenant with us, and from all the world beside has chosen us to be his own elect. If others refuse him homage, we at least will render it cheerfully. He is ours, and our God; ours, therefore will we love him; our God, therefore will we worship him. Happy is that man who can sincerely believe that this sentence is true in reference to himself. And we are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand. As he belongs to us, so do we belong to him. "My Beloved is mine, and I am his." And we are his as the people whom he daily feeds and protects. Our pastures are not ours, but his; we draw all our supplies from his stores. We are his, even as sheep belong to the shepherd, and his hand is our rule, our guidance, our government, our succour, our source of supply. Israel was led through the desert, and we are led through this life by "that great Shepherd of the sheep." The hand which cleft the sea and brought water from the rock is still with us, working equal wonders. Can we refuse to "worship and bow down" when we clearly see that "this God is our God for ever and ever, and will be our guide, even unto death"? But what is this warning which follows? Alas, it was sorrowfully needed by the Lord's ancient people, and is not one whit the less required by ourselves. The favoured nation grew deaf to their Lord's command, and proved not to be truly his sheep, of whom it is written, "My sheep hear my voice": will this turn out *to be our character also*? God forbid. To day if ye will hear his voice. Dreadful "if." Many would not hear, they put off the claims of love, and provoked their God." Today, "in the hour of grace, in the day of mercy, we are tried as to whether we have an ear for the voice of our Creator. Nothing is said of tomorrow, "he limiteth a certain day, "he presses for immediate attention, for our own sakes he asks instantaneous obedience. Shall we yield it? The Holy Ghost saith "Today, "will we grieve him by delay?

**Verse 8.** *Harden not your heart.* If ye will hear, learn to fear also. The sea and the land obey him, do not prove more obstinate than they!

"Yield to his love who round you now  
The bands of a man would east."

We cannot soften our hearts, but we can harden them, and the consequences will be fatal. Today is too good a day to be profaned by the hardening of our hearts against our own mercies. While mercy reigns let not obduracy rebel. "As in the provocations, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness" (or, "like Meribah, like the day of Massah in the wilderness"). Be not wilfully, wantonly, repeatedly, obstinately rebellious. Let the example of that unhappy generation serve as a beacon to you; do not repeat the offences which have already more than enough provoked the Lord. God remembers men's sins, and the more memorably so when they are committed by a favoured people, against frequent warnings, in defiance of terrible judgments, and in the midst of superlative mercies; such sins write their record in marble. Reader, this verse is for you, for you even if you can say, "He is our God, and we are the people of his pasture." Do not seek to turn aside the edge of the warning; thou hast good need of it, give good heed to it.

**Verse 9.** *When your fathers tempted me.* As far as they could do so they tempted God to change his usual way, and to do their sinful bidding, and though he cannot be tempted of evil, and will never yield to wicked requests, yet their intent was the same, and their guilt was none the less. God's way is perfect, and when we would have him alter it to please us, we are guilty of tempting him; and the fact that we do so in vain, while it magnifies the Lord's holiness, by no means excuses our guilt. We are in most danger of tilling sin in times of need, for then it is that we are apt to fall into unbelief, and to demand a change in those arrangements of providence which are the transcript of perfect holiness and infinite wisdom. Not to acquiesce in the will of God is virtually to tempt him to alter his plans to suit our imperfect views of how the universe should be governed. Proved me. They put the Lord to needless tests, demanding new miracles, fresh interpositions, and renewed tokens of his presence. Do not we also peevishly require frequent signs of the Lord's love other than those which every hour supplies? Are we not prone to demand specialities, with the alternative secretly offered in our hearts, that if they do not come at our bidding we will disbelieve? True, the Lord is very condescending, and frequently grants us marvellous evidences of his power, but we ought not to require them. Steady faith is due to one who is so constantly kind. After so many proofs of his love, we are ungrateful to wish to prove him again, unless it be in those ways of his own appointing, in which he has said, "Prove me now." If we were for ever testing the love of our wife or husband, and remained unconvinced after years of faithfulness, we should wear out the utmost human patience. Friendship only flourishes in the atmosphere of confidence, suspicion is deadly to it: shall the Lord God, true and immutable, be day after day

suspected by his own people? Will not this provoke him to anger? And saw my work. They tested him again and again, through out forty years, though each time his work was conclusive evidence of his faithfulness. Nothing could convince them for long.

"They saw his wonders wrought,  
And then his praise they sung;  
But soon his works of power forgot,  
And murmured with their tongue."

"Now they believe his word,  
While rocks with rivers flow;  
Now with their lusts provoke the Lord,  
And he reduced them low."

Fickleness is bound up in the heart of man, unbelief is our besetting sin; we must for ever be seeing, or we waver in our believing. This is no mean offence, and will bring with it no small punishment.

**Verse 10.** *Forty years long was I grieved with this generation.* The impression upon the divine mind is most vivid; he sees them before him now, and calls them "this generation." He does not leave his prophets to upbraid the sin, but himself utters the complaint and declares that he was grieved, nauseated, and disgusted. It is no small thing which can grieve our long suffering God to the extent which the Hebrew word here indicates, and if we reflect a moment we shall see the abundant provocation given; for no one who values his veracity can endure to be suspected, mistrusted, and belied, when there is no ground for it, but on the contrary the most overwhelming reason for confidence. To such base treatment was the tender Shepherd of Israel exposed, not for a day or a month, but for forty years at a stretch, and that not by here and there an unbeliever, but by a whole nation, in which only two men were found so thoroughly believing as to be exempted from the doom which at last was pronounced upon all the rest. Which shall we most wonder at, the cruel insolence of man, or the tender patience of the Lord? Which shall leave the deepest impression on our minds, the sin or the punishment? unbelief, or the barring of the gates of Jehovah's rest against the unbelievers? And said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have *not known my ways*. Their heart was obstinately and constantly at fault; it was not their head which erred, but their very heart was perverse: love, which appealed to their affections, could not convert them. The heart is the main spring of the man, and if it be not in order, the entire nature is thrown out of gear. If sin were only skin deep, it might be a

slight matter; but since it has defiled the soul, the case is bad indeed. Taught as they were by Jehovah himself in lessons illustrated by miracles, which came to them daily in the manna from heaven, and the water from the flinty rock, they ought to have learned something, and it was a foul shame that they remained obstinately ignorant, and would not know the ways of God. Wanderers in body, they were also wanderers in heart, and the plain providential goodness of their God remained to their blinded minds as great a maze as those twisting paths by which he led them through the wilderness. Are we better than they? Are we not quite as apt to misinterpret the dealings of the Lord? Have we suffered and enjoyed so many things in vain? With many it is even so. Forty years of providential wisdom, yea, and even a longer period of experience, have failed to teach them serenity of assurance, and firmness of reliance. There is ground for much searching of heart concerning this. Many treat unbelief as a minor fault, they even regard it rather as an infirmity than a crime, but the Lord thinketh not so. Faith is Jehovah's due, especially from those who claim to be the people of his pasture, and yet more emphatically from those whose long life has been crowded with evidences of his goodness: unbelief insults one of the dearest attributes of Deity, it does so needlessly and without the slightest ground and in defiance of all sufficient arguments, weighty with the eloquence of love. Let us in reading this psalm examine ourselves, and lay these things to heart.

**Verse 11.** *Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.* There can be no rest to an unbelieving heart. If manna and miracles could not satisfy Israel, neither would they have been content with the land which flowed with milk and honey. Canaan was to be the typical resting place of God, where his ark should abide, and the ordinances of religion should be established; the Lord had for forty years borne with the ill manners of the generation which came out of Egypt, and it was but right that he should resolve to have no more of them. Was it not enough that they had revolted all along that marvellous wilderness march? Should they be allowed to make new Messahs and Meribahs in the Promised Land itself? Jehovah would not have it so. He not only said but swore that into his rest they should not come, and that oath excluded every one of them; their carcasses fell in the wilderness. Solemn warning this to all who leave the way of faith for paths of petulant murmuring and mistrust. The rebels of old could not enter in because of unbelief, "let us therefore fear, lest, a promise being left us of entering into his rest, any of us should even seem to come short of it." One blessed inference from this psalm must not be forgotten. It is clear that there is a rest of God, and that some must enter into it: but "they to whom it was first preached entered not in because of unbelief, there remaineth therefore a

rest to the people of God." The unbelievers could not enter, but "we which have believed do enter into rest." Let us enjoy it, and praise the Lord for it for ever. Ours is the true Sabbath rest, it is ours to rest from our own works as God did from his. While we do so, let us "come into his presence with thanksgiving, and make a joyful noise unto him with psalms."

---

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Whole Psalm.** These six psalms, 95 to 100, form, if I mistake not, one entire prophetic poem, cited by St. Paul in the Epistle to the Hebrews, under the title of the Introduction of the First Born into the world. Each Psalm has its proper subject, which is some particular branch of the general argument, the establishment of the Messiah's Kingdom. The 95th Psalm asserts Jehovah's Godhead, and his power over all nature, and exhorts his people to serve him. In Psalm 96th all nations are exhorted to join in his service, because he cometh to judge all mankind, Jew and Gentile. In the 97th Psalm, Jehovah reigns over all the world, the idols are deserted, the Just One is glorified. In the 98th Psalm, Jehovah hath done wonders, and wrought deliverance for himself: he hath remembered his mercy towards the house of Israel; he comes to judge the whole world. In the 99th, Jehovah, seated between the cherubim in Zion, the visible Church, reigns over all the world, to be praised for the justice of his government. In the 100th Psalm, all the world is called upon to praise Jehovah the Creator, whose mercy and truth are everlasting.—*Samuel Horsley.*

**Whole Psalm.** This Psalm is twice quoted in the Epistle to the Hebrews, as a warning to the Jewish Christians at Jerusalem, in the writer's day, that they should not falter in the faith, and despise God's promises, as their forefathers had done in the wilderness, lest they should fail of entering into his rest; see He 3:7, where verse 7 of this Psalm is introduced with the words, "As the Holy Ghost saith, Today if ye will hear his voice," and see He 4:7, where it is said, "Again, he limiteth a certain day, saying in David, Today." It has by some been inferred from these words that the writer of the Epistle to the Hebrews ascribes this Psalm to David. It may be so. But it seems not improbable that the words "in David" mean simply "the Book of Psalms," the whole being named from the greater part; and that if he had meant that David wrote the Psalm, he would have written, "David spake," or, "the Holy Ghost spake by David," and not as it is written, "as it is said in David."—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

**Verse 1.** O come, let us sing unto the Lord, etc. The first verse of the Psalm begins the invitation unto praise and exultation. It is a song of three parts, and every part (like Jacob's part of the sheep) brings forth twins; each a double string, as it were, in the music of this praise, finely twisted of two parts into a kind of discordant concord, falling into a musical close through a differing yet reconciled diapason. The first couple in this song of praise are multitude and unity, concourse and concord: "*O come*", there's multitude and concourse; "let us," there's unity and concord. The second twisted pair, are tongue and heart, "let us sing," there's the voice and sound; and "heartily rejoice," there's the heart and soul. The third and last intertwined string, or part in the musick, is might and mercy, (rock or) strength and salvation; God's strength and our salvation: "to the strength (or rock) of our salvation."—*Charles Herle* (1598-1659) in a "*Sermon before the House of Lords*", entitled, "*David's Song of Three Parts*".

**Verse 1.** *Come.* The word "come" contains an exhortation, exciting them to join heart and lips in praising God; just as the word is used in Genesis, where the people, exciting and encouraging each other, say, "Come, let us make bricks;" and "Come, let us make a city and a town;" and, in the same chapter, the Lord says, "Come, let us go down, and there confound their tongue."—*Bellarmino*.

**Verse 1.** If it be so that one "come, let us" goes further than twenty times go and do, how careful should such be whom God hath raised to eminence of place that their examples be Jacob's ladders to help men to heaven, not Jeroboam's stumbling blocks to lie in their way, and make Israel to sin.—*Charles Herle*.

**Verse 1.** There is a silent hint here at that human listlessness and distraction of cares whereby we are more prompt to run after other things than to devote ourselves seriously to the becoming praises and service of God. Our foot has a greater proclivity to *depart* to the field, the oxen, and the new wife, than to come to the sacred courts, Lu 14:18, *seq.* See Isa 2:3, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord."—*Martin Geier*.

**Verse 1.** *Joyful noise.* The verb *eyrh*, signifies to make a loud sound of any sort, either with the voice or with instruments. In the psalms, it generally refers to the mingled din of voices and various instruments, in the Temple service. This wide sense of the word cannot be expressed otherwise in the English language than by a periphrasis.—*Samuel Horsley*.



**Verse 1.** *The rock of our salvation.* Jesus is the Rock of ages, in which is opened a fountain for sin and uncleanness; the Rock which attends the church in the wilderness, pouring forth the water of life, for her use and comfort; the Rock which is our fortress against every enemy, shadowing and refreshing a weary land.—*George Horne.*

**Verse 2.** *Let us come before his presence.* Hebrew, *prevent his face*, be there with the first. "*Let us go speedily ...I will go also*", Zec 8:21. Let praise wait for God in Sion, Ps 65:1.—*John Trapp.*

**Verse 2.** *(second clause).* *Let us chant aloud to him the measured lay.* twrmz, I take to be songs, in measured verse, adjusted to the bars of a chaunt.—*S. Horsley.*

**Verse 3.** He that hath a mind to praise God, shall not want matter of praise, as they who come before princes do, who for want of true grounds of praise in them, do give them flattering words; *for the Lord is a great God*, for power and preeminence, for strength and continuance.—*David Dickson.*

**Verse 3.** The Supreme Being has *three* names here: *la El*, *hwhy Jehovah*, *Myhla Elohim*, and we should apply none of them to *false gods*. The *first* implies his *strength*; the *second*, his *being* and *essence*; the *third*, his *covenant relation* to mankind. In public worship these are the views we should entertain of the Divine Being.—*Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 3.** *Above all gods.* When He is called a great *God* and *King* above *all gods*, we may justly imagine that the reference is to the angels who are wont to be introduced absolutely under this name, and to the supreme *Judges* in the land, who also wear this title, as we have it in Ps 82:1-8.—*Venema.*

**Verse 4.** *In his hand.* The dominion of God is founded upon his preservation of things. "The Lord is a great King above all gods." Why?

In his hand are the deep places of the earth. While his hand holds, his hand hath a dominion over them. He that holds a stone in the air exerciseth a dominion over its natural inclination in hindering it from falling. The creature depends wholly upon God in its preservation; as soon as that divine hand which sustains everything were withdrawn, a languishment and swooning would be the next turn in the creature. He is called Lord, *Adonai*, in regard of his sustentation of all things by his continual influx, the word coming of Nwa, which signifies a basis or pillar that supports a building.

God is the Lord of all, as he is the sustainer of all by his power, as well as the Creator of all by his word.—*Stephen Charnock*.

**Verse 4.**

"In whose hand are the recesses of the earth  
And the treasures of the mountains are his."  
—*Thomas J. Conant's Translation*.

**Verse 4.** *In his hand are the deep places of the earth.* This affords consolation to those; who for the glory of the divine name are cast into prisons and subterraneous caves; because they know, that even there it is not possible to be the least separated from the presence of Christ. Wherefore He preserved Joseph when hurled by his brethren into the old pit, and when thrust by his shameless mistress into prison; Jeremiah also when sent down into the dungeon; Daniel among the lions, and his companions in the furnace. So all who cleave to Him with a firm faith, he wonderfully keeps and delivers to this day.—*Solomon Gesner, 1559-1605*.

**Verse 4.** *In his hand are the deep places of the earth.* As an illustration of the working and presence of the Lord in the mines amid the bowels of the earth we have selected the following: "The natural disposition of coal in detached portions", says the author of an excellent article in the Edinburgh Review, "is not simply a phenomenon of geology, but it also bears upon natural considerations. It is remarkable that this natural disposition is that which renders the fuel most accessible and most easily mined. Were the coal situated at its normal geological depth, that is, supposing the strata to be all horizontal and undisturbed or upheaved, it would be far below human reach. Were it deposited continuously in one even superficial layer, it would have been too readily, and therefore too quickly, mined, and therefore all the superior qualities would be wrought out, and only the inferior left; but as it now lies it is broken up by geological disturbances into separate portions, each defined and limited in area, each sufficiently accessible to bring it within man's reach and labour, each manageable by mechanical arrangements, and each capable of gradual excavation without being subject to sudden exhaustion. Selfish plundering is partly prevented by natural barriers, and we are warned against reckless waste by the comparative thinness of coal seams, as well as by the ever augmenting difficulty of working them at increased depths. By the separation of seams one from another, and by varied intervals of waste sandstones and shales, such a measured rate of winning is necessitated as precludes us from entirely robbing posterity of the most valuable mineral fuel, while the fuel itself is

preserved from those extended fractures and crumblings and falls, which would certainly be the consequence of largely mining the best bituminous coal, were it aggregated into one vast mass. In fact, by an evident exercise of forethought and benevolence in the Great Author of all our blessings, our invaluable fuel has been stored up for us in deposits the most compendious, the most accessible, yet the least exhaustible, and has been locally distributed into the most convenient situations. Our coal fields are so many *Bituminous Banks*, in which there is abundance for an adequate currency, but against any sudden run upon them nature has interposed numerous checks; whole reserves of the precious fuel are always locked up in the bank cellar under the invincible protection of ponderous stone beds. It is a striking fact, that in this nineteenth century, after so long an inhabitation of the earth by man, if we take the quantities in the broad view of the whole known coal fields, so little coal has been excavated, and that there remains an abundance for a very remote posterity, even though our own best coal fields may be then worked out."

But it is not only in these inexhaustible supplies of mineral fuel that we find proofs of divine foresight, all the other treasures of the earth rind equally convince us of the intimate harmony between its structure and the wants of man. Composed of a wonderful variety of earths and ores, it contains an inexhaustible abundance of all the substances he requires for the attainment of a higher grade of civilisation. It is for his use that iron, copper, lead, silver, tin, marble, gypsum, sulphur, rock salt, and a variety of other minerals and metals, have been deposited in the veins and crevices, or in the mines and quarries, of the subterranean world. It is for his benefit that, from the decomposition of the solid rocks results that mixture of earths and alkalies, of marl, lime, sand, or chalk, which is most favourable to agriculture. It is for him, finally, that, filtering through the entrails of the earth, and dissolving salutary substances on their way, the thermal springs gush forth laden with treasures more inestimable than those the miner toils for. Supposing man had never been destined to live, we well may ask wily all those gifts of nature useless to all living beings but to him why those vast coal fields, those beds of iron ore, those deposits of sulphur, those hygeian fountains, should ever have been created? Without him there is no design, no purpose, in their existence; with him they are wonderful sources of health or necessary instruments of civilisation and improvement. Thus the geological revolutions of the earth rind harmoniously point to man as to its future lord; thus, in the life of our planet and that of its inhabitants, we everywhere find proofs of a gigantic unity of plan, embracing unnumbered ages in its development and progress.—*G. Hartwig*, in "*The Harmonies of Nature*", 1866.

**Verse 4.** *The deep places of the earth*, penetralia terrae, which are opposed to the heights of the hills, and plainly mean the deepest and most retired parts of the terraqueous globe, which are explorable by the eye of God, and by his only.—*Richard Mant.*

**Verse 4.** *The strength of the hills.* The word translated "strength" is plural in Hebrew, and seems properly to mean fatiguing exertions, from which some derive the idea of strength, others that of extreme height, which can only be reached by exhausting effort.—*J.A. Alexander.*

**Verse 4.** *The strength of the hills is his also.* The reference may be to the wealth of the hills, obtained only by labour *Gesenius*, corresponding to the former—"the deep places of the earth", explained as referring to the mines *Mendelssohn*. Go where man may, with all his toil and searching in the heights or in the depths of the earth, he cannot find a place beyond the range of God's dominion.—*A.R. Faussett.*

**Verse 4.** *Hills, The Sea, the dry land.* The relation of areas of land to areas of water exercises a great and essential influence on the distribution of heat, variations of atmospheric pressure, directions of the winds, and that condition of the air with respect to moisture, which is so necessary for the health of vegetation. Nearly three fourths of the earth's surface is covered with water, but neither the exact height of the atmosphere nor the depth of the ocean are fully determined. Still we know that with every addition to or subtraction from the present bulk of the waters of the ocean, the consequent variation in the form and magnitude of the land would be such, that if the change was considerable, many of the existing harmonies of things would cease. Hence, the inference is, that the magnitude of the sea is one of the conditions to which the structure of all organised creatures is adapted, and on which indeed they depend for wellbeing. The proportions between land and water are exactly what the world as constituted requires; and the whole mass of earth, sea, and air, must have been balanced with the greatest nicety before even a crocus could stand erect. Or a snowdrop or a daffodil bend their heads to the ground. The proportions of land and sea are adjusted to their reciprocal functions. Nothing deduced from modern science is more certain than this.—*Edwin Sidney*, in "*Conversations on the Bible and Science.*"

**Verse 5.** *The sea is his.* When God himself makes an oration in defence of his sovereignty, Job 38:1 his chief arguments are drawn from creation: "The Lord is a great King above all gods. The sea is his, and he made it." And so the apostle in his sermon to the Athenians. As he "made the world, and all

things therein, "he is styled "Lord of heaven and earth, "Ac 17:24. His dominion also of property stands upon this basis: Ps 84:11, "The heavens are thine, the earth also is thine: as for the world and the fulness thereof, thou hast founded them." Upon this title of forming Israel as a creature, or rather as a church, he demands their services to him as their Sovereign. "O jacob and Israel, thou art my servant: I have formed thee; thou art my servant, O Israel, "Is 44:21. The sovereignty of God naturally ariseth from the relation of all things to himself as their entire creator, and their natural and inseparable dependence upon him in regard of their being and wellbeing.—*Stephen Charrwick.*

**Verse 5.** *He made it.*

The Earth was formed, but in the womb as yet  
Of waters, embryon immature involved,  
Appeared not: over all the face of Earth  
in ocean flowed, not idle; but, with warm  
Prolific humour softening all her globe,  
Fermented the great mother to conceive,  
Satiated with genial moisture; when God said,  
Be gathered now, ye waters under Heaven  
unto one place and let dry land appear.

Immediately the mountains huge appear  
Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave  
unto the clouds; their tops ascend the sky:  
So high as heaved the tumid hills, so low  
own sunk a hollow bottom broad and deep,  
Capacious bed of waters.—*John Milton.*

**Verse 6.** You hold it a good rule in worldly business, not to say to your servants, "O come", arise ye, go ye; but, Let us come, let us go, let us arise. Now shall the children of this world be wiser in their generation than the children of light? Do we commend this course in mundane affairs, and neglect it in religious offices? Assuredly, if our zeal were as great to religion, as our love is towards the world, masters would not come to church (as many do) without their servants, and servants without their masters; parents without their children, and children without their parents: husbands without their wives, and wives without their husbands; but all of us would call one to another, as Esau prophesied (chap. 2:3): "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob; and he will teach us

of his ways, and we will walk in his paths, "and as David here practised.—  
*John Boys.*

**Verse 6.** *Let us worship and bow down.* To fall upon the ground is a gesture of worship, not only when the worshipper mourns, but when the worshipper rejoiceth. It is said (Mt 2:10,11) that the wise men when they found Christ, "rejoiced with exceeding great joy", and presently, "they fell down, and worshipped him". Neither is this posture peculiar to worship in times or upon occasions of extraordinary joy and sorrow; for the ordinary invitation was, "O come, let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker".—*Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 6.** "Let us worship and bow down: let us kneel before the Lord our maker." Not before a crucifix, not before a rotten image, not before a fair picture of a foul saint: these are not our makers; we made them, they made not us. Our God, unto whom we must sing, in whom we must rejoice, before whom we must worship, is a great "King above all gods": he is no god of lead, no god of bread, no brazen god, no wooden god; we must not fall down and worship our Lady, but our Lord; not any martyr, but our Maker not any saint, but our Saviour: "O come, let us sing unto the Lord: let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation." Wherewith: with voice, "Let us sing; "with soul, "Let us heartily rejoice"; with hands and knees, "Let us worship and bow down: let us kneel"; with all that is within us, with all that is without us; he that made all, must be worshipped with all, especially when we "come before his presence".—*John Boys.*

**Verse 6.** *Bow down.* That is, so as to touch the floor with the forehead, while the worshipper is prostrate on his hands and knees. See 2Ch 7:3.—*John Fry,* 1842.

**Verse 6.** *Worship, bow down, kneel.* Kimchi distinguishes the several gestures expressed by the different words here used. The first we render, worship, signifies, according to him, the prostration of the whole body on the ground, with the hands and legs stretched out. The second a bowing of the head, with part of the body; and the third a be drag of the knees on the ground.—*Samuel Burder.*

**Verse 7.** *We are the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand.* See how elegantly he hath transposed the order of the words, and as it were not given its own attribute to each word; that we may understand these very same to be "*the sheep*", who are also "*the people*." He said not, the sheep of his pasture, and the people of his hand; which might be thought more

congruous, since the sheep belong to the pasture; but he said, "*the people of his pasture*": the people themselves are sheep. But again, since we have sheep which we buy, not which we create; and he had said above, "*Let us fall down before our Maker*"; it is rightly said, "*the sheep of his hand*." No man maketh for himself sheep, he may buy them, they may be given, he may find them, he may collect them, lastly he may steal them; make them he cannot. But our Lord made us; therefore "*the people of his pasture, and the sheep of his hand*", are the very sheep which he hath deigned by his grace to create unto himself.—*Augustine*.

**Verse 7.** *The sheep of his hand*, is a fit though figurative expression, the shepherd that feeds, and rules, and leads the sheep, doing it by his hand, which manages the rod and staff (Ps 23:4), by which they are administered. The Jewish Arabs read, the people of his feeding or, flock, and the sheep of his guidance.—*H. Hammond*.

**Verse 7.** *For we are his people whom he feeds in his pastures, and his sheep whom he leads as by his hand.* (French Version.) Here is a reason to constrain us to praise God; it is this,—that not only has he created us, but that he also directs us by special providence, as a shepherd governs his flock. Jesus Christ, Divine Shepherd of our souls, who not only feeds us in his pastures, but himself *leads us with his hand*, as intelligent sheep. Loving Shepherd, who feeds us not only from the pastures of Holy Wilt, but even with his own flesh. What subjects of ceaseless adoration for a soul penetrated by these great verities! What a fountain of tears of joy at the sight of such prodigious mercy!—*Quesnel*.

**Verse 7.** *Today if ye will hear his voice.* If we put off repentance another day, we have a day more to repent of, and a day less to repent in.—*W. Mason*.

**Verse 7.** He that hath promised pardon on our repentance hath not promised to preserve our lives till we repent.—*Francis Quarles*.

**Verse 7.** You cannot repent too soon, because you do not know how soon it may be too late.—*Thomas Fuller*.

**Verse 7.** *If ye will hear his voice.* Oh! what an *if* is here! what a reproach is here to those that hear him not! "My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me"; "but ye will not come to me that ye might have life." And yet there is mercy, there is still salvation, if ye will hear that voice. Israel heard it among the thunders of Sinai, "which voice they that heard it entreated that the word should not be spoken to them any more"; so terrible

was the sight and sound that even Moses said, "I exceedingly quake and fear": and yet they heard too the Lord's still voice of love in the noiseless manna that fell around their tents, and in the gushing waters of the rock that followed them through every march for forty years. Yet the record of Israel's ingratitude runs side by side with the record of God's mercies—"My people would not hearken to my voice, and Israel would none of me."—*Barton Bouchier*.

**Verse 7.** *If ye will hear his voice.* And yet, as S. Bernard tells us, there is no difficulty at all in hearing it; on the contrary, the difficulty is to stop our ears effectually against it, so clear is it in enunciation, so constant in appeal. Yet there are many who do not hear, from divers causes; because they are far off; because they are deaf; because they sleep; because they turn their heads aside; because they stop their ears; because they hurry away to avoid hearing; because they are dead; all of them topics of various forms and degrees of unbelief.—*Bernard and Hugo Cardinalis, in Neale and Littledale*.

**Verse 7.** *If ye will hear his voice.* These words seem to allude to the preceding words, in which we are represented as the sheep of God's pasture, and are to be considered as an affectionate call of our heavenly Shepherd to follow and obey him.—*From "Lectures on the Liturgy, from the Commentary of Peter Waldo", 1821.*

**Verses 7-8.** It will be as difficult, nay, more difficult, to come to Christ tomorrow, than it is today: therefore *today hear his voice, and harden not your heart*. Break the ice now, and by faith venture upon your present duty, wherever it lies; do what you are now called to. You will never know how easy the yoke of Christ is, till it is bound about your necks, nor how light his burden is, till you have taken it up. While you judge of holiness at a distance, as a thing without you and contrary to you, you will never like it. Come a little nearer to it; do but take it in, actually engage in it, and you will find religion carries meat in its mouth; it is of a reviving, nourishing, strengthening nature. It brings that along with it, that enables the soul cheerfully to go through with it.—*Thomas Cole (1627-1697) in the "Morning Exercises."*

**Verse 8.** *Harden not your hearts.* An old man, one day taking a child on his knee, entreated him to seek God *now*—to pray to him, and to love him; when the child, looking up at him, asked, "But why do not *you* seek God?" The old man, deeply affected, answered, "I would, child; but my heart is *hard*—my heart is *hard*."—*Arvine's Anecdotes*.



**Verse 8.** *Harden not your heart.*—*Heart* is ascribed to reasonable creatures, to signify sometimes the whole soul, and sometimes the several faculties appertaining to the soul.

1. It is frequently put for the whole soul, and that for the most part when it is set alone; as where it is said, "Serve the Lord with all your heart", 1Sa 7:20.

2. For that principal part of the soul which is called the mind or understanding. "I gave my heart to know wisdom", Ec 1:17. In this respect darkness and blindness are attributed to the heart, Eph 6:18, Ro 1:21.

3. For the will: as when heart and soul are joined together, the two essential faculties of the soul are meant, namely, the mind and will: *soul* put for the mind, heart for the will "Serve the Lord with all your heart and with all your soul", De 6:13.

4. For the memory. "I have hid thy word in my heart", saith the prophet, Ps 119:11. The memory is that faculty wherein matters are laid up and hid.

5. For the conscience. It is said that "David's heart smote him", that is, his conscience, 1Sa 24:5 2Sa 24:10. Thus is heart taken, 1Jo 3:20-21.

6. For the affections: as where it is said, "Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind", Mt 22:37. By the *mind* is meant the understanding faculty; by the *soul*, the will; by the *heart*, the affections.

Here in this text the heart is put for the whole soul, even for mind, will, and affections. For blindness of mind, stubbornness of will, and stupidity of affections go together.—*William Gouge*.

**Verse 8.** *In Massah—in Meribah.* Our translators say, *in the provocation, in the day of temptation*. But the places were denominated by names taken from the transactions that occurred in them; and the introduction of those names gives more liveliness to the allusion. See to the same effect Ps 81:7; where the Bible translation retains the proper name.—*Richard Mant*.

**Verse 8.** Let us not fail to notice, that while it is the flock who speak in Ps 95:1-7, it is *the Shepherd* who takes up their expostulating words, and urges them home himself at Ps 95:8, to the end, using the argument which by the Holy Ghost is addressed to us also in Heb 3:7-19. There is something very powerful in this expostulation, when connected with the circumstances that

give rise to it. In themselves, the burst of adoring love, and the full out pouring of affection in Ps 95:1-7 are irresistibly persuasive; but when (Ps 95:8) the voice of the Lord himself is heard (such a voice, using terms of vehement entreaty!) we cannot imagine expostulation carried further. Unbelief alone could resist this voice; blind, malignant unbelief alone could repel *The flock, and then the Shepherd, inviting men now to enter the fold.*—*Andrew A. Bonar.*

**Verse 9.** *Your fathers tempted me.* Though God cannot be tempted with evil he may justly be said to be tempted whenever men, by being dissatisfied with his dealings, virtually ask that he will alter those dealings, and proceed in a way more congenial to their feelings. If you reflect a little, you will hardly fail to perceive, that in a very strict sense, this and the like may be called tempting God. Suppose a man to be discontented with the appointments of providence, suppose him to murmur and to repine at what the Almighty allots him to do or to bear; is he not to be charged with the asking God to change his purposes? And what is this if it is not tempting God, and 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 the multiplied proofs of Divine lovingkindness, doubt or question whether or not God do indeed love him, of what is he guilty, if not of tempting the Lord, seeing that he solicits God to the giving additional evidence, as though there was a deficiency, and challenges him to a fresh demonstration 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 striving to extract from them new proofs, by asking them to evince their love more, though they may already have done as much as in wisdom and in justice they ought to do. And this is clearly tempting them, and that too in the ordinary sense of the term. In short, unbelief of every kind and every degree may be said to tempt God. For not to believe upon the evidence which he has seen fit to give, is to provoke him to give more, offering our possible assent if proof were increased as an inducement to him to go beyond what his wisdom has prescribed. And if in this, and the like sense, God may be tempted, what can be more truly said of the Israelites, than that they tempted God in Massah? ...We are perhaps not accustomed to think of unbelief or murmuring as nothing less than a tempting God, and therefore, we do not attach to what is so common, its just degree of heinousness. It is so natural to us to be discontented whenever God's dealings are not just what we like, to forget what has been done for us

as soon as our wishes seem thwarted, to be impatient and fretful under every new cross, that we are scarcely conscious of committing a sin, and much less one more than usually aggravated. Yet we cannot be dissatisfied with God's dealings, and not be virtually guilty of tempting God. It may seem a harsh definition of a slight and scarcely avoidable fault, but nevertheless it is a true definition. You cannot mistrust God, and not accuse him of 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 he might have appointed in respect of yourselves. So that your fear, or your despondency, or your anxiety, in circumstances of perplexity, or peril, are nothing less than the calling 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 to 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.—*Henry Melvill*.

**Verse 9.** *Your fathers tempted me.* There are two ways of interpreting the words which follow. As *tempting God* is nothing else than yielding to a diseased and unwarrantable craving after proof of his power, we may consider the verse as connected throughout, and read, *They tempted me and proved me, although they had already seen my work.* God very justly complains, that they should insist upon new proof, after his power had been already amply testified by undeniable evidences. There is another meaning, however, that may be given to the term "*proved*", —according to which, the meaning of the passage would run as follows:—Your fathers tempted me in asking where God was, notwithstanding all the benefits I had done them; and they proved me, that is, they had actual experience of what I am, inasmuch as I did not cease to give them open proofs of my presence, and consequently they saw my work.—*John Calvin*.

**Verse 9.** *Proved me,* put me to the proof of my existence, presence, and power, by requiring me to work, *i.e.* to act in an extraordinary manner. And this desire, unreasonable as it was, I gratified. They not only demanded, but they war-Mg likewise saw *my work*, *i.e.* what I could do.—*J.A. Alexander*.

**Verse 9.** *Forty years.* To understand this passage we must bear in mind the event referred to. The same year in which the people of Israel came forth

from Egypt, they were distressed for water at Rephidim, (Ex 17:1); and the place had two names given to it, Massah and Meribah, because the people tempted God and chided with Moses. The Lord did not swear *then* that they should not enter into the land of Canaan; but this was in the following year, after the return of the spies. (Nu 14:20-38.) And God said then that they had tempted him "ten times"; that is, during the short time since their deliverance from Egypt. It was after ten temptations that God deprived them of the promised land. Bearing in mind these facts, we shall be able to see the full force of the passage. The "provocation" or contention, and "temptation" refer clearly to the latter instance, as recorded in Nu 14:1-45 because it was then that God swore that the people should not enter into his rest. The people's conduct was alike in both instances. To connect "forty years" with grieved, was the work of the Punctuists, and this mistake the Apostle corrected; and it is to be observed that he did not follow in this instance the *Septuagint*, in which the words are arranged as divided by the Masorites. Such a rendering as would correspond with the Hebrew is as follows,—

"Today when ye hear his voice,

8. Harden not your hearts us in the provocation, In the day of temptation in the wilderness.

9. When your fathers tempted me, they proved me And saw my works forty years:

10. I was therefore offended with that generation and said, Always do they go astray in heart, And they have not known my ways;

11. So that I swore in my wrath, 'They shall by no means enter into my rest.'"

The meaning of the ninth verse is, that when the children of Israel tempted God, they proved him, *i.e.*, found out by bitter experience how great his displeasure was, and saw his works or his dealings with them forty years. He retained them in the wilderness during that period until the death of all who disbelieved his word at the return of the spies; he gave them this proof of his displeasure.—*John Owen, of Thruxington, 1853.*

**Verse 10.** O the desperate presumption of man, that he should offend his Maker *forty years*! O the patience and longsuffering of his Maker, that he should allow him forty years to offend in! Sin begins in the *heart*, by its desires *wandering* and going astray after forbidden objects; whence follows

inattention to the *ways* of God, to his dispensations, and our own duty. Lust in the heart, like vapour in the stomach, soon affects the head, and clouds the understanding.—*George Horne*.

**Verse 10.** *Forty Years.* It is curious to know that the ancient Jews believed that "the days of the Messiah were to be forty years." Thus Tanchuma, F. 79, 4. "Quamdiu durant anni Messiae? R. Akiba dixit, 40 annos, quemadmodum Israelitae per tot annos in deserto fuerunt." It is remarkable, that in forty years after the ascension, the whole Jewish nation were cut off equally as they who fell in the wilderness.—*John Brown, in "An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews."* 1862.

**Verse 10.** *Was I grieved.* The word is a strong word, expressive of *loathing* and *disgust*.—*J.J.S. Perowne*.

**Verse 10.** *This generation.* The word *rdw*, *dor*, signifies an age, or the allotted term of human life; and it is here applied to the men of an age, as if the psalmist had said, that the Israelites whom God had delivered were incorrigible, during the whole period of their lives.—*John Calvin*.

**Verse 10.** *It is a people that do err in their heart.* We may observe here, that he does not simply say, This people errs. What mortal is there that does not err? Or where is there a multitude of mortals, exposed to no errors? But he adds, "*In their heart.*" Every error therefore is not blamed here, but the error of their heart is fastened upon. It is to be noted, therefore, that there is a twofold kind of error:

1. One is of the intellect, by which we go astray through ignorance. In this kind of erring Paul erred when he persecuted the Church of Christ; the Sadducees erred, not knowing the Scriptures, Mt 22:29; and to this day many in the Church go astray, endowed with zeal for God, but destitute of a true knowledge of Him.
2. The other kind of erring is of the heart and affections, by which men go astray, not through ignorance, but through corruption and perversity of heart. This error of heart is a mind averse to God, and alienated from the will and way of God, which is elsewhere thus described in the case of this very people: "And their heart was not right with Him."—*Musculus*.

**Verse 10.** *It is a people that do err in their heart.* In err in heart may mean either to err in judgment, or in disposition, intention: for the Hebrew *bbl*, and after it the Greek *kardia*, means either *animus*, *judicium*, or, *mens*, *cogitatio*,

*desiderium*. I understand kardia here, as used according to the Hebrew idiom (in which it is often pleonastic, at least it seems so to us,) so that the phrase imports simply, *They always err*, i.e. they are continually departing from the right way.—*Moses Stuart*.

**Verse 10.** *Err in their heart*. He had called them sheep, and now he notes their wandering propensity, and their incapacity for being led; for the footsteps of their Shepherd they did not know, much less follow.—*C.H.S.*

**Verse 10.** *They have not known my ways*; that is, they have not regarded my ways, have not allowed of them, or loved them; for otherwise they were not ignorant of them; they heard his words, and *saw his works*.—*David Dickson*.

**Verse 10.** *They have not known my ways*. This ungrateful people did not approve of God's ways—they did not enter into his designs—they did not conform to his commands—they paid no attention to his miracles—and did not acknowledge the benefits which they received from his hands.—*Adam Clarke*.

**Verse 10.** *A people that do err in their heart, & c.* These words are not to be found in Nu 14:1-45; but the inspired Psalmist expresses the sense of what Jehovah said on that occasion. "*They do always err in their heart*", (Heb 3:10). They are radically and habitually evil. *They have not known my ways*. God's "*ways*" may mean either his dispensations or his precepts. The Israelites did not rightly understand the former, and they obstinately refused to acquire a practical knowledge—the only truly valuable species of knowledge—of the latter. The reference is probably to God's mode of dealing: Ro 11:33 De 4:32, 8:2, 29:2-4. Such a people deserved severe punishment, and they received it. *So I swear in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest*. The original words in the Hebrew are, "*If they shall enter into my rest*." This elliptical mode of expressing oaths is common in the Old Testament: De 1:35 1Sa 3:14 Ps 89:35 Isa 62:8. This awful oath is recorded in Nu 14:21-29: "But as truly as I live, all the earth shall be filled with the glory of the Lord. Because all those men which have seen my glory, and my miracles, which I did in Egypt, and in the wilderness, and have tempted me now these ten times, and have not hearkened to my voice; surely they shall not see the land which I swear unto their fathers, neither shall any of them that provoked me see it: but my servant Caleb, because he had another spirit with him, and hath followed me fully, him will I bring into the land whereinto he went; and his seed shall possess it. (Now the Amalekites and the Canaanites dwelt in the valley.) Tomorrow turn you, and get you into the wilderness by the way of the Red Sea. And the Lord spoke unto Moses and

unto Aaron, saying, How long shall I bear with this evil congregation, which murmur against me? I have heard the murmurings of the children of Israel which they murmur against me. Say unto them, As truly as I live, saith the LORD, as ye have spoken in mine ears, so will I do to you: your carcasses shall fall in this wilderness; and all that were numbered of you, according to your whole number, from twenty years old and upward, which have murmured against me." The words of the oath seem here borrowed from the account in De 1:35. There are many threatenings of God which have a tacit condition implied in them; but when God interposes his oath, the sentence is irreversible. The curse was not causeless, and it did come. We have an account of its actual fulfilment, Nu 26:64-65. The "rest" from which they were excluded was the land of Canaan. Their lives were spent in wandering. It is termed "God's rest", as there he was to finish his work of bringing Israel into the land promised to their fathers, and fix the symbol of his presence in the midst of them,—dwelling in that land in which his people were to rest from their wanderings, and to dwell in safety under his protection. It is *His* rest, as of His preparing, De 12:9. It is *His* rest—rest like His, rest along with Him. We are by no means warranted to conclude that all who died in the wilderness came short of everlasting happiness. It is to be feared many of them, most of them, did; but the curse denounced on them went only to their exclusion from the earthly Canaan.—*John Brown*.

**Verses 10-11.** And said. Mark the gradation, first grief or *disgust* with those who *erred* made him *say*; then anger felt more heavily against those who did not *believe* made him *swear*. The people had been called sheep in Ps 95:7, to sheep the highest good is rest, but into this rest they were never to come, for they had not known or delighted in the ways in which the good Shepherd desired to lead them.—*John Albert Bengel*.

**Verse 11.** The word *swearing* is very significant, and seems to import these two things. First, the certainty of the sentence here pronounced. Every word of God both is, and must be truth; but ratified by an oath, it is truth with an advantage. It is signed irrevocable. This fixes it like the laws of the Medes and Persians, beyond all possibility of alteration and makes God's word, like his very nature, unchangeable. Secondly, it imports the terror of the sentence. If the children of Israel could say, "Let not God speak to us, lest we die, what would they have said had God then sworn against them?" It is terrible to hear an oath from the mouth but of a poor mortal, but from the mouth of an omnipotent God, it does not only terrify, but confound. An oath from God is truth delivered in anger; truth, as I may so speak, with a

vengeance. When God speaks, it is the creature's duty to hear; but when he swears, to tremble.—*Robert South.*

**Verse 11.** *That they should not enter into my rest.* There is something unusual and abrupt in the conclusion of this psalm, without any cheering prospect to relieve the threatening. This may be best explained by assuming, that it was not meant to stand alone, but to form one of a series.—*J.A. Alexander.*

---

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** An invitation to praise the Lord.

1. A favourite method of worship—"let us sing."
2. A fitting state of mind for singing—joyful gratitude.
3. A fitting subject to excite both gladness and thankfulness—the rock of our salvation.

**Verse 1.** *The rock of our salvation.* Expressive imagery. Rock of shelter, support, indwelling, and supply—illustrate this last by the water flowing from the rock in the wilderness.

**Verse 2.**

1. What is meant by coming before his presence? Certainly not the holiness of places, etc.
2. What offering is most appropriate when we come into his presence?

**Verse 3.**

1. The greatness of God as god. He is to be conceived of as great in goodness, power, glory, etc.
2. His dominion over all other powers in heaven or earth.
3. The worship which is consequently due to him.

**Verses 4-5.** The universality of the divine government.



1. In all parts of the globe.
2. In all providences.
3. In every phase of moral condition. Or, Things deep, or high, dark or perilous are in his hand; circumstances shifting, terrible, overwhelming as the sea, are under his control as much as the comfortable terra firma of peace and prosperity.

**Verse 6.** A true conception of God begets

1. A disposition to worship.
  2. Mutual incitement to worship.
  3. Profound reverence in worship.
  4. Overwhelming sense of God's presence in worship.
- C.A. Davis.*

**Verses 6-7.** God is to be worshipped—

1. As our Creator—"our maker."
  2. As our Redeemer, "the people," etc.
  3. As our Preserver, "the sheep," etc.
- George Rogers.*

**Verse 7.** The entreaty of the Holy Ghost.

1. The special voice—"the Holy Ghost saith"—
  - (a) In Scripture.
  - (b) In the hearts of his people.
  - (c) In the awakened.
  - (d) By his deeds of grace.
2. A special duty, "hear his voice", instructing, commanding, inviting, promising, threatening.
3. A special time—"today." While God speaks, after so long a time, in the day of grace, now, in your present state.
4. The special danger—"harden not your hearts", by indifference, unbelief, asking for signs, presumption, worldly pleasures, etc.

**Verse 7.** Sinners entreated to hear God's voice. "Hear his voice", because—

1. Life is short aud uncertain;
2. You cannot properly or lawfully promise to give what is not your own;
3. If you defer, though but till tomorrow, you must harden your hearts;
4. There is great reason to fear that, if you defer it today, you will never commence;
5. After a time God ceases to strive with sinners;
6. There is nothing irksome or disagreeable in a religious life, that you should wish to defer its commencement.

—*Edward Payson.*

**Verse 7.** The Difference of Times with respect to Religion.—Upon a spiritual account there is great difference of time. To make this out, I will shew you,

1. That *sooner* and *later* are not alike, in respect of eternity.
2. That *times of ignorance* and of *knowledge* are not alike.
3. That *before* and *after voluntary commission of known iniquity*, are not alike.
4. That *before* and *after contracted naughty habits*, are not alike.
5. That the time of *God's gracious and particular visitation* and the time when God *withdraws* his gracious presence and assistance, are not alike.
6. The flourishing time of our *health and strength*, and the hour of *sickness, weakness*, and approach of *death*, are not alike.
7. Now and hereafter, present and future, *this world* and *the world to come*, are not alike.

—*Benjamin Whichcot.*

**Verse 7.** This supposition, *If ye will hear*, and the consequence inferred thereupon, *harden not your hearts*, doth evidently demonstrate that a right hearing will prevent hardness of heart; especially hearing of Christ's voice,

that is, the gospel. It is the gospel that maketh and keepeth a soft heart.—  
*William Gouge.*

**Verses 8-11.**

1. Israel's fearful experiment in tempting God.
2. The awful result.
3. Let it not be tried again.

—*C.A. Davis.*

**Verse 10.** The error and the ignorance which are fatal.

**Verse 11.** The fatal moment of the giving up of a soul, how it may be hastened, what are the signs of it, and what are the terrible results.

**Verses 10-11.** The kindling, increasing, and full force of divine anger, and its dreadful results.

## Psalm 96

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

**SUBJECT.** This Psalm is evidently taken from that sacred song which was composed by David at the time when "the ark of God was set in the midst of the tent which David had prepared for it, and they offered burnt sacrifices and peace offerings before God." See the sixteenth chapter of the first book of the Chronicles. The former part of that sacred song was probably omitted in this place because it referred to Israel, and the design of the Holy Ghost in this psalm was to give forth a song for the Gentiles, a triumphant hymn wherewith to celebrate the conversion of the nations to Jehovah in gospel times. It follows fitly upon the last Psalm, which describes the obstinacy of Israel, and the consequent taking of the gospel from them that it might be preached among the nations who would receive it, and in due time be fully won to Christ by its power. It thus makes a pair with the Ninety-fifth Psalm. It is a grand MISSIONARY HYMN, and it is a wonder that Jeers can read it and yet remain exclusive. If blindness in part had not happened unto Israel, they might have seen long ago, and would now see, that their God always had designs of love for all the families of men, and never intended that his grace and his covenant should relate only to the seed of Abraham after the flesh. We do not wonder that the large hearted David rejoiced and danced before the ark, while he saw in vision all the earth turning from idols to the one living and true God. Had Michal, Saul's daughter, only been able to enter into his delight, she would not have reproached him, and if the Jews at this day could only be enlarged in heart to feel sympathy with all mankind, they also would sing for joy at the great prophecy that all the earth shall be fitted with the glory of the Lord.

**DIVISION.** We will make none, for the song is one and indivisible, a garment of praise without seam, woven from the top throughout.

### EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *O sing unto the Lord a new song.* New joys are filling the hearts of men, for the glad tidings of blessing to all people are proclaimed, therefore let them sing a new song. Angels inaugurated the new dispensation with new songs, and shall not we take up the strain? The song is for Jehovah alone, the hymns which chanted the praises of Jupiter and Neptune, Vishnoo and Siva are hushed for ever; Bacchanalian shouts are silenced, lascivious sonnets are no more. Unto the one only God all music is to be dedicated. Mourning is over, and the time of singing of hearts has come. No dismal rites are celebrated, no bloody sacrifices of human beings are presented, no cutting with knives, and outcries of lamentation are presented by deluded votaries. Joy is in the ascendant, and singing has become the universal expression of love, the fitting voice of reverent adoration. Men are made new creatures, and their song is new also. The names of Baalim are no more on their lips, the wanton music of Ashtaroth ceaseth; the foolish ditty and the cruel war song are alike forgotten; the song is holy, heavenly, pure, and pleasant. The

psalmist speaks as if he would lead the strain and be the chief musician, he invites, he incites, he persuades to sacred worship, and cries with all his heart, "O sing unto Jehovah a new song." Sing unto the Lord, all the earth.—National jealousies are dead; a Jew invites the Gentiles to adore, and joins with them, so that all the earth may lift up one common psalm as with one heart and voice unto Jehovah, who hath visited it with his salvation. No corner of the world is to be discordant, no race of heathen to be dumb. All the earth Jehovah made, and all the earth must sing to him. As the sun shines on all lands, so are all lands to delight in the light of the Sun of Righteousness. *E Pluribus Unum*, out of many one song shall come forth. The multitudinous languages of the sons of Adam, who were scattered at Babel, will blend in the same song when the people are gathered at Zion. Nor men alone, but the earth itself is to praise its Maker. Made subject to vanity for a while by a sad necessity, the creation itself also is to be delivered from the bondage of corruption, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God, so that sea and forest, field and flood, are to be joyful before the Lord. Is this a dream? then let us dream again. Blessed are the eyes which shall see the kingdom, and the ears which shall hear its songs. Hasten thine advent, good Lord! Yea, send forth speedily the rod of thy strength out of Zion, that the nations may bow before the Lord and his Anointed.

**Verse 2.** *Sing unto the Lord, bless his name.* Thrice is the name of the Lord repeated, and not without meaning. Is it not unto the Three One Lord that the enlightened nations will sing? Unitarianism is the religion of units; it is too cold to warm the world to worship; the sacred fire of adoration only burns with vehement flame where the Trinity is believed in and beloved. In other ways beside singing, the blessed Lord is to be blessed. His name, his fame, his character, his revealed word and will are to be delighted in, and remembered with perpetual thanksgiving. We may well bless him who so divinely blesses us. At the very mention of his name it is meet to say, "Let him be blessed for ever." Shew forth his salvation from day to day. The gospel is the clearest revelation of himself, salvation, outshines creation and providence; therefore let our praises overflow in that direction. Let us proclaim the glad tidings, and do so continually, never ceasing the blissful testimony. It is ever new, ever suitable, ever sure, ever perfect; therefore let us show it forth continually until he come, both by words and deeds, by songs and sermons, by sacred Baptism and by the Holy Supper, by books and by speech, by Sabbath services and weekday worship. Each day brings us deeper experience of our saving God, each day shows us anew how deeply men need his salvation, each day reveals the power of the gospel,

each day the Spirit strives with the sons of men; therefore, never pausing, be it ours to tell out the glorious message of free grace. Let those do this who know for themselves what *his* salvation means; they can bear witness that there is salvation in none other, and that in him salvation to the uttermost is to be found. Let them show it forth till the echo flies around the spacious earth, and all the armies of the sky unite to magnify the God who hath displayed his saving health among all people.

**Verse 3.** *Declare his glory among the heathen.* His salvation is his glory, the word of the gospel glorifies him; and this should be published far and wide, till the remotest nations of the earth have known it. England has spent much blood and treasure to keep up her own prestige among barbarians; when will she be equally anxious to maintain the honour of her religion, the glory of her Lord? It is to be feared that too often the name of the Lord Jesus has been dishonoured among the heathen by the vices and cruelties of those who call themselves Christians; may this fact excite true believers to greater diligence in causing the gospel to be proclaimed as with a trumpet in all quarters of the habitable globe. His wonders among all people. The gospel is a mass of wonders, its history is full of wonders, and it is in itself far more marvellous than miracles themselves. In the person of his Son the Lord has displayed wonders of love, wisdom, grace, and power. All glory be unto his name; who can refuse to tell out the story of redeeming grace and dying love? All the nations need to hear of God's marvellous works; and a really living, self denying church would solemnly resolve that right speedily they fill shall hear thereof. The tribes which are dying out are not to be excluded from gospel teaching any more than the great growing families which, like the fat kine of Pharaoh, are eating up other races: Red Indians as well as Anglo Saxons are to hear of the wonders of redeeming love. None are too degraded, none too cultured, none too savage, and none too refined.

**Verse 4.** *For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised.* He is no petty deity, presiding, as the heathen imagined their gods to do, over some one nation, or one department of nature. Jehovah is great in power and dominion, great in mind and act; nothing mean or narrow can be found in him or his acts, in all things he is infinite. Praise should be proportionate to its object, therefore let it be infinite when rendered unto the Lord. We cannot praise him too much, too often, too zealously, too carefully, too joyfully. He deserves that nothing in his worship should be little, but all the honour rendered unto him should be given in largeness of heart, with the utmost zeal for his glory. He is to be feared above all gods. Other gods have been worshipped at great cost, and with much fervour, by their blinded rotaries,

but Jehovah should be adored with far greater reverence. Even if the graven images had been gods they could not have borne comparison for an instant with the God of Israel, and therefore his worship, should be far more zealous than any which has been rendered to them. He is to be feared, for there is cause to fear. Dread of other gods is mere superstition, awe of the Lord is pure religion. Holy fear is the beginning of the graces, and yet it is the accompaniment of their highest range. Fear of God is the blush upon the face of holiness enhancing its beauty.

**Verse 5.** *For all the gods of the nations are idols.* Mere images of wood and stone, vanities, nothings. But the Lord made the heavens. The reality of his Godhead is proved by his works, and foremost among these the psalmist mentions that matchless piece of architecture which casts its arch over every man's head, whose lamps are the light of all mankind, whose rains and dew fall upon the fields of every people, and whence the Lord in voice of thunder is heard speaking to every creature. The idol gods have no existence, but our God is the author of all existences; they are mere earthly vanities, while he is not only heavenly, but made the heavens. This is mentioned as an argument for Jehovah's universal praise. Who can be worshipped but he? Since none can rival him, let him be adored alone.

**Verse 6.** *Honour and majesty are before him.* Men can but mimic these things; their pompous pageants are but the pretence of greatness. Honour and majesty are with him and with him alone. In the presence of Jehovah real glory and sovereignty abide, as constant attendants. Strength and beauty are in his sanctuary. In him are combined all that is mighty and lovely, powerful and resplendent. We have seen rugged strength devoid of beauty, we have also seen elegance without strength; the union of the two is greatly to be admired. Do we desire to see the "sublime and beautiful" at one glance? Then we must look to the eternal throne. In the Chronicles we read strength and *gladness*; and the two renderings do not disagree in sense, for in the highest degree in this instance it is true that "a thing of beauty is a joy for ever." Not in outward show or parade of costly robes does the glory of God consist; such things are tricks of state with which the ignorant are dazzled; holiness, justice, wisdom, grace, these are the splendours of Jehovah's courts, these the jewels and the gold, the regalia, and the pomp of the courts of heaven.

**Verse 7.** The first six verses commenced with an exhortation to sing, three times repeated, with the name of the Lord thrice mentioned; here we meet with the expression, Give unto the Lord, used in the same triple manner. This is after the manner of those poets whose flaming sonnets have best won

the ear of, the people, they reiterate choice words till they penetrate the soul and fire the heart. The invocation of the sweet singer is still addressed to all mankind, to whom he speaks as, Ye kindreds of the people. Divided into tribes and families, we are called in our courses and order to appear before him and ascribe to him all honour. "All worship be to God only, "is the motto of one of our City companies, and it may well be the motto of all the families upon earth. Family worship is peculiarly pleasing unto him who is the God of all the families of Israel. Give unto the LORD glory and strength, that is to say, recognise the glory and power of Jehovah, and ascribe them unto him in your solemn hymns. Who is glorious but the Lord? Who is strong, save our God? Ye great nations who count yourselves both famous and mighty, cease your boastings! Ye monarchs, who are styled imperial and puissant, humble yourselves in the dust before the only Potentate. Glory and strength are nowhere to be found, save with the Lord, all others possess but the semblance thereof. Well did Massilion declare, "God alone is great."

**Verse 8.** *Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name.* But who can do that to the full? Can all the nations of the earth put together discharge the mighty debt? All conceivable honour is due to our Creator, Preserver, Benefactor, and Redeemer, and however much of zealous homage we may offer to him, we cannot give him more than his due. If we cannot bring in the full revenue which he justly claims, at least let us not fail from want of honest endeavour. Bring an offering, and come into his courts. Come with an unbloody sacrifice; atonement for sin having been made, it only remains to bring thank offerings, and let not these be forgotten. To him who gives us all, we ought gladly to give our grateful tithe. When assembling for public worship we should make a point of bringing with us a contribution to his cause, according to that ancient word, "None of you shall appear before me empty." The time will come when from all ranks and nations the Lord will receive gifts when they gather together for his worship. O long expected day begin!

**Verse 9.** *O worship the Lord in the beauty of holiness.* This is the only beauty which he cares for in our public services, and it is one for which no other can compensate. Beauty of architecture and apparel he does not regard; moral and spiritual beauty is that in which his soul delighteth. Worship must not be rendered to God in a slovenly, sinful, superficial manner; we must be reverent, sincere, earnest, and pure in heart both in our prayers and praises. Purity is the white linen of the Lord's choristers, righteousness is the comely garment of his priests, holiness is the royal apparel of his servants. Fear before him, all the earth. "Tremble" is the word in the original, and it



expresses the profoundest awe, just as the word "worship" does, which would be more accurately translated by "bow down." Even the bodily frame would be moved to trembling and prostration if men were thoroughly conscious of the power and glory of Jehovah. Men of the world ridiculed "the Quakers" for trembling when under the power of the Holy Spirit; had they been able to discern the majesty of the Eternal they would have quaked also. There is a sacred trembling which is quite consistent with joy, the heart may even quiver with an awful excess of delight. The sight of the King in his beauty caused no alarm to John in Patmos, and yet it made him fall at his feet as dead. Oh, to behold him and worship him with prostrate awe and sacred fear!

**Verse 10.** *Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth.* This is the gladdest news which can be carried to them,—the Lord Jehovah, in the person of his Son has assumed the throne, and taken to himself his great power. Tell this out among the heathen, and let the heathen themselves, being converted, repeat the same rejoicing. The dominion of Jehovah Jesus is not irksome, his rule is fraught with untold blessings, his yoke is easy, and his burden is light. The world also shall be established that it shall not be moved. Society is safe where God is king, no revolutions shall convulse his empire, no invasions shall disturb his kingdom. A settled government is essential to national prosperity, the reign of the god of truth and righteousness will promote this to the highest degree. Sin has shaken the world, the reign of Jesus will set it fast again upon sure foundations. He shall judge the people righteously. This is the best method for establishing society on a secure basis, and this is the greatest source of joy to oppressed nations. Iniquity makes the dynasties of tyrants fall, equity causes the throne of Jesus to stand. He will impartially rule over Jew and Gentile, prince and peasant, and this will bring happiness to those who are now the victims of the despot's arbitrary will.

**Verse 11.** *Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad.* Above and below let the joy be manifested. Let the angels who have stood in amaze at the wickedness of men, now rejoice over their repentance and restoration to favour, and let men themselves express their pleasure in seeing their true prince set upon his throne. The book of creation has two covers, and on each of these let the glory of the Lord be emblazoned in letters of joy. Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof let it be no more a troubled sea, wailing over shipwrecked mariners, and rehearsing the griefs of widows and orphans, but let it adopt a cheerful note, and rejoice in the kingdom of the Lord. Let it thunder out the name of the Lord when its tides are at its full, and let all its

teeming life express the utmost joy because the Lord reigneth even in the depth of the sea. In common with the rest of the creation, the sea has groaned and travailed until now; is not the time close at hand in which its hollow murmur shall be exchanged for an outburst of joy? Will not every billow soon flash forth the praises of him who once trod the sea?

"Waft, waft, ye winds, his story!  
And you ye waters, roll,  
Till, like a sea of glory,  
It spreads from pole to pole."

**Verse 12.** *Let the field be joyful, and all that is therein.* Let the cultivated plains praise the Lord. Peace enables their owners to plough and sow and reap, without fear of the rapine of invaders, and therefore in glad notes they applaud him whose empire is peace. Both men, and creatures that graze the plain, and the crops themselves are represented as swelling the praises of Jehovah, and the figure is both bold and warranted, for the day shall come when every inhabited rood of ground shall yield its song, and every farmstead shall contain a church. Then shall all the trees of the wood rejoice. He does not say, let them rejoice, but they shall do so. The faith of the psalmist turns itself from the expression of desire to the fully assured prediction of the event. Groves have in old times stood shuddering at the horrid orgies which have been performed within their shade, the time shall come when they shall sing for joy because of the holy worship, the sounds of which they shall hear. The bush is the stronghold of savage men and robbers, but it shall be sanctified to retirement and devotion. Perhaps the psalmist was thinking of the birds; so Keble must have supposed, for he versifies the passage thus—

"Field exults and meadow fair,  
With each bud and blossom there,  
In the lonely woodlands now  
Chants aloud each rusting bough."

**Verse 13.** *Before the LORD: for he cometh.* Even now he is near, his advent should, therefore, be the cause of immediate rejoicing: already are we in his presence, let us worship him with delight. For he cometh to judge the earth, to rule it with discretion; not to tax it, and control it by force, as kings often do, but to preside as magistrates do whose business it is to see justice carried out between man and man. All the world will be under the jurisdiction of this great Judge, and before his bar all will be summoned to appear. At this moment he is on the road, and the hour of his coming draweth nigh. His

great assize is proclaimed. Hear ye not the trumpets? His foot is on the threshold. He shall judge the world with righteousness. His essential rectitude will determine all causes and cases, there will be no bribery and corruption there, neither can error or failure be found in his decisions. And the people with his truth, or rather "the nations in faithfulness." Honesty, veracity, integrity, will rule upon his judgment seat. No nation shall be favoured there, and none be made to suffer through prejudice. The black man shall be tried by the same law as his white master, the aboriginal shall have justice executed for him against his civilised exterminator, the crushed and hunted Bushman shall have space to appeal against the Boer who slaughtered his tribe, and the South Sea Islander shall gain attention to his piteous complaint against the treacherous wretch who kidnapped him from his home. There shall be true judgment given without fear or favour. In all this let the nations be glad, and the universe rejoice. In closing, let us ourselves join in the song. Since the whole universe is to be clothed with smiles, shall not we be glad? As John Howe observes, "Shall we not partake in this common dutiful joy, and fall into concert with the adoring loyal chorus? Will we cut ourselves off from this happy obsequious throng? And what should put a pleasant face and aspect upon the whole world, shall it only leave our faces covered with clouds, and a mournful sadness?"

---

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Whole Psalm.** What has been said of Psalm 67 may be fitly applied to the present psalm. We need not hesitate to add that it is a millennial anthem. It accords with the condition of the world when Christ shall sit enthroned in the willing loyalty of our race. The nations join in an acclaim of praise to him as their rightful Judge and King. There is a unanimity in the song, as if it ascended from a world purged into a temple of holiness, and whose inhabitants were indeed a royal priesthood, with one heart to make Jesus king, with one voice to sound forth one peal of melody in praise of the name above every name. Fix the eye for a moment on the precious vision of which we thus catch a glimpse. It holds true to the deepest principles of our nature, that what we contemplate as possible, much more what we anticipate as certain, lends us the very hope and energy conducive to its realisation. On the contrary, despair paralyses effort. Is it on this account that everywhere in prophecy, old and new, there floats before us the ideal of a recovered and rejoicing world, at times transfigured into a loftier scene, the new heavens and new earth wherein dwelleth righteousness? So largely did this thought imbue the prophetic mind, that the language of Paul warms into the

animation of poetry, when even "the creature itself, "according to his own vivid personification, like some noble bird, drooping under the weight of its chain, with neck outstretched and eyeball distended, is described as looking down into the vista of coming time for its deliverance from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the sons of God (Ro 8:19). He hastens to add, that "we are saved by hope." It is true of the soul individually, we are saved by hope. It is true of our race collectively, if ever a millennium is to dawn upon it, we are saved by such a hope. Our earth may be in ruins meanwhile, blackness on the sky, barrenness on the soil, because sin is everywhere; but a change is promised. What we hope for, we labour for all the more that our hope is no dream of fancy, but has its basis in the science and certainty of absolute truth. "For as the earth hinges forth her bud, and as the garden causeth the things that are sown in it to spring forth; so the Lord God will cause righteousness and praise to spring forth before all the nations." (Isa 61:11) The tuning of the instrument is sometimes heard before the music comes. The mother teaches her child to lisp a hymn before he comprehends its full scope and meaning. And so here, in this holy psalm, the Jerusalem from above, the mother of us all, trains us to the utterance of a song suitable to seasons of millennial glory, when the Moloch of oppression, the Mammon of our avarice, the Ashtaroth of fiery lust, every erring creed, every false religion, shall have given place to the worship of the one true and living God—to the faith and love of Christ. "Let the peoples praise thee, O God; let all the peoples praise thee." *W.H. Gould, in "The Mission Hymn of the Hebrew Church: a Sermon."* 1865.

**Whole Psalm.** This psalm is entitled in the *Septuagint*, "*A Hymn of David; when the Temple was rebuilt after the Captivity,* " and this appears to be a true description of it; for the substance of it is found in 1Ch 16:23-33, where it is described as having been delivered by David into the hand of Asaph and his brethren, to thank the Lord when the Ark was brought up to Zion. David's Psalm here receives a new name, and is called a *new song* (*sir chadash*), because new mercies of God were now to be celebrated; mercies greater than David had ever received, even when he brought the Ark to Zion. They who now sang the old song, which had thus become a new song, identified themselves with David, and identified him with themselves. *Chr. Wordsworth.*

**Whole Psalm.** Subject.—Call to praise, in view of Christ's second advent and glorious reign.—*To apply it.*—Look forward to the glorious day of the Lord's coming; and realize its approach that you may prepare for it. *A. R. C. Dallas.*

**Verse 1.** *O sing unto the LORD a new song*, etc. "A new song," unknown to you before. Come, all ye nations of the wide earth, who, up to this hour, have been giving your worship to dead gods that were no gods at all; come and give your hearts to the true and only God in this *new song*! *Henry Cowles*.

**Verse 1.** *A new song*. It must be "*a new canticle*," a beautiful canticle, and elegantly composed; also a canticle for fresh favours: in like manner, a canticle befitting men who have been regenerated, in whom avarice has been supplanted by charity; and finally, a canticle not like that of Moses, or Deborah, or any of the old canticles that could not be sung outside the land of promise, according to Ps 137:4; "How shall we sing the LORD'S song in a strange land?" but a new canticle that may be sung all over the world; and he, therefore, adds, *Sing unto the LORD, all the earth*, not only Judea, but the whole world. *Bellarmino*.

**Verse 1.** *New*. The word is used to describe that which is delightful, exquisite, precious, etc. *Martin Geier*.

**Verse 1.** *New*. New things are generally most approved, and especially in songs; for Pindar praises old wine and new songs. *John Cocceius, 1603-1669*.

**Verse 1.** *A new song*. Our old songs were those of pride, of gluttony, of luxury, in hope of gain, prosperity, or harm to others; our "*new song*" is of praise, reverence, and obedience, and love to God, in newness of life, in the Spirit that quickeneth, no longer in the letter that killeth, but keepeth that new commandment, that we love one another, not with the narrow patriotism and fellow feeling of a small tribe, or a mere national church, but with a citizenship which embraces *all the whole earth*. *Neale and Littledale*.

**Verse 1.** *Sing unto the LORD*. We find it thrice said, *sing unto the Lord*, that we may understand that we are to sing unto Him with mind, and tongue, and deed. For all these things must be joined together, and the life ought to correspond with the mouth and mind. As Abbot Absalom says, *When the speech does not jar with the life, there is sweet harmony*. *Le Blanc*.

**Verse 1.** *All the earth*. It is a *missionary hymn* for all ages of the church; and it becomes more and more appropriate to our times in proportion as the heathen begin to respond to the call, "Sing unto the Lord a new song," and in proportion as we find in the melancholy condition of the church at home

occasion to look with a hopeful eye towards the heathen world. *E. W. Hengstenberg.*

**Verse 2.** *From day to day.* Continually; always. It is a fit subject for unceasing praise. Every man should praise God every day—on each returning morning, and on every evening—for the assurance that there is a way of salvation provided for him, and that he may be happy for ever. If we had right feelings, this would be the first thought which would burst upon the mind each morning, irradiating, as with sunbeams, all around us; and it would be the last thought which would linger in the soul as we lie down at night, and close our eyes in slumber making us grateful, calm, happy, as we sink to rest, for whether we wake or not in this world, we may be for ever happy. *Albert Barnes.*

**Verse 2.** *From day to day.* Other news delights us only at first hearing; but the good news of our redemption is sweet from day to day, *ac si in codera die redemptio fuisset opereta*, saith Kimchi here, as if it were done but today. *Tam recens mihi nunc Christus est*, saith Luther, *ac si hac hora fudisset sanguinem*, Christ is now as fresh unto me as if he had shed his blood but this very hour. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 3.** *Declare.* The corresponding word is a *book*; and the participle is often rendered a scribe, a writer. Ps 45:1. The verb is rendered, tell, show forth, declare. The variety of verbs used in Ps 96:1-3, proves that we are to employ all proper means for making known the Saviour. One of these methods is by writing. *W. S. Plumer.*

**Verse 3.** *Declare his glory*—what a glorious person the Messiah is; the brightness of his Father's glory; having all the perfections of Deity in him; how the glory of God appears in him, and in all that he has done; and especially in the work of redemption, in which the glory of divine wisdom, power, justice, truth, and faithfulness, love, grace, and mercy, is richly displayed; say what glory he is advanced unto, having done his work, being highly exalted, set at the right hand of God, and crowned with glory and honour, and what a fulness of grace there is in him, for the supply of his people; and what a glory is on him, which they shall behold to all eternity. *John Gill.*

**Verse 3.** His glory shines from every ray of light that reaches us from a thousand stars; it sparkles from the mountain tops that reflect the earliest and retain the last rays of the rising and the setting sun; it spreads over the expanse of the sea, and speaks in the murmur of its restless waves; it girdles

the earth with a zone of light, and flings over it an aureole of beauty. In the varied forms of animal tribes; in the relations of our world to other worlds, in the revolutions of planets, in the springing of flowers, in the fall of waters, and in the flight of birds; in the sea, the rivers, and the air; in heights and depths, in wonders and mysteries,—Christ wears the crown, sways the sceptre, and receives from all a tribute to his sovereignty. We cannot augment it; we cannot add one ray of light to the faintness of a distant star nor give wings to an apterous insect, nor change a white hair into black. We can unfold, but not create; we can adore, but not increase; we can recognise the footprints of Deity, but not add to them. *John Cumming in "From Patmos to Paradise," 1873.*

**Verse 3.** *Declare his glory among the heathen*, etc. It is a part of the commission given to the ministers of the gospel, not only to teach their congregations concerning Christ, but also to have a care that they who never did hear of him, may know what he is, what he hath done and suffered, and what good may be had by his mediation. Nothing so glorious to God, nothing so wonderful in itself, as is the salvation of man by Christ; to behold God saving his enemies by the incarnation, sufferings, and obedience of Christ the eternal Son of God: *Declare his glory among the heathen, his wonders among all people.* *David Dickson.*

**Verse 3.** *Declare his glory.* It is *his* glory which should be proclaimed, not the learning, ability, and eloquence of the orator who professes to speak for Him; it is his *glory*, the loving beauty, the attractiveness of his gospel, the lavish promises to repentant sinners, the blessedness of heaven, which should be the chief themes of discourse; not threats, menaces, sermons on hell or torment to affright men, and at best make them God's trembling slaves, not his loving friends. The preaching is to be *unto all people*, in obscure country districts, amongst unpolished and illiterate congregations, and not to be confined, as fashionable preachers like to confine it, to the cultivated and critical audiences of the capital. *Hugo, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

**Verse 3.** *His glory.* What he had before called *salvation*, he now names *glory*, and afterwards *wonders*. And since this salvation, whereby the human race is redeemed from eternal death and damnation, is glorious and full of wonders, it is therefore worthy of admiration and praise. *Mollerus.*

**Verse 3.** *His wonders.* What a wonderful person he is, for he is God manifest in the flesh; what wonderful love he has shown in his incarnation, obedience, sufferings, and death; what amazing miracles he wrought, and what a

wonderful work he performed; the work of our redemption, the wonder of men and angels; declare his wonderful resurrection from the dead, his ascension to heaven, sitting at the right hand of God, and intercession for his people; the wonderful effusion of his Spirit, and the conquests of his grace, and the enlargement of his kingdom in the world; as also what wonders will be wrought by him when he appears a second time; how the dead will be raised and all will be judged. *John Gill.*

**Verse 5.** *For all the gods of the nations are idols. Nothings*, nonentities, a favourite description of idols in Isaiah's later prophecies. See eg Isa 41:24, and compare Le 19:4 26:1, 1Co 8:4-6 10:19. A less probable etymology of the Hebrew word makes it a diminutive of (la) El, analogous to *godlings* as an expression of contempt. *J. A. Alexander.*

**Verse 5.** *The gods of the nations are idols.* Their Elohim are *elilim*. See 1Ch 16:26. The word *elilim* occurs in two places in the Psalms, here and Ps 97:7. It is used most frequently by Isaiah, and properly signifies *nothings*, as St. Paul says, "an idol is *nothing*." (1Co 8:4.) *Chr. Wordsworth.*

**Verse 5.** *The Lord made the heavens.* Ps 96:5 is a notandum. What a tribute to astronomy is it that the Lord is so often done homage to as having made the heavens! Let the theology of nature be blended with the theology of conscience—a full recognition of the strength and the glory which shine palpably forth in the wonders of creation, with the spiritual offerings of holy worship and holy service. *Thomas Chalmers.*

Oh, if so much of beauty doth reveal  
Itself in every vein of life and nature,  
How beautiful must be the Source itself,  
The Ever Bright One! *Esaias Tegner, 1782-1847.*

**Verse 6.** *In his sanctuary.* That is to say (1) his ark, tabernacle, or temple, as many writers consider. Kimchi, as quoted by Muis, suggests that where joy or beauty is mentioned as being in his temple, it is set in opposition to the perpetual grief of the Philistines when the ark was in their cities. They saw the Lord's strength, but not his beauty. (2) Others refer the word sanctuary to the church of Christ, which, as Munster remarks, is adorned with heavenly ornaments, and was typified by the magnificence of Solomon's temple. Certainly it is in the church that the spiritual power and beauty of the Lord are to be most clearly seen. (3) The passage may refer to heaven, where the divine presence is more peculiarly manifest. *C. H. S.*



**Verse 7.** *Ye kindreds of the people.* There is a peculiar force, observes an early commentator *Cassiodorus*, in this phrase, "*kindreds of the people*," "much more than if we had the word "*peoples*" alone; for in every nation there are at all times strangers, aliens, sojourners abiding permanently or for a time, but not reckoned among the natives; while the phrase here includes all such, and provides that none shall be shut out because of his origin. *Neale and Littledale.*

**Verse 7.** *Ye kindreds of the people.* He calls upon them to come in kindreds or families, in allusion to the Jewish custom of families coming by themselves, on the several festival days to worship in Jerusalem; and the Holy Ghost gives us here to understand that such custom was to serve as a model for Christians, whose families should unite in coming to the church to give glory and honour to God for all the wonderful things he accomplished in the redemption of man; for it was not by our own industry, or by our merits, that we have come to grace, and to be the adopted children of God, but through God's mercy, to whom, therefore, is due all honour and glory. *Bellarmino.*

**Verse 8.** *Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name.* It is a debt; and a debt, in equity, must be paid. The honour due to his name is to acknowledge him to be holy, just, true, powerful: "The Lord, the faithful God, ""good, merciful, long suffering, "etc. Defraud not his name of the least honour. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 8.** *Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name.* Is all the glory due unto God's name, and ought it, in strict justice, to have been ascribed unto him by men, ever since man began to exist? How immeasurably great then is the debt which our world has contracted, and under the burden of which it now groans! During every day and every hour which has elapsed since the apostasy of man, this debt has been increasing; for every day and every hour all men ought to have given unto Jehovah the glory which is due to his name. But no man has ever done this fully. And a vast proportion of our race have never done it at all. Now the difference between the tribute which men ought to have paid to God and that which they actually have paid constitutes the debt of which we are speaking. How vast, then, how incalculable is it! *Edward Payson.*

**Verse 8.** *Give unto the LORD the glory due unto his name.* Every glory will not serve the turn, but such glory as is proper and peculiar for that God we serve. It is a stated rule in Scripture that, *respects to God must be proportioned to the nature of God.* God is a *spirit*, therefore will be

worshipped in *spirit and truth*. God is a God of *peace*, therefore lift up pure hands, without *wrath and doubting*. God is a *holy God*, therefore will be *sanctified*. They which worship the sun, among the heathens, they used a flying horse, as a thing most suitable to the swift motion of the sun. Well, then, they that will glorify and honour God with a glory due to his name, must sanctify him as well as honour him. Why? For "God is glorious in holiness," Ex 15:11. This is that which God counteth to be his chief excellency, and the glory which he will manifest among the sons of men. *Thomas Minton.*

**Verse 8.** *Bring an offering.* This is language taken from the temple worship, and means that God is to be worshipped, in the manner which he has prescribed, as a suitable expression of his majesty. The word here rendered "*offering*"—*hxkm, minkhah*—is that which is commonly used to denote a bloodless offering, a thank offering. *Albert Barnes.*

**Verse 9.** *In the beauty of holiness,* or, in the ornament of holiness, alluding to the splendid robes of eastern worshippers. *W. Wilson.*

**Verse 9.** *The beauty of holiness.* Shall I call *holiness* an attribute? Is it not rather the glorious combination of all his attributes into one perfect whole? As all his attributes proceed from the absolute, so all again converge and meet in holiness. As from the insufferable white light of the Absolute they all seem to diverge and separate into prismatic hues, so they all seem again to converge and meet and combine in the dazzling white radiance of his holiness. This, therefore, is rather the intense whiteness, purity, clearness, the infinite lustre and splendour of his perfect nature—like a gem without flaw, without stain, and without colour. All of his attributes are glorious, but in this we have a combination of all into a still more glorious whole. It is for this reason that it is so frequently in Scripture associated with the Divine beauty. The poetic nature of the psalmist is exalted to ecstasy in contemplation of the "*beauty of holiness*," the "*beauty of the Lord*." Beauty is a combination of elements according to the laws of harmony; the more beautiful the parts or elements, and the more perfect the harmonious combination, the higher the beauty. How high and glorious, therefore, must be the beauty of this attribute which is the perfect combination of all his infinite perfections! You see, then, why this attribute is awful to us. In the ideal man all the faculties and powers, mental, moral, and bodily, work together in perfect harmony, making sweet music—the image of God is clear and pure in the human heart. But, alas! how far are we from the ideal! In the actual man the purity is stained, the beauty is defaced, the harmony is changed into jarring discord, "like sweet bells jangled out of tune." How it

came so, we are not now inquiring. We all feel that it is so. Therefore is this attribute so awful to us. It is the awfulness of absolute purity in the presence of impurity; it is the awfulness of perfect beauty in the presence of deformity; it is the awfulness of honour in the presence of dishonour and shame; in one word, it is the awfulness of holiness in the presence of sinfulness. How, then, shall we approach him before whom angels bow and archangels veil their faces—him in whose sight the white radiance of heaven itself is stained with impurity? *Joseph Le Coute, in "Religion and Science, "1874.*

**Verse 9.** *The beauty of holiness.* The religion of the gospel of Christ is "*the beauty of holiness*," as it concerns its Author, its plan, its fruits. First, As it concerns its *Author*. Whatever we can understand as meant by beauty or holiness, we see in the attributes of God, whether we consider them in all their harmony, or contemplate any one of them in particular... Secondly. As to its plan. Survey the gospel where we will, or regard whatever we can that is revealed concerning it, we find it to be all "*beauty*"; and we cannot call it by a more appropriate name than "*the beauty of holiness*." Thirdly, As to its *fruits*. There is a holy separation, a beautiful character of holiness, a separation as to character, feelings, and conduct; these are all the various fruits of grace; and so the man becomes beautiful in holiness. *Leigh Richmond, 1772-1827.*

**Verse 10.** *Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth.* This clause reads in the old Latin version, "Tell it out among the heathen, that the Lord reigneth *from the tree*." Justin Martyr accuses the Jews, that they have erased the words "a ligno", *apo xulou*, which are wanting in the original and in the Septuagint. Mrs. Charles renders the verse thus:

"The truth that David learned to sing,  
Its deep fulfilment here attains;  
Tell all the earth the Lord is king!  
Lo, from the cross, a King he reigns!"  
--From "*Christ in Song. Hymns of Immanuel, with Notes by P. Schaff,*" 1870.

**Verse 10.** *Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth.* It is not enough to feel *desire*; we must "*say among the heathen, the Lord reigneth*." There is a commandment given us of the Lord to "go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature"—to tell them what Christ hath taught us—to say to them, in fact, "The LORD reigneth." . . . We go among the heathen, and say, "the Lord reigneth"—point them to all the various objects in *creation*—to the stars of heaven, to the beauties of vegetation, to the daily

occurrences of *providence*, to the body fearfully and wonderfully made, to its continual preservation and supply. We may easily take our text from every thing by which we are surrounded, and say, "The Lord reigneth." But we must not stop here. It is well to have right views of God as the Creator; but it is only as we view him as the God of *Redemption*, that we can praise him "in the beauty of holiness." *Leigh Richmond*.

**Verse 10.** *Say among the heathen that the LORD reigneth* must be the Christian's as it was the Israelite's motto. The earliest preaching of our Saviour and his disciples was the preaching of the gospel of the *kingdom*. It was because *all power was given unto him in heaven and in earth*, that, after his resurrection from the dead, Jesus sent forth his apostles to go and teach all nations. The substance of the apostles' subsequent preaching was, confessedly, the *kingdom* of God. *J. F. Thrupp*.

**Verse 10.** *Say among the heathen.* Go, ye that are already become proselytes unto him, and publish everywhere, in all countries, that the Lord *Christ* is the sovereign of the world, who alone can make it happy: for he shall settle those in peace that submit unto his government: and they shall not be so disturbed as they were wont with wars and tumults: he shall administer equal justice unto all: and neither suffer the good to be unrewarded, nor the evil to escape unpunished. *Symon Patrick*.

**Verse 10.** *The world also*, etc. The natural world shall be established; the standing of the world, and its stability, is owing to the mediation of Christ. Sin had given it a shock, and still threatens it; but Christ, as redeemer, upholds all things, and preserves the course of nature. The world of mankind shall be established, shall be preserved, till all that belong to the election of grace are called in, though a guilty, provoking world. The Christian religion, as far as it is embraced, shall establish states and kingdoms, and preserve good order among men. The church in the world shall be established, that it cannot be moved, for it is built upon a rock, and the gates of hell shall never prevail against it; it is a "kingdom that cannot be shaken." *Matthew Henry*.

**Verse 10.** *It shall not be moved.* When we learn from the records of geology, as they are inscribed upon the rocks, how numerous and thorough have been the revolutions of the surface and the crust of the globe in past ages; how often and how long the present dry land has been alternately above and beneath the ocean; how frequently the crust of the globe has been fractured, bent, and dislocated; now lifted upward, and now thrown downward, and now folded by lateral pressure; how frequently melted matter has been forced through its strata and through its fissures to the surface; in short, how

every particle of the accessible portions of the globe has undergone entire metamorphoses; and especially when we recollect what strong evidence there is that oceans of liquid matter exist beneath the solid crust, and that probably the whole interior of the earth is in that condition, with expansive energy sufficient to rend the globe into fragments; when we review all these facts, we cannot but feel that the condition of the surface of the globe must be one of great insecurity and liability to change. But it is not so. On the contrary, the present state of the globe is one of permanent uniformity and entire security, except those comparatively slight catastrophes which result from earthquakes, volcanoes, and local deluges. Even the climate has experienced no general change within historic times, and the profound mathematical researches of Baron Fourier have demonstrated that, even though the internal parts of the globe are in an incandescent state, beneath a crust thirty or forty miles, the temperature of the surface has long since ceased to be affected by the melted central mass; that it is not now more than one seventeenth of a degree higher than it would be if the interior were ice; and that hundreds of thousands of years will not see it lowered, from this cause, more than the seventeenth part of a degree. And as to the apprehension that the entire crust of the globe may be broken through, and fall into the melted matter beneath, just reflect what solidity and strength there must be in a mass of hard rock from fifty to one hundred miles in thickness, and your fears of such a catastrophe will probably vanish. Now, such a uniformity of climate and security from general ruin are essential to the comfort and existence of animal nature. But it must have required infinite wisdom and benevolence so to arrange and balance the mighty elements of change and ruin which exist in the earth, that they should hold one another in check, and make the world a quiet, unchanged, and secure dwelling place for so many thousands of years. Surely that wisdom must have been guided by infinite benevolence. *Edward Hitchcock, in "The Religion of Geology," 1851.*

**Verse 11.** *Let the heavens rejoice.* As the whole creation, both animate and inanimate, has groaned beneath the weight of the curse, so shall the whole creation partake of the great deliverance." *The Speaker's Commentary,* "1873.

**Verse 11.** *Let the sea roar.*

Thou paragon of elemental powers,  
Mystery of waters—never slumbering sea!  
Impassioned orator with lips sublime,

Whose waves are arguments which prove a God!  
—*Robert Montgomery, 1807-1855.*

**Verses 11-12.** God will graciously accept the holy joys and praises of all the hearty well wishers to the kingdom of Christ, be their capacity never so mean. *The sea* can but *roar*, and how *the trees of the wood* can show that they *rejoice*, I know not; but "he that searcheth the heart, knows what is the mind of the Spirit, " and understands the language, the broken language of the weakest. *Matthew Henry.*

**Verses 11-13.** These verses are full of comprehensive beauty and power. They present the gathering together of everything under the confessed dominion of the reigning Christ. Things in heaven, as well as things on earth, rejoice together in the acknowledged blessing of the Lord of peace. The Psalm is throughout a very sweet strain of millennial prophecy. *Arthur Pridham.*

**Verses 11-13.** Nothing can excel that noble exultation of universal nature in the 96th Psalm, which has been so often commended, where the whole animate and inanimate creation unite in the praises of their Maker. Poetry here seems to assume the highest tone of triumph and exultation, and to revel, if I may so express myself, in all the extravagance of joy. *Robert Lowth.*

**Verses 11-13.** Although there are some who by *heaven* understand *angels*; by the *earth, men*; by the *sea, troublesome spirits*; by *trees and fields*, the *Gentiles* who were to believe, yet this need not be thought strange, because such *prosopopaeias* are frequent in Scripture. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 12.** *Let the fields be joyful*, etc. Let the husbandmen, and the shepherds, and all that dwell in the fields leap for joy; and the woodmen and foresters shout for joy, to see the happy day approaching; when all the idols that are worshipped there shall be thrown down together with their groves. *Symon Patrick.*

**Verse 12.** *Rejoice.* The verb *wgr* expresses the vibratory motion, either of a dancer's feet, or of a singer's lip. *Samuel Horsley.*

**Verse 12.** *The trees of the wood.*

His praise, ye winds, that from four quarters blow,  
 Breathe soft or loud; and wave your tops, ye Pines,  
 With every plant, in sign of worship wave. *John Milton.*

**Verses 12-13.** He cometh, etc.

It chanced upon the merry, merry Christmas eve,  
 I went sighing past the church across the moorland dreary—  
 "Oh! never sin and want and woe this earth will leave,  
 And the bells but mock the wailing round, they sing so cheery.

How long O Lord! how long before thou come again?  
 Still in cellar, and in garret, and on moorland dreary  
 The orphans moan, and widows weep, and poor men toil in vain,  
 Till earth is sick of hope deferred, though Christmas bells be cheery."

Then arose a joyous clamour from the wild fowl on the mere,  
 Beneath the stars, across the snow, like clear bells ringing.  
 And a voice within cried. "Listen! Christmas carols even here!  
 Though thou be dumb, yet over their work the stars and snows are singing.

Blind! I live, I love, I reign: and all the nations through  
 With the thunder of my judgments even now are ringing;  
 Do thou fulfil thy work but as yon wild fowl do,  
 Thou wilt heed no less the wailing, yet hear through it angels singing."  
 —*Charles Kingsley*, 1858.

**Verse 13.** *For he cometh, for he cometh.* Because the thing was hard to be believed, the Prophet asserts twice that God should come, that he should be Judge and King, and Governor of all. *Martinus Bucerus in Expos. Ecclesiast.*

**Verse 13.** *He cometh.* Not awby, "*he shall come*"; "but jpv l ab, "he cometh; "to show how near the time is. It is almost daybreak, and the court is ready to sit: "The Judge standeth at the door, "Jas 5:9. *Thomas Watson.*

**Verse 13.** *To judge.* Vatablus remarks that *to judge* is the word used instead of *to reign, judicare pro regere*, because judges in the early days of the Holy Land exercised the power both of kings and magistrates. The Lord comes to be to all nations a wiser judge than Samuel, a greater champion than Samson, a mightier deliverer than Gideon. *C. H. S.*

**Verse 13.** *He cometh to judge the earth.* That is, to put earth in order, to be its Gideon and Samson, to be its *ruler*, to fulfil all that the Book of Judges delineates of a judge's office. It is, as Hengstenberg says, "a gracious judging, "not a time of mere adjudication of causes or pronouncing sentences—it is a day of jubilee. It is the happiest day our world has ever seen. Who would not long for it? Who is there that does not pray for it? It is the day of the Judge's glory, as well as of our world's freedom—the day when "*the judgement of this world*" (Joh 12:31 16:11), which his cross began and made sure, is completed by the total suppression of Satan's reign, and the removal of the curse. All this is anticipated here; and so we entitle this Psalm, *The glory due to him who cometh to judge the earth.* Andrew A. Bonar.

**Verse 13.** *He cometh to judge the earth*, etc. In this new song they take up the words of Enoch, the seventh from Adam (Jude 1:14), who preached of the Coming of the Lord to judge the world. *Chr. Wordsworth.*

---

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** The novelties of grace.

1. A new salvation.
2. Creates a new heart.
3. Suggests a new song.
4. Secures new testimonies, and these,
5. Produce new converts.

**Verses 1-3.**

1. The end desired—to see the earth singing unto the Lord, and blessing his name.
2. The means suggested—the showing forth his salvation from day to day; declaring his glory, etc.
3. The certainty of its accomplishment. The Lord hath said it. "O sing, "etc. When he commands earth must obey. *G. R.*

**Verses 1-3.** The progress of zeal.



1. The spring of expansive desire, Ps 96:1.
2. The streamlet of practical daily effort, Ps 96:2.
3. The broad river of foreign missions, Ps 96:3. *C. D.*

**Verses 1-9.** We are to honour God.

1. With songs, Ps 96:1-2.
  2. With sermons, Ps 96:3.
  3. With religious services, Ps 96:7-9.
- Matthew Henry.*

**Verses 3** (*first clause*).

1. Declare among the heathen the glory of God's perfections, that they may acknowledge him as the true God.
2. Declare the glory of his salvation, that they may accept him as their only Redeemer.
3. Declare the glory of his providence, that they may confide in him as their faithful guardian.
4. Declare the glory of his word, that they may prize it as their chief treasure.
3. Declare the glory of his service, that they may choose it as their noblest occupation.
4. Declare the glory of his residence, that they may seek it as their best home. *William Jackson.*

**Verse 3.**

1. What the gospel is, "God's glory, ""his wonders."
2. What shall we do with it—declare it.
3. To whom. "Among the heathen, "all people.

**Verse 3** (*last clause*). *His wonders among the people.*

1. The wonders of his Being, to inspire them with awe.
2. The wonders of his creation, to fill them with amazement.
3. The wonders of his judgments, to restrain them with fear.
4. The wonders of his grace, to allure them with love. *W. Jackson.*

**Verses 4-6.** Missionary sermon.

1. Contrast Jehovah of the Bible with gods of human device.
2. Decide between divine worship and idolatry.
3. Appeal for effort on behalf of idolaters. *C. D.*

**Verse 6.** *Honour and majesty are before him.*

1. As emanations from him.
2. As excellencies ascribed to him.
3. As characteristics of what is done by him.
4. As marks of all that dwell near him. *W. Jackson.*

**Verse 6** (latter clause).—What we may see in God's sanctuary (strength, and beauty). What we may obtain there, Ps 90:17 (strength and beauty). *C. D.*

**Verse 8.** Jehovah possesses a nature and character peculiar to himself; he sustains various offices and relations, and he has performed many works which he alone could perform. On all these accounts something is due to him from his creatures. And when we regard him with such affections, and yield him such services, as his nature, character, offices, and works deserve, then we give unto him the glory which is due to his name.

1. Let us inquire what is due to Jehovah on account of his nature.
2. What is due to Jehovah on account of the character he possesses.
3. What is due to God on account of the relations and offices which he sustains—that of a creator, preserver.
4. What is due to Jehovah on account of the works which he has performed, in nature, providence and redemption. *E. Payson.*

**Verse 8.** The object of worship. The nature of worship. The accompaniment of worship (an offering). The place of worship. *C. D.*

**Verse 9.** (first clause). An examination of true and false worship.

1. False worship, in the obscurity of ignorance, in the dulness of formalism, in the offensiveness of indulged sin, in the hideousness of hypocrisy.
2. True worship, in the beauty of holiness. *C. D.*

**Verse 9.** Holy fear an essential ingredient in true religion.

**Verses 10-13.** The reign of righteousness.

1. The announcement of a righteous king and judge.
2. The joyful reception prepared for him.
3. His glorious coming. *C. D.*

**Verses 11-12.** The sympathy of nature with the work of grace; especially dwelling upon its fuller display in the millennial period.

## Psalm 97

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

**SUBJECT.** As the fast Psalm sung the praises of the Lord in connection with the proclamation of the gospel among the Gentiles, so this appears to foreshadow the mighty working of the Holy Ghost in subduing the colossal systems of error, and casting down the idol gods. Across the sea to maritime regions a voice cries for rejoicing at the reign of Jesus (Ps 97:1), the sacred fire descends (Ps 97:3), like lightning the gospel flames forth (Ps 97:4), difficulties vanish (Ps 97:5), and all the nations see the glory of God (Ps 97:6). The idols are confounded (Ps 97:7), the church rejoices (Ps 98:8), the Lord is exalted (Ps 98:9). The Psalm closes with an exhortation to holy steadfastness under the persecution which would follow, and bids the saints rejoice that their path is bright, and their reward glorious and certain. Modern critics, always intent upon ascribing the psalms to anybody rather than to David, count themselves successful in dating this song further on than the captivity, because it contains passages similar to those which occur in the later prophets; but we venture to assert that it is quite as probable that the prophets adopted the language of David as that some unknown writer borrowed from them. One psalm in this series is said to be "in David", and we believe that the rest are in the same place, and by the same author. The matter is not important, and we only mention it because it seems to be the pride of certain critics to set up new theories; and there are readers who imagine this to be a sure proof of prodigious learning. We do not believe that their theories are worth the paper they are written upon.

**DIVISION.** The psalm divides itself into four portions, each containing three verses. The coming of the Lord is described (Ps 97:1-3); its effect upon the earth is declared (Ps 97:4-6); and then its influence upon the heathen and the people of God (Ps 97:7-9). The last part contains both exhortation and encouragement, urging to holiness and inculcating happiness (Ps 97:10-12).

### EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *The Lord reigneth.* This is the watchword of the psalm—Jehovah reigns. It is also the essence of the gospel proclamation, and the foundation of the gospel kingdom. Jesus has come, and all power is given unto him in heaven and in earth, therefore men are bidden to yield him their obedient faith. Saints draw comfort from these words, and only rebels cavil at them. Let the earth rejoice, for there is cause for joy. Other reigns have produced injustice, oppression, bloodshed, terror; the reign of the infinitely gracious Jehovah is the hope of mankind, and when they all yield to it the race will have its paradise restored. The very globe itself may well be glad that its Maker and liege Lord has come to his own, and the whole race of man may also be glad, since to every willing subject Jesus brings untold blessings. Let the multitude of isles be glad thereof. To the ancient Israelites all places beyond the seas were isles, and the phrase is equivalent to all lands which are reached by ships. It is remarkable, however, that upon actual islands some of the greatest victories of the Cross have been achieved. Our own

favoured land is a case in point, and not less so the islands of Polynesia and the kingdom of Madagascar. Islands are very numerous; may they all become Holy Islands, and Isles of Saints, then will they all be Fortunate Islands, and true Formosas. Many a land owes its peace to the sea; if it had not been isolated it would have been desolated, and therefore the inhabitants should praise the Lord who has moated them about, and given them a defence more available than bars of brass. Jesus deserves to be Lord of the Isles, and to have his praises sounded along every sea beaten shore. Amen, so let it be.

**Verse 2.** *Clouds and darkness are round about him.* So the Lord revealed himself at Sinai, so must he ever surround his essential Deity when he shows himself to the sons of men, or his excessive glory would destroy them. Every revelation of God must also be an obvelation; there must be a veiling of his infinite splendour if anything is to be seen by finite beings. It is often thus with the Lord in providence; when working out designs of unmingled love he conceals the purpose of his grace that it may be the more clearly discovered at the end. "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing." Around the history of his church dark clouds of persecution hover, and an awful gloom at times settles down, still the Lord is there; and though men for a while see not the bright light in the clouds, it bursts forth in due season to the confusion of the adversaries of the gospel. This passage should teach us the impertinence of attempting to pry into the essence of the Godhead, the vanity of all endeavours to understand the mystery of the Trinity in Unity, the arrogance of arraigning the Most High before the bar of human reason, the folly of dictating to the Eternal One the manner in which he should proceed. Wisdom veils her face and adores the mercy which conceals the divine purpose; folly rushes in and perishes, blinded first, and by and by consumed by the blaze of glory. Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne. There he abides, he never departs from strict justice and right: his throne is fixed upon the rock of eternal holiness. Righteousness is His immutable attribute, and judgment marks his every act. What though we cannot see or understand what he doeth, yet we are sure that he will do no wrong to us or any of his creatures. Is not this enough to make us rejoice in him and adore him? Divine sovereignty is never tyrannical. Jehovah is an autocrat, but not a despot. Absolute power is safe in the hands of him who cannot err, or act unrighteously. When the roll of the decrees, and the books of the divine providence shall be opened, no eye shall there discern one word that should be blotted out, one syllable of error, one line of injustice, one letter of unholiness. Of none but the Lord of all can this be said.

**Verse 3.** *A fire goeth before him.* Like an advance guard clearing the way. So was it at Sinai, so must it be: the very Being of God is power, consuming all opposition; omnipotence is a devouring flame which burneth up his enemies round about. God is longsuffering, but when he comes forth to judgment he will make short work with the unrighteous, they will be as chaff before the flame. Reading this verse in reference to the coming of Jesus, and the descent of the Spirit, we are reminded of the tongues of fire, and of the power which attended the gospel, so that all opposition was speedily overcome. Even now where the gospel is preached in faith, and in the power of the Spirit, it burns its own way, irresistibly destroying falsehood, superstition, unbelief, sin, indifference, and hardness of heart. In it the Lord reigneth, and because of it let the earth rejoice.

**Verse 4.** *His lightnings enlightened the world.* In times of tempest the whole of nature is lighted up with a lurid glare, even the light of the sun itself seems dim compared with the blaze of lightning. If such are the common lights of nature what must be the glories of the Godhead itself? When God draws aside the curtain for a moment how astonished are the nations, the light compels them to cover their eyes and bow their heads in solemn awe. Jesus in the gospel lights up the earth with such a blaze of truth and grace as was never seen or even imagined before. In apostolic times the word flashed from one end of the heavens to the other, no part of the civilised globe was left unilluminated. The earth saw, and trembled. In God's presence the solid earth quakes, astonished by his glory it is convulsed with fear. To the advent of our Lord and the setting up of his kingdom among men these words are also most applicable; nothing ever caused such a shaking and commotion as the proclamation of the gospel, nothing was more majestic than its course, it turned the world upside down, levelled the mountains, and filled up the valleys. Jesus came, he saw, he conquered. When the Holy Ghost rested upon his servants their course was like that of a mighty storm, the truth flashed with the force and speed of a thunderbolt, and philosophers and priests, princes and people were utterly confounded, and altogether powerless to withstand it. It shall be so again. Faith even now sets the world on fire and rocks the nations to and fro.

**Verse 5.** *The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD.* Inanimate nature knows its Creator, and worships him in its own fashion. States and kingdoms which stand out upon the world like mountains are utterly dissolved when he decrees their end. Systems as ancient and firmly rooted as the hills pass away when he does but look upon them. In the Pentecostal era, and its subsequent age, this was seen on all hands, heathenism yielded at the

glance of Jehovah Jesus, and the tyrannies based upon it dissolved like melted wax. At the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. His dominion is universal, and his power is everywhere felt. Men cannot move the hills, with difficulty do they climb them, with incredible toil do they pierce their way through their fastnesses, but it is not so with the Lord, his presence makes a clear pathway, obstacles disappear, a highway is made, and that not by his hand as though it cost him pains, but by his mere presence, for power goes forth from him with a word or a glance. O for the presence of the Lord after this sort with his church at this hour! It is our one and only need. With it the mountains of difficulty would flee away, and all obstacles would disappear. O that thou wouldest rend the heavens and come down, that the mountains might flow down at thy presence, O Lord. In the little world of our nature the presence of Jesus in reigning power is as a fire to consume our lusts and melt our souls to obedience. Sometimes we doubt the presence of the Lord within, for he is concealed with clouds, but we are again assured that he is within us when his light shines in and fills us with holy fear, while at the same time the warmth of grace softens us to penitence, resignation and obedience, even as wax becomes soft in the presence of fire.

**Verse 6.** *The heavens declare his righteousness.* It is as conspicuous as if written across the skies, both the celestial and the terrestrial globes shine in its light. It is the manner of the inspired poets to picture the whole creation as in sympathy with the glory of God, and indeed it is not *mere* poetry, for a great truth underlies it, the whole creation has been made to groan through man's sin, and it is yet to share in the joy of his restoration. And all the people see his glory. The glorious gospel became so well known and widely promulgated, that it seemed to be proclaimed by every star, and published by the very skies themselves, therefore all races of men became acquainted with it, and were made to see the exceeding glory of the grace of God which is resplendent therein. May it come to pass ere long that, by a revival of the old missionary ardour, the glad tidings may yet be carried to every tribe of Adam's race, and once again all flesh may see the glory of Jehovah. It must be so, therefore let us rejoice before the Lord.

**Verse 7.** *Confounded be all they that serve graven images, that boast themselves of idols.* They shall be so; shame shall cover their faces, they shall blush to think of their former besotted boastings. When a man gravely worships what has been engraved by a man's hand, and puts his trust in a mere nothing and nonentity, he is indeed brutish, and when he is converted from such absurdity, he may well be ashamed. A man who worships an image is but the image of a man, his senses must have left him. He who

boasts of an idol makes an idle boast. Worship him, all ye gods. Bow down yourselves, ye fancied gods. Let Jove do homage to Jehovah, let Thor lay down his hammer at the foot of the cross, and Juggernaut remove his blood stained car out of the road of Immanuel. If the false gods are thus bidden to worship the coming Lord, how much more shall they adore him who are godlike creatures in heaven, even the angelic spirits? Paul quotes this passage as the voice of God to angels when he sent his Son into the world. All powers are bound to recognise the chief power; since they derive their only rightful authority from the Lord, they should be careful to acknowledge his superiority at all times by the most reverent adoration.

**Verse 8.** *Zion heard, and was glad.* While the heathen are confounded the people of God are made to triumph, for they love to see their God exalted. The day shall come when the literal Zion, so long forsaken, shall joy in the common salvation. It did so at the first when the apostles dwelt at Jerusalem, and the good days will come back again. And the daughters of Judah rejoiced. Each individual believer is glad when he sees false systems broken up and idol gods broken down; the judgments of the Lord afford unalloyed delight to those who worship the true God in spirit and in truth. In the first ages of Christianity the believing Israel rejoiced to see Christ's kingdom victorious among the heathen, and even yet, though for a while turning aside, the daughters of Judah will sympathise in the wide spread reign of Jehovah their God, through the gospel of his dear Son. As the women of Judah went forth to meet David in the dance, singing his victory over the Philistine, so shall they chant the triumphs of David's son and Lord.

**Verse 9.** *For thou, Lord, art high above all the earth.* And therefore do we rejoice to see the idols abolished and to see all mankind bending at thy throne. There is but one God, there cannot be another, and he is and ever must be over all. Thou art exalted far above all gods. As much as ALL is exalted above nothing, and perfection above folly. Jehovah is not alone high over Judea, but over all the earth, nor is he exalted over men only, but over everything that can be called god: the days are on their way when all men shall discern this truth, and shall render unto the Lord the glory which is due alone to him.

**Verse 10.** *Ye that love the Lord, hate evil.* For He hates it, his fire consumes it, his lightnings blast it, his presence shakes it out of its place, and his glory confounds all the lovers of it. We cannot love God without hating that which he hates. We are not only to avoid evil, and to refuse to countenance it, but we must be in arms against it, and bear towards it a hearty indignation. He preserveth the souls of his saints. Therefore they need not be afraid of



proclaiming war with the party which favours sin. The saints are the safe ones: they have been saved and shall be saved. God keeps those who keep his law. Those who love the Lord shall see his love manifested to them in their preservation from their enemies, and as they keep far from evil so shall evil be kept far from them. He delivereth them out of the hand of the wicked. It is not consistent with the glory of his name to give over to the power of his foes those whom his grace has made his friends. He may leave the bodies of his persecuted saints in the hand of the wicked, but not their souls, these are very dear to him, and he preserves them safe in his bosom. This foretells for the church a season of battling with the powers of darkness, but the Lord will preserve it and bring it forth to the light.

**Verse 11.** *Light is sown for the righteous.* All along their pathway it is strewn. Their night is almost over, their day is coming, the morning already advancing with rosy steps is sowing the earth with orient pearls. The full harvest of delight is not yet ours, but it is sown for us; it is springing, it will yet appear in fulness. This is only for those who are light before the Lord in his own righteousness, for all others the blackness of darkness is reserved. And gladness for the upright in heart. Gladness is not only for one righteous man in the singular, but for the whole company of the upright, even as the apostle, after speaking of the crown of life laid up for himself, immediately amended his speech by adding, "and not for me only, but also for all them that love his appearing." The upright ought to be glad, they have cause to be glad, yea and they shall be glad. Those who are right hearted shall also be glad hearted. Right leads to light. In the furrows of integrity lie the seeds of happiness, which shall develop into a harvest of bliss. God has lightning for sinners and light for saints. The gospel of Jesus, wherever it goes, sows the whole earth with joy for believers, for these are the men who are righteous before the Lord.

**Verse 12.** *Rejoice in the LORD, ye righteous.* The psalmist had bidden the earth rejoice, and here he turns to the excellent of the earth and bids them lead the song. If all others fail to praise the Lord, the godly must not. To them God is peculiarly revealed, by them he should be specially adored. And give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness—which is the harmony of all his attributes, the superlative wholeness of his character. This is a terror to the wicked, and a cause of thankfulness to the gracious. To remember that Jehovah is holy is becoming in those who dwell in his courts, to give thanks in consequence of that remembrance is the sure index of their fitness to abide in his presence. In reference to the triumphs of the gospel, this text teaches us to rejoice greatly in its purifying effect; it is the death of sin and the life of

virtue. An unholy gospel is no gospel. The holiness of the religion of Jesus is its glory, it is that which makes it glad tidings, since while man is left in his sins no bliss can be his portion. Salvation from sin is the priceless gift of our thrice holy God, therefore let us magnify him for ever and ever. He will fill the world with holiness, and so with happiness, therefore let us glory in his holy name, world without end. Amen.

---

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Whole Psalm.** The two preceding psalms are songs of joy and thanksgiving, in which the gladness of Christ's people is poured forth as they go to meet their triumphant Lord at his second advent, and to bring him back in glory to assume his kingdom. The present psalm, in language sufficiently explicit, describes the completion of this great event, "the Lord reigneth"; Messiah is on his throne, and now the words of Ps 2:6, are fulfilled, "I have set my king upon my holy hill of Sion." Messiah's first act of sovereignty is judgment. Scriptures bearing upon that event are 2Th 1:7 Jude 1:14 Isa 66:15. The character of these judgments is given in the psalm: clouds and darkness encircling his throne, where, however, righteousness and mercy dwell; a fire which burns up his enemies round about; lightnings flashing upon the world, the earth trembling, and the hills melting like wax at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the Lord of the whole earth. Peter, in his second Epistle, and third chapter, evidently refers to these events as yet future in his day.—*R.H. Ryland.*

**Verse 1.** *The LORD reigneth.* Here's good news, glad tidings: "*The Lord reigneth.*" It cannot be published without *praise*, without *rejoicing*, without *singing*, without *blessing*. We should dishonour this truth if we did not publish it; if we should with silence suppress it; if we should not speak well of it. It is so sweet and comfortable, that it fills the whole world with joy; and calls on every ear, and every tongue, and every heart, to be glad, to rejoice, and to praise God. Let the earth rejoice; let the multitude of isles be glad. As though he should say, Let nothing fear but hell: let nothing be disquieted but devils. Let the *lowest*, the *poorest* of the people of God, though but *earth*, yet let them rejoice in this, "*The LORD reigneth*"...

Here are two things of very sweet consideration, 1. The *reign* of the Lord; and, 2. The *reign* of the Lord *in the saints*.

First, This *kingdom* that God is now setting up is his everlasting kingdom. It will not be administered by the weakness of man, but by the power of God;

not by the folly of man, but by the judgment of God. God will, in this kingdom, nakedly manifest his own righteousness, his own compassion and pity; his own love, his own peace: he will do all things immediately by his own self. And therefore all the pride and ambition, all the oppression and tyranny, and miscarriages that have been in the government of men, shall be wholly taken away. Pure righteousness and judgment and equity shall be infallibly dispensed; and infinite power, strength, holiness, goodness, and authority shall shine forth nakedly in the face of God; and that shall be the judge of all men. We shall no longer be abused and oppressed by the will of men, by the lusts of men. The poor people shall no longer groan under the burden of men's lusts, nor sweat for the pleasure and contents of men; nor their faces any longer be ground by the hardness of the spirit of men; but they shall be under the protection of God. The great cry now of the people is, "Let's have a King!" Ye shall have one, one that will "reign in righteousness", the LORD himself.

Secondly, And this *reign* of the LORD shall be *in his saints*; according to that in Da 7:27. "And the kingdom and dominion, and the greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven, shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High, whose kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and all dominions shall serve and obey him." As this kingdom shall be administered in the glory of God; so also in the sweetness and gentleness of man, by brethren, by friends, by the saints of the Most High. God lifting up himself in the saints will administer this reign; and as he will do it by the saints, so he will do it by the softness and tenderness of the saints; "The kingdom and dominion under the whole earth shall be given to the people of the saints of the Most High." It's now doing; that ye shall obey none but the Lord; ye shall know no other laws but the law of God; ye shall know no other master but Jehovah. He hath made us priests and kings, and we shall reign with him on the earth. This nature of ours, this body of ours, shall reign with Christ, with God, and that upon earth.

The Lord reigns. The Lord hath served, hath been hitherto much, yea, mostly, "in the form of a servant." It hath been, as it were, the business of the Lord, whilst this world stood, to give supplies to men; to serve men; to give men strength, and wisdom, and riches, and authority, and power; that men might be great and happy, with the goodness of God: and (in this) God hath been *King* too, but in an under way; as saith the Lord, "I have served with your sins" and lusts: now he will no longer *serve*, but *reign*; God will take all the power and authority into his own hands. He will not be any longer under men, but above all men. It's time He should be so; it's reason He should be

so; it's just He should be so. Everything now must bow, stoop, and submit to the law, and rule, and will of God. No man shall any longer say, it shall be so, because it is my will to have it so: there shall not be found an heart, or tongue, that shall move against the dominion of the Lord.

Satan hath been a prince; he hath made laws of your captivity and misery; he hath kept you to his task, to do him service. He hath said, *Be angry*, and then you have been full of rage. He hath said, *Be covetous*, and then you have been full of covetousness. He hath said, *Be dark*, and then you have been full of blindness. He hath said, *Be proud*, and then ye have been full of haughtiness. And so he hath, as a monstrous tyrant, tormented the world. The sting of Satan's whips is in your consciences, I know. Your errors and mistakes have been through the kingdom of darkness in you, that you do not know God, or his holy hill. You would come into the enjoyment of God; Satan will not let you: you would know God; he will not suffer you: you would be wise unto salvation; he will not permit you. He hath fettered you with his chains of darkness; he hath captivated your judgments; he hath made you to grind at his mill and to drudge in his service; and hath made you to cry out, "O when will the Lord come!" But now his wicked reign is at an end: what ye had, ye shall want, and what ye want, ye shall have; what hath been shall not be; that which shall be, must be, and cannot choose but be: ye shall have love, because the law of God is love; and ye shall have peace, because the kingdom of God is peace; and ye shall have light, because the inheritance is marvellous light; ye shall have righteousness, because this state is true holiness; ye shall have liberty, settledness, stability, and every good thing in this kingdom of God. It's always ill with us while Satan reigns. It's always well with us while God reigns; when our Husband is King we shall have preferment, and honour, and riches, and greatness, and power, and authority, because our God reigns. "*The Lord reigns*", for us; the Lord takes his kingdom, and it is for us: the Lord hath reigned in himself all this while; now he reigns by us: the Lord counts himself not to have a kingdom, till we have it with him: the Lord thinks himself mean and despised, till we are exalted. He is poor without us. He is weak, while absent from us. He is not himself unless he enjoys us. "Thou art my excellency, my firstborn." The power of God is in weakness, till we become mighty. The kingdom of God is in darkness, till we shine forth. The treasures of God were of no worth to him, if we were not his richest jewels.

The Lord doth reign. This is not to be passed by; it's in the present tense. This is the song that we hear and see angels sing. The elders and saints in heaven sing it perpetually; we daily hear it. Hallelujah, Hallelujah, the Lord

reigneth! There is administered into our hearts and ears an hallelujah; the Lord reigneth; indeed every creature speaks it, all in heaven and earth. "THE LORD *doth reign*", and saith, "I am upon my throne. I am great; none is great but myself. I am King; I have the sceptre in my hand. I am powerful; none is powerful but I." All the power of men is broken. All the thrones of men are shattered into dust. All the wisdom of men is turned into folly. All the strength of men s melted into weakness and water. The melting and mouldering away of the powers and dignities of the world, speak it aloud, *The LORD reigns*.—*William Sedgwick, in "Some Flashes of Lightnings of the Son of Man," 1648.*

**Verse 1.** *The LORD reigneth.* He who stood before the judge, he who received the blows, he who was scourged, he who was spit upon, he who was crowned with thorns, he who was struck with fists, he who hung upon the cross, he who as he hung upon the wood was mocked, he who died upon the cross, he who was pierced with the spear, he who was buried, himself arose from the dead. "*The Lord reigneth.*" Let kingdoms rage as much as they can; what can they do to the King of kingdoms, the Lord of all kings, the Creator of all worlds?—*Augustine.*

**Verse 1.** *The LORD reigneth.* I am glad that Christ is Lord of all, for otherwise I should utterly have been out of hope, saith *Miconius* in an epistle to *Calvin*, upon a view of the church's enemies.—*John Trapp.*

**Verse 1.** *The LORD reigneth; let the earth rejoice.* Consider the divine government in various views, as legislative, providential, mediatorial, and judicial, and in each of these views the divine government is matter of universal joy.

1. *The Lord reigneth upon a throne of legislation,* "let the earth rejoice." He is the one supreme law giver and is perfectly qualified for that important trust. Nothing tends more to the advantage of civil society than to have good laws established, according to which mankind are to conduct themselves, and according to which their rulers will deal with them. Now the supreme and universal King has enacted and published the best laws for the government of the moral world, and of the human race in particular. Let the earth then rejoice that God has clearly revealed his will to us and not left us in inextricable perplexities about our duty to him and mankind... Again, "Let the earth rejoice" that these laws are suitably enforced with proper sanctions. The sanctions are such as become a God of infinite wisdom, almighty power, inexorable justice, untainted holiness, and unbounded goodness and grace, and such as are agreeable to the nature of reasonable creatures formed for an

immortal duration. Let the earth rejoice that the divine laws reach the inner man, and have power upon the hearts and consciences of men. Human laws can only smooth our external conduct at best, but the heart in the mean time may be disloyal and wicked. Now this defect is supplied by the laws of the King of Heaven, which are spiritual. They require a complete uniformity and self consistency in us that heart and life may agree, and therefore they are wisely framed to make us entirely good.

2. *The Lord reigneth by his providence*, "let the earth rejoice." The providence of God is well described in our shorter catechism, "It is his most holy, wise, and powerful preserving and governing all his creatures and all their actions." "The Lord reigneth" over the kingdoms of the earth, and manages all their affairs according to his sovereign and wise pleasure, and he doth the same for his church. He can reduce confusion into order, make the wrath of man to praise him, and restrain the remainder of it.

3. "The Lord reigneth" *upon a throne of grace!* "let the earth rejoice." It is the mediatorial government of the Messiah which the Psalmist had more immediately in view, and this is the principal cause of joy to the earth and its guilty inhabitants.

4. And, lastly, the Lord will reign ere long upon *a throne of universal judgment* conspicuous to the assembled universe, "let the earth therefore rejoice, and the multitude of the isles be glad."—*Condensed from a Sermon by Samuel Davies, 1724-1761.*

**Verse 1.** *Let the earth rejoice.* The earth is called upon to rejoice because the Lord reigneth; and well it may, on the day of its enlargement and final emancipation from evil, which seems to be here set forth—a day of judgment, and so also a day of terror and destruction to the enemies of God and goodness—a day when at his presence "the elements shall melt with fervent heat"; but his own righteousness and glory shall be manifested in the sight of all people. Then will the worldly, who serve idols in loving the creature more than the Creator, be confounded and overthrown; but then, too, will the righteous lift up their heads and rejoice because of God's judgments.—*Thomas Chalmers.*

**Verse 1.** *The multitude of the isles.* In Poole's Synopsis we find from the various interpretations of different authors that the word may mean maritime regions, places beyond sea usually reached in ships, and all countries bordering on the ocean.—*C.H.S.*

**Verse 1.** *The isles.* Figuratively the isles may be taken for all the churches. Why isles? because the waves of all temptations roar around them. But as an isle may be beaten by the waves which on every side dash around it, yet cannot be broken, and rather itself doth break the advancing waves, than by them is broken: so also the churches of God, springing up throughout the world, have suffered the persecutions of the ungodly, who roar around them on every side; and behold the isles stand fixed, and at last the sea is calmed.—*Augustine.*

**Verse 1.** When Bulstrode Whitelock was embarked as Cromwell's envoy to Sweden, in 1653, he was much disturbed in mind, as he rested at Harwich the preceding night, which was very stormy, as he thought upon the distracted state of the nation. It happened that a confidential servant slept in an adjacent bed, who, finding that his master could not sleep, at length said:

"Pray, sir, will you give me leave to ask you a question?"

"Certainly."

"Pray, sir, do you think God governed the world very well before you came into it?"

"Undoubtedly."

"And pray, sir, do you think that He will govern it quite as well when you are gone out of it?"

"Certainly."

"Then pray, sir, excuse me, but do not you think you may trust him to govern it quite as well as long as you live?"

To this question Whitelock had nothing to reply; but turning about, soon fell fast asleep, till he was summoned to embark.—*G.S. Bowes, in "Illustrative Gatherings."* 1862.

**Verse 2.** *Clouds and darkness are round about him.* The figurative language in the poetical parts of the Old Testament is frequently taken from the historical books, and refers to the facts therein recorded: thus the appearances of God to the saints and patriarchs in old times is the origin of the figure in our text. If you look at the history of these appearances, you will find they were all accompanied with clouds and darkness. The cloud of

the Lord went before the children of Israel when they departed from the land of bondage. This cloud had a dark and bright side, and was a symbol of the divine presence. Thus it preceded the people in all their marches, as a pillar of fire by night, and of a cloud by day. When Solomon dedicated the temple, the glory of the Lord filled the house, and the priest could not enter into the house of the Lord, because the glory of the Lord filled the house. When God descended upon Mount Sinai, "there were thunders and lightnings, and a thick cloud upon the mount, and the voice of the trumpet exceeding loud. And Mount Sinai was altogether on a smoke, because the Lord descended upon it in fire; and the smoke thereof ascended as the smoke of a furnace, and the whole mount quaked greatly. And the Lord came down upon Mount Sinai, upon the top of the mount" (Ex 19:16,18,20). When our Saviour was transfigured before three of his disciples, "a bright cloud overshadowed them", from which proceeded the voice of the Father, saying, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; hear ye him." And Peter, who was present there, afterwards referring to the fact, says that the voice proceeded "from the excellent glory." Thus, in all the symbols of the divine presence, there was a mixture of splendour with darkness and obscurity. So it is in the operations of Providence: in a moral and figurative sense, we may say that clouds and darkness surround all the operations of divine power and wisdom. Clouds are emblems of obscurity; darkness, of distress. The works of God's providence are often obscure and productive of distress to mankind, though righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.—*Robert Hall*.

**Verse 2.** *Clouds and darkness are round about him.* God doth govern the world mysteriously. As there are mysteries in the word, so in the works of God; dusnohta, "things hard to be understood", (2Pe 3:16), many riddles which nonplus and puzzle men of the largest and most piercing intellectuals: "Behold, I go forward, but he is not there; and backward, but I cannot perceive him: on the left hand, where he doth work, but I cannot behold him: he hideth himself on the right hand, that I cannot see him: but he knoweth the way that I take." Job 23:8-10. God knoweth our ways, and counteth our steps; but the wisest of men do not know all God's ways. His way is frequently in the sea, and his chariots in the clouds; so that he is invisible, not only in his essence, but also in the design and tendence of his operations. Those that behold him with an eye of faith, do not yet see him with an eye of understanding, so as to discern his way, and whither he is going. Paul assures us, "His judgments are unsearchable, and his ways past finding out." Ro 11:33. Some of them, indeed, are obvious, plain, and easy; we may upon the first view give a satisfactory account of them; we may read



righteousness, equity, mercy, goodness, love, in them, because written in capital letters, and with such beams of light as he that runs may read them. But others of God's ways are dark and obscure, so that they are out of our reach and above our sight. He that goes about in them to trace God, may quickly lose himself. They are like that hand writing upon the wall, which none of Belshazzar's wise men could read or give the interpretation of (Da 5:8). There are *arcana imperii*, "secrets of state and government", which are not fit to be made common. But this may be our comfort:—though God doth not now give any account of his matters, nor is he obliged thereunto, yet he can give a very good and satisfactory account; and one day his people shall be led into the mystery; and, though many things which God doeth they know not now, yet they shall know them afterward; and when they know, they shall approve and admire both the things, and the reason, and the end. They shall then be perfectly reconciled to all providence, and see that all were worthy of God, and that in all he acted *yeoprepwv*, "as did highly become himself."—*Samuel Slater (1704) in "The Morning Exercises."*

**Verse 2.** How despicable soever Christ's kingdom may seem to the world, yet it is full of heavenly majesty: *clouds and darkness are round about him*. The glory of Christ's kingdom is unsearchable, and hid from the eyes of the world, who cannot take up the things of God, except he reveal himself to them, and do open the eyes of the understanding: "*clouds and darkness are round about him.*"—*David Dickson*.

**Verse 2. Darkness.** This and the four following verses have a striking resemblance to the awful pomp of the march of God, as described Ps 18:8-9 Ps 68:8. All the dread phenomena and meteoric array of nature are in attendance; thunder and lightning, and earthquakes and volcanoes, with streams of melting lava, like streams of melting wax. Yet all is justice and equity, joy, exultation, and glory; and the wicked alone—the adversaries of Jehovah—feel his judgments—the host of idols and their brutish worshippers.—*John Mason Good*.

**Verse 2. Righteousness and judgment.** *Righteousness* is the essential perfection of the Divine Being. It is his nature: if there had been no creatures for him to govern, he would have had an unchangeable and invincible love of rectitude. *Judgment* is the application of the principle of righteousness in his government of his creatures and their actions; it is a development of his rectitude in the management of the affairs of his great empire; it is that superintendence over all, whereby the operations of all things are directed, to some vast and important end. Judgment implies measure and equity, in opposition to what is done without rule and consideration. All the divine

conduct is equitable, regulated by rectitude, and everything is directed by a judgment that cannot err.—*Robert Hall*.

**Verse 2.** *Righteousness and judgment*, etc. When the mercy and grace of our heavenly King are to be described, he is likened to the sun shining in a clear firmament, and gladdening universal nature with his beneficent ray. But when we are to conceive an idea of him, as going forth, in justice and judgment, to discomfit and punish his adversaries, the imagery is then borrowed from a troubled sky; he is pictured as surrounded by clouds and darkness; from whence issue lightnings and thunders, storms and tempests, fear and confounding the wicked and the impenitent.—*Samuel Burder*.

**Verse 2.** The Lord manages his kingdom and government with perfect equity. *Righteousness and judgment are the habitation of his throne.* *Righteousness*, whereby he preserves, saves, and rewards the good; *judgment*, whereby he punishes, confounds, and destroys the wicked: these are *the habitation of his throne*, his tribunal, his seat of judicature. These are the basis or foundation, which give unto his throne *rectitudinem et stabilitatem*, "rectitude and establishment." His throne is established in righteousness, and "the sceptre of his kingdom is a right sceptre:" though there be clouds, yet no blemishes; though darkness, yet no deformities: Ps 92:15. Ever since the creation, all things have been done with that unreprieveable exactness, that if the world were to begin again, and the affairs of it to be acted over again, there should not be an alteration in a tittle. All hath been so well, that nothing can be mended. Those dark and obscure passages of Providence, at which good men are startled, and by which all men are posed, are most excellent and curious strokes, and as so many well placed shades, which commend the work and admirably set off the beauty of Providence.—*Samuel Slater*.

## Verse 2.

Jove's firm decree, tho' wrapped in night,  
Beams midst the gloom a constant light;  
Man's fate obscure in darkness lies,  
Not to be pierced by mortal eyes:  
The just resolves of his high mind  
A glorious consummation find;  
Though in majestic state enthroned  
Thick clouds and dark enclose him round,  
As from the tower of heaven his eye  
Surveys man's bold impiety;

Till his ripe wrath on vengeance bent,  
 He arms each god for punishment,  
 And from his high and holy throne  
 Sends all his awful judgments down.  
 —*Aeschylus (R. Potter's translation, 1808.)*

**Verse 3.** *A fire goeth before him.* Like a marshall or advance guard before a royal presence, or as the javelin men who precede a judge. Fire is the sign both of grace and wrath (Ex 3:2 Ps 18:9.) Majesty marches forth in both displays of Deity.—*C.H.S. from Poli Synopsis.*

**Verse 3.** *A fire goeth before him.* That fire which Christ came to send upon the earth, the kindling blaze of the Holy Ghost, which came down in tongues of fire at Pentecost, to burn freely throughout the world, for the destruction of obstinate unbelievers, and the purifying of those who gladly received the Word. And of this the prophet spake, saying, "I will send a fire on Magog, and among them that dwell carelessly its the isles: and they shall know that I am the LORD." (Eze 39:6.) This divine flame goes still before the face of the Lord in his coming to every faithful soul, as it kindles with longing for him, and burns up all its sins therewith, as he heaps his coals of fire upon its head, to soften and purify it. "It must needs be", teaches a great saint, (S. Bernard.) "that the fervour of holy desire must go before his face to every soul to which he means to come, a flame which will burn up all the mildew of sin, and make ready a place for the Lord. And then the soul knows that the Lord is at hand, when it feels itself kindled with that fire, and it saith with the prophet, 'My heart was hot within me; then spake I with my tongue.'" (Ps 39:3).—*Augustine, and others, quoted by Neale and Littledale.*

**Verse 3.** *A fire goeth before him.* There is no less, but rather more wrath attending the despisers of the Gospel, than did attend the giving out of the law. Heb 12:29.—*David Dickson.*

**Verse 4.** *His lightnings enlightened the world.* This passage is applied by Munster to the rapid increase of the kingdom of Christ: for the sound of the Gospel sped through all the world like lightning. There is a prediction almost to this effect in Zec 9:14: "His arrow shall go forth as the lightning, and the Lord God shall blow the trumpet."—*Martin Geier.*

**Verse 4.** *The earth saw and trembled.* The bare sight of thee caused the earth to tremble (Ps 77:16).—*A.R. Faussett.*

**Verse 5.** *The hills melted like wax at the presence of the LORD.* For a parallel passage see Mic 1:4. There the words are applied to the judgment of God about to fall on the people of the covenant: here they are applied to the judgment on the God opposing world. The fact that judgment has begun at the house of God is a token that judgments of a far more destructive kind will overtake the (openly) ungodly and sinners (1Pe 4:7). "*The hills*" symbolize the heights or man's self exalting pride of intellect, wealth, and power.—*A.R. Faussett.*

**Verse 5.** *The Lord of the whole earth.* In this title lies concealed the reason for the liquefaction of the hills, for the God who here manifests himself is he who created the earth, and is able therefore to reduce it to nothing.—*Martin Geier.*

**Verse 6.** *The heavens declare,* etc. He does not say, the heavens exercise, but they declare his righteousness. To the eyes of the wicked the righteousness of God is hidden, until it is made manifest by an astonishing miracle.

"The heavens." This phrase is not, *God* declares, but *the heavens* declare his righteousness. The creature is the servant and revealer of the righteousness of God.

"His righteousness." He says not, the heavens declare *our* righteousness, but *his* righteousness. They testify that God is the righteous judge, rather than that the saints themselves are righteous.

"All the people." Not only do the wicked, those oppressive monsters, see, but "all the people." God so reveals his glory that not only the wicked who are punished may see it, but also other mortals to their edification.

"And shall see." They shall not simply hear or know, but they shall see. This at last is a powerful and convincing demonstration of the righteousness of God, which is put before their eyes.

"His glory." Not merely the destruction of the wicked and vengeance on the enemies of God, but his glory; for in the destruction of the wicked, and the deliverance of the innocent, the glory of God is declared. Thus the prophet rejoices not so much concerning the destruction of the wicked as concerning the glory of God.—*Musculus.*

**Verse 7.** *Confounded be all they that serve graven images.* etc. Albeit such as are lovers of imagery not only do serve images, but also will defend the

use of images in the exercise of religion, and glory in them; yet shall they at length be ashamed of their boasting.—*David Dickson*.

**Verse 7.** *Worship him, all ye gods, or Let all the angels of God worship him.* The matter of the psalm itself makes it manifest that the Holy Ghost treats in it about God's bringing in the firstborn into the world, and the setting up of his kingdom in him. A kingdom is described wherein God would reign, which should destroy idolatry and false worship; a kingdom wherein the isles of the Gentiles should rejoice, being called to an interest therein; a kingdom that was to be preached, proclaimed, declared, unto the increase of light and holiness in the world, with the manifestation of the glory of God unto the ends of all the earth: every part whereof declareth the kingdom of Christ to be intended in the psalm, and consequently that it is a prophecy of the bringing in of the first begotten into the world. Our inquiry is, whether the angels be intended in these words. They are *Myhla-lk omnes dii*; and are so rendered by Jerome, *Adorate eum, omnes dii*; and by our authorised version, "*Worship him, all ye gods.*" The preceding words are, "*Confounded be all they that serve graven images*", *Mylylab Myllhtmh, that boast themselves in or of "idols", "vanities, nothings"*, as the word signifies, wherein ensues this apostrophe, "*Worship him, Myhla-lb, all ye gods.*" And who they are is our present inquiry. Some, as all the modern Jews, say that it is the gods of the Gentiles, those whom they worship, that are intended; so making *Myhla* and *owlyla*, "*gods*", and "*vain idols*", to be the same in this place. But

1. It cannot be that the psalmist should exhort the *idols of the heathen*, some whereof were *devils*, some *dead men*, some *inanimate parts of the creations*, unto a reverential worshipping of God reigning over all. Hence the Targumist, seeing the vanity of that interpretation, perverts the words, and renders them, "Worship before Him, all ye nations which serve idols."

2. *Myhla*, "*Elohim*", is so far in this place from being exegetical of *Mylyla* "*gods*", or "*vain idols*"; that it is put in direct opposition to it, as is evident from the words themselves.

3. The word *Elohim*, which most frequently denotes the true God, doth never alone, and absolutely taken, signify *false gods* or idols, but only when it is joined with some other word discovering its application, as *his god*, or *their gods*, or *the gods of this or that people*, in which case it is rendered by the LXX., (Septuagint) sometimes *eidwlon* an "idol"; sometimes *ceiropoihton*, an "idol made with hands"; sometimes *bdelugma* an "abomination." But here it hath no such limitation or restriction.

Whereas, therefore, there are some creatures who, by reason of some peculiar excellency and likeness unto God, or subordination unto him in their work, are called gods, it must be those, or some of them, that are intended in the expression. Now these are either *magistrates* or *angels*.

1. *Magistrates* are somewhere called *elohim*, because of the representation they make of God in his power, and their peculiar subordination unto him in their working. The Jews, indeed, contend that no other magistrates but those only of the great Sanhedrim are anywhere called gods; but that concerns not our present inquiry. Some magistrates are so called, but none of them are intended by the psalmist, there being no occasion administered unto him of any such apostrophe unto them.

2. Angels are called *elohim*: *Degomenoi yeoi*, 1Co 8:5. They have the name of God attributed unto them, and these are they whom the psalmist speaks unto. Having called on the whole creation to rejoice in the bringing forth of the kingdom of God, and pressed his exhortation upon things on the earth, he turns unto the ministering angels, and calls on them to the discharge of their duty unto the King of that kingdom. Hence the Targamist, in the beginning of Ps 96:1-13 expressly mentioned "his high angels", joining in his praise and worship, using the Greek word *aggelov*, for distinction's sake, as on the same account it often occurs in the Targum.

We have thus evinced that the psalm treats about the bringing in of the firstborn into the world; as also that they are the ministering angels who are here commanded to worship him.—*John Owen*.

**Verse 8.** *Zion heard*, etc. But why, it may be asked, does he speak of those things being *heard*, rather than *seen*? Two reasons may be given for this. First, he would have God's believing people anticipate the blessing by hope, ere the consummation of it arrived; and, again, the language intimates, that the glory of the Gospel would be spread to such distant quarters, that the Jews would rather hear of it by report, than witness it with their own eyes.—*John Calvin*.

**Verse 8.** *The daughters of Judah rejoiced*. David alludes to a custom familiar in Judea, of forming choral bands of maidens after a victory or some happy circumstance. Thus after the passage of the Red Sea, when the Egyptians were drowned and the people of God brought in safety to the farthest shore, Miriam the prophetess, the sister of Aaron, took a timbrel in her hand, and all the women followed her with timbrels and dancing, saying, Let us sing unto the Lord, for he hath triumphed gloriously; the horse and his

rider hath he thrown into the sea. When Goliath was slain by David, it is said 1Sa 18:6-7, "When David returned from the slaughter of the Philistine, the women came out of all cities of Israel, singing and dancing, to meet king Saul, with tabrets, with joy, and with instruments of music. And the women sang as they played, and said, Saul hath slain his thousands, and David his ten thousands."—*Le Blanc*.

**Verse 10.** *Ye that love the LORD, hate evil.* It is evident that our conversion is sound when we loathe and hate sin from the heart: a man may know his hatred of evil to be true, first, if it be universal: he that hates sin truly, hates all sin. Secondly, true hatred is fixed; there is no appeasing it but by abolishing the thing hated. Thirdly, hatred is a more rooted affection than anger: anger may be appeased, but hatred remains and sets itself against the whole kind. Fourthly, if our hatred be true, we hate all evil, in ourselves first, and then in others; he that hates a toad, would hate it most in his own bosom. Many, like Judah, are severe in censuring others (Ge 38:24), but partial to themselves. Fifthly, he that hates sin truly, hates the greatest sin in the greatest measure; he hates all evil in a just proportion. Sixthly, our hatred is right if we can endure admonition and reproof for sin, and not be enraged; therefore, those that swell against reproof do not appear to hate sin.—*Richard Sibbes*.

**Verse 10.** *Hate evil.* Sin seemeth to have its name of *sana*, anv (the word here used) because it is most of all to be hated, as the greatest evil; as that which setteth us furthest from God the greatest good.—*John Trapp*.

**Verse 10.** Get mortifying graces, especially love to God, for *those that love the Lord, will hate evil*. And the more they love him, the more they will hate it.—*David Clarkson*.

**Verse 10.** God is a Spirit, and he looks to our very spirits; and what we are in our spirits, in our hearts and affections, that we are to him. Therefore, what ill we shun, let us do it from the heart, by hating it first. A man may avoid an evil action from fear, or out of other respects, but that is not sincerity. Therefore look to thy heart, see that thou hate evil, and let it come from sincere looking to God. *Ye that love the LORD, hate evil*, saith David: not only avoid it, but hate it; and not only hate it, but hate it out of love to God.—*Richard Sibbes*.

**Verse 10.** *Hate evil.*

LUCIAN. I am the declared enemy of all false pretence, all quackery, all lies, and all puffing. I am a lover of truth, of beauty, of undisguised nature; in short, of everything that is lovely.

PHILOSOPHY. To love and to hate, they say, spring from one and the same source.

LUCIAN. That, O philosophy, must be best known to you. My business is to hate the bad, and to love and commend the good; and that I stick to.—

*Lucian. Piscat. c, 8.*

**Verse 10.** *He preserveth the souls of his saints.* Let us observe that there are two parts of divine protection—preservation and deliverance. Preservation is keeping lest we should be imperilled: deliverance has reference to those already involved in perils. The shepherd keeps his sheep lest they should fall among wolves; but if perchance they should fall into the clutches of the wolf he pursues and delivers. Both parts the Prophet exhibits, persuading us that it is the Lord who keeps the souls of his saints lest they fall into the hands of the wicked; and if they should fall, He will deliver them.—*Musculus.*

**Verse 11.** *Light is sown.* *erz* does not here signify sown strewn into the earth, but strewn along his life's way, so that he, the righteous one, advances step by step in the light. Hitzig rightly compares *kidnatai skidnatai*, used of the dawn and of the sun. Of the former Virgil also says, *Et jam prima novo spargebat lumine terras.*—*Franz Delitzsch.*

**Verse 11.** *Light is sown.*

And now Aurora, from the saffron bed  
Of her Tithonus rising, sowed the earth  
With dewy light.

—*C.R. Kennedy's Translation of Virgil.*

**Verse 11.** *Light is sown.*

Now Morn, her rosy steps in the eastern clime  
Advancing, sowed the earth with orient pearl.  
—*John Milton.*

**Verse 11.** *Light is sown for the righteous.* Most thoughtful men increase in faith and spiritual discernment by often doubting, and by having their doubts cleared up. Religious thought in this way grows into a personal feeling; and



the solid rock of truer conviction and deeper trust as a firm foundation for the soul to build upon for eternity, remains behind after all the abrasion of loose and more perishable materials through speculation. A different if not a truer revelation of heavenly realities is given to us through the dark distressing process of doubting, than through the bright joyful exercise of unhesitating faith; just as our knowledge of the chemistry of the sun and stars, of the physical constitution of distant worlds, is derived not from the bright bands of their spectrum, which reveal only their size and shape, but from Fraunhofer's wonderful lines—those black blank spaces breaking up the spectrum bands—which tell us of rays arrested in their path and prevented from bearing their message to us by particular metallic vapours. Unto the upright, just because of the purity and singleness of their motives and the earnestness of their quest after truth, there ariseth light in the darkness. We must remember that "light is *sown* for the righteous"; that its more or less rapid germination and development depend upon the nature of the soil on which it falls and the circumstances that influence it; that, like seed, it at first lies concealed in the dark furrow, under the cheerless clod, in the cold ungenial winter; but that even then, while shining in the darkness, while struggling with doubts and difficulties of the mind and heart, it is nevertheless the source of much comfort, and in its slow, quickening, and hidden growth the cause of lively hope, and of bright anticipation of that time when it shall blossom and ripen in the summer time of heaven—shine more and more unto the perfect day.—*Hugh Macmillan, in "The Ministry of Nature", 1871.*

**Verse 11.** *Light is sown for the righteous:* sown in these two fields,

1. *Of God's eternal decree*, in his power, promise, grace and love. These are the "upper springs."

2. In the field of their *graces*, and holy *duties*; these are the "nether springs"; both which fall into one river, and "make glad the city of God"; both these fields yield a plentiful harvest of comfort to the godly.—*John Sheffield, in "The Rising Sun," 1654.*

**Verse 11.** *Sown.* The righteous man's harvest is secret and hidden. It lieth, like the corn covered in the ground; "their life is hid"; and "it is not manifest what they shall be"; "no eye hath seen, or ear heard, neither hath it entered into the heart of man, what the Lord hath laid up for them that love him" (Col 3:3 1Jo 3:2 1Co 2:9). Name what you can, and it will be a mystery, a secret thing, that belongs to the upright in heart. First, is not the decree of God a hidden thing? a depth unsearchable? and able to make a man

astonished? Did not Paul cry out, "O the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and knowledge of God! how unsearchable are his judgments, and his ways past finding out!" (Ro 12:33). And is not the incarnation of Christ a secret too? what more to be admired than that God should become man, and be manifested in the flesh? The very angels desired to peep into this mystery. 1Ti 3:16 1Pe 1:12 Isa 7:14. Again, the conversion and regeneration of a sinner is admirable; it's a noble, yet a secret work: Nicodemus a great doctor could not see it. And if natural births be so strange, what shall we judge of this? Moreover, peace of conscience and joy in the Holy Ghost is no open matter; none knoweth it, but he that hath it. So is the earnest of the Spirit, and true seal of salvation; the power, life and sweetness of the word; the remission and pardon of sin, with certainty of salvation. And in the fifth place, the harvest is secret, if we consider where it is growing. One close is, *the secret purpose of God*; and who can understand it? A second is, *his word*; and how hardly is that to be searched into? A third is, *a man's own heart*; and is not that both secret and deceitful? And last of all, the very principal part of the harvest is hid *with Christ in heaven*; and when he appears, it will appear what it shall be.—*John Barlow*.

**Verses 11-12.**, are both most savoury and precious notanda.—Give me to experience, O Lord, those revelations which follow in the train of obedience; and O that I felt the charm and enjoyment of holiness, so as to give thanks, in the reflection that with a holy God holiness is an indispensable requisite for our appearing in his presence. We should further be grateful because of this essential attribute in the Godhead; for it is in virtue of his holiness that evil cannot dwell with him, and that the world will at length be delivered, and this conclusively, from the wickedness and malice and vile sensualities by which it is now so disquieted and deformed. Hasten this consummation, O Lord.—*Thomas Chalmers*.

**Verse 12. Rejoice in the LORD.** We must "rejoice evermore"; for even holy mourning hath the seed of joy in it, which the soul finds by that time it is over, if not in it.—*William Cooper, in the "Morning Exercises."*

**Verse 12. Rejoice in the Lord.**

1. Our rejoicing in the Lord denotes our taking a very sincere and cordial pleasure in whatever relates to the ever blessed God, particularly his existence, perfections, and providence; the discoveries of his will to us, especially in his word; the interest we have in him, and the relations wherein we stand to him; his continual protection, guidance and influence; his gracious intercourse with us in the duties of religious worship; and, finally,

the hope he has given us of fulness of joy, in his beatific and most glorious presence above.

2. Rejoicing in the Lord signifies that our joy in God is superior to all our other joys, otherwise it is a joy unworthy of him, and no way, or not savingly, profitable to us.

3. Whatever else we rejoice in, we are to rejoice in such a manner, that we may be properly said to rejoice in the Lord, even when other things are the immediate occasions of our joy. The God we serve is not an envious and a malevolent Being, but exceeding liberal and kind; he has created us with an inextinguishable desire after happiness, as a secret intimation that he intends to make us happy, if we do not make ourselves miserable; and while our principal happiness is lodged in himself, and to be found nowhere else, (in which he has shown the singular regard he has to our nature), he feeds our hearts with a thousand little rivulets of joy and satisfaction from created objects: our bodies are endowed with a variety of senses and appetites, and our souls with powers and faculties of their own; nor was any one sense or faculty made in vain, or to lie always idle and useless; but every sense, and much more every mental faculty, has not one, but a great number of things provided to entertain it. But then the soul is not to lose itself in this maze and labyrinth of delight; it is not by this variety to be diverted from that one infinite good, who eminently contains in himself all the various kinds and degrees of true joy.—*Henry Grove*, 1683-1737/8.

**Verse 12.** *Rejoice...and give thanks.* Two things are to be observed: One, that he unites joy in the Lord and praise of God. Rightly: for it is not possible for a man to praise the Lord truly and from the soul, unless he rejoices in Him. Another, that he connects the praise of God with the remembrance of his holiness. And with good reason: for it is the chief use of divine praise, that by the exercise thereof, we should keep fresh in our souls the remembrance of God and of all the blessings received from Him. Thus this verse contains the root and fruit of divine praise. The root is joy in God; the fruit is the remembrance of God and his goodness.—*Musculus*.

**Verse 12.** *Ye righteous...all ye that are upright in heart.* Some may say the *just* or the *righteous* man may thus rejoice; but where are any such? "Who can say", saith Solomon, "I have made my heart clean, I am pure from my sin?" No; "There is not a just man upon earth, that doeth good, and sinneth not." A vain thing may as seem then to exhort men to rejoice, when the condition annexed is such as excludes all from rejoicing To what end is it to incite the *just* to rejoice when there are none such that may rejoice? The

answer is ready at hand in the latter part of the verse. By *just* are meant all such as are "*upright in heart*", which clause is added partly to exclude the hypocrite, and partly to temper and qualify the rigour of the term before used, if it were strictly and exactly taken. So that it is a note as well of *extent*, as of *restraint*.

1. Of *restraint*, to exclude from this joy, and all right therein, all dissemblers, all counterfeit Christians, all hollow hearted hypocrites, that repent in the face but not in the heart; that make a sour face that they may seem to fast, saith our Saviour, that justify themselves in the sight of men, but God seeth their hearts what they are, and seeth them to be far other than either they should be, or they pretend themselves to be.

2. Of *extent*, to extend and enlarge this joy, the ground of it and the right to it, to all that are single and sincere hearted; and so to give and afford a share and a portion in it as well to those that are sincerely righteous on earth, as to those that are perfectly righteous in heaven. It is as a *key* to let in the one. It is as a *bolt* to bar out the other.—*Thomas Gataker*.

---

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** The sovereignty of God a theme for joy in many respects and to many persons, especially when exhibited in a reign of grace.

**Verses 3-6.** The accompaniments of Christ's gospel advent.

1. The fire of his Spirit.
2. The light of the word.
3. The commotion in the world.
4. The removal of obstacles.
5. The display of the divine glory.

**Verses 4-5.**

1. The terrors which accompanied the giving of the law: "his lightnings", etc.
2. The reasons for those terrors. (a) To show the guilt of man. (b) His inability to keep the law. (c) To show his need of a law fulfiller on his behalf.—*G.R.*

**Verses 4-6.** A description of the giving of the law.

1. The lawgiver's heralds, or, *conviction*, Ps 97:4.
2. The effect of his presence, or, *contrition*, Ps 97:5.
3. The proclamation of the law, or, *instruction* (as by a voice from heaven, Ps 97:6).
4. The effect of the lawgiving, or, divine *manifestation* (Ps 97:6, latter clause).—*C.D.*

**Verse 5.** The presence of God in the church her invincible power.

**Verse 6.** The confusion of heart which will ensue from idolatrous worship, even if it be only spiritual. Breaking of the idol, disappointment in it, injury by it, removal from it, etc.

**Verse 8.**

1. The world is terrified at the divine judgments.
2. The church rejoices in them, "Zion heard", etc.;

or,

1. When the world is glad the church is sad.
2. When the world is sad the church is glad.—*G.R.*

**Verse 10.**

1. What you do now: "Love the Lord." Reciprocally, personally, supremely, habitually, progressively.
2. What you must do: "Hate evil." Evil working, evil writing, evil speaking, evil thinking; renounce evil, master it, supplant it.—*W.J.*

**Verse 10.**

1. The distinguishing peculiarity of the people of God: "Ye that love the Lord."
2. Its manifestation: "Hate evil."
3. Its reward: "The Lord preserveth", etc.; "He delivereth", etc.—*G.R.*

**Verses 10-11.** David notes in God three characteristics of a true friend: First with fidelity and good will He keepeth the souls of the pious. Secondly, with his power and majesty He delivereth them from their enemies. Thirdly, with his wisdom and holiness He enlightens and refreshes them.—*Le Blanc*.

**Verse 11.**

1. *Where is it sown?* The answer to this will come under the following heads, viz. In the purpose of God, In the purchase of Christ, In the office of the Spirit, In the promises of the Word, In the work of Grace wrought in the heart, and, In the preparations made above in glory.

2. *When is the season of reaping?* And to this, the answer is, The season of reaping the first fruits, of reaping in part, is at certain times in the present life; the season of reaping more fully is at death; and of reaping most fully and perfectly commences at the day of judgment and is continued throughout eternity.

(a) The season of reaping in part falls out at some times within the course of this present life. Particularly

(1) Times of affliction have been to the upright, seasons of reaping the joy sown. By this they have been prepared for sufferings, supported under them, and made afterwards to forget their sorrows, by reason of the gladness breaking in from the affecting discovery of what God has done for them, and wrought in them. Thus God causeth light to arise in darkness, and in a rainy day refresheth them with a beam from heaven, brightening the drops that fall; brings his people into the wilderness, and there speaks comfortably unto them.

(2) Seasons of suffering for the sake of Christ and the gospel, have been seasons wherein the upright have begun to reap the joy sown. When called to resist unto blood, striving against sin, they have need of more than ordinary comfort, to enable them to meet, and hold firm through the fiery trial: and they have found that then encouragement hath been yielded them in a degree they never before experienced (Joh 16:33).

(3) Seasons wherein God has called the righteous to great and difficult service, have been seasons of reaping the beginnings of joys sown. When their heavenly Father has lifted up the light of his countenance upon them, and shed abroad the sense of his love within them, they are prepared to go whither he sends them, and to do whatever he bids them.

(4) After sore conflicts with Satan, the upright have been revived by the springing of the joy sown. After Christ was tempted came an angel to comfort him. And for the encouragement of his followers he declares, Re 2:17, "To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and I will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it."

(5) In waiting upon God in the sanctuary the upright have met with him, and so have had the beginnings of joy sown.

(b) A fuller reaping time will be at death; with some as the soul is going; but with all immediately after its release from the body.

(c) The season in which the righteous shall reap their joy sown, to the full, and in perfection, shall be at the last day. Then Christ shall come to be glorified in his saints, and admired in all them that believe, and lead them all in a body, and all of them perfected, into that presence of God, where there is fulness of joy, and where there are pleasures for evermore.—*Daniel Wilcox.*

**Verse 12.** *Give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness.* Be thankful for—

1. Its unsullied perfection.
2. Its wondrous forbearance.
3. Its place in our salvation.
4. Its approachableness through Christ.
5. Its predicted triumphs.—*W.J.*

**Verse 12.**

1. A remembrance at which the world does not give thanks.
2. Reasons which make it a matter of thanksgiving with the righteous. Its bearing on the way of salvation; on the doctrines of the gospel; on the law of the Christian life.—*C.D.*

# Psalm 98

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

---

**TITLE AND SUBJECT.** This sacred ode, which bears simply the title of "A Psalm," follows fitly upon the last, and is evidently an integral part of the series of royal psalms. If Ps 97:1-12 described the publication of the gospel, and so the setting up of the kingdom of heaven, the present Psalm is a sort of *Coronation Hymn*, officially proclaiming the conquering Messiah as Monarch over the nations, with blast of trumpets, clapping of hands, and celebration of triumphs. It is a singularly bold and lively song. The critics have fully established the fact that similar expressions occur in Isaiah, but we see no force in the inference that therefore it was written by him; on this principle half the books in the English language might be attributed to Shakespeare. The fact is that these associated Psalms make up a mosaic, in which each one of them has an appropriate place, and is necessary to the completeness of the whole, and therefore we believe them, to be each and all the work of one and the same mind. Paul, if we understand him aright, ascribes Ps 95:1-11 to David, and as we believe that the same writer must have written the whole group, we ascribe this also to the son of Jesse. Whoever that may be, the song is worthy to rank among the most devout and soul stirring of sacred lyrics.

**DIVISION.** We have here three stanzas of three verses each. In the first, Ps 98:1-3, the subject of praise is announced, in the second, Ps 98:4-6, the manner of that praise is prescribed; and in the third, Ps 98:7-9, the universal extent of it is proclaimed.

---

## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *O sing unto the LORD a new song; for he hath done marvellous things.* We had a new song before (Ps 96:1-13) because the Lord was coming, but now we have another new song because he has come, and seen and conquered. Jesus, our King, has lived a marvellous life, died a marvellous death, risen by a marvellous resurrection, and ascended marvellously into heaven. By his divine power he has sent forth the Holy Spirit doing marvels, and by that sacred energy his disciples have also wrought marvellous things and astonished all the earth. Idols have fallen, superstitions have withered, systems of error have fled, and empires of cruelty have perished. For all this he deserves the highest praise. His acts have proved his Deity, Jesus is Jehovah, and therefore we sing unto him as the LORD. His right hand, and his holy arm, hath gotten him the victory; not by the aid of others, but by his own unweaponed hand his marvellous conquests have been achieved. Sin, death, and hell fell beneath his solitary prowess, and the idols and the errors of mankind have been overthrown and smitten by his hand alone. The victories of Jesus among men are all the more wonderful because they are accomplished by means to all appearance most



inadequate; they are due not to physical but to moral power—the energy of goodness, justice, truth; in a word, to the power of his *holy* arm. His holy influence has been the sole cause of success. Jesus never stoops to use policy, or brute force; his unsullied perfections secure to him a real and lasting victory over all the powers of evil, and that victory will lie gained as dexterously and easily as when a warrior strikes his adversary with his *right hand* and stretches him prone upon the earth. Glory be unto the Conqueror, let new songs be chanted to his praise. Stirred by contemplating his triumphs, our pen could not forbear to praise him in the following hymn:

Forth to the battle rides our King;  
He climbs his conquering ear;  
He tits his arrows to the string,  
And smites his foes afar.

Convictions pierce the stoutest hearts,  
They bleed, they faint, they die;  
Slain by Immanuel's well aligned darts,  
In helpless heaps they lie.

Behold, he bares his two edged sword,  
And deals almighty blows,  
His all revealing, killing word  
Mixed with joint and marrow goes.

Anon arrayed in robes of grace  
He rides the trampled plain,  
With pity beaming from his face,  
And mercy in his train.

Mighty to save he now appears,  
Mighty to raise the dead,  
Mighty to stanch the bleeding wound,  
And lift the fallen head.

Victor alike in love and arms,  
Myriads before him bend:  
Such are the Conqueror's matchless charms.  
Each foe becomes his friend.

They crown him on the battle field  
Of all the nations King;

With trumpets and with cornets loud  
They make the welkin ring.

The salvation which Jesus has accomplished is wrought out with wonderful wisdom, hence it is ascribed to his right hand; it meets the requirements of justice, hence we read of his holy arm; it is his own unaided work, hence all the glory is ascribed to him; and it is marvellous beyond degree, hence it deserves a new song.

**Verse 2.** *The LORD hath made known his salvation*, —by the coming of Jesus and by the outpouring of the Holy Ghost, by whose power the gospel was preached among the Gentiles. The Lord is to be praised not only for effecting human salvation, but also for making it known, for man would never have discovered it for himself; nay, not so much as one single soul would ever have found out for himself the way of mercy through a Mediator; in every case it is a divine revelation to the mind and heart. In God's own light his light is seen. He must reveal his Son in us, or we shall be unable to discern him. His righteousness hath he openly shewed in the sight of the *heathen*. This word "righteousness" is the favourite word of the apostle of the Gentiles; he loves to dwell on the Lord's method of making man righteous, and vindicating divine justice by the atoning blood. What songs ought we to render who belong to a once heathen race, for that blessed gospel which is the power of God unto salvation, "for therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith." This is no close secret; it is clearly taught in Scripture, and has been plainly preached among the nations. What was hidden in the types is "openly shewed" in the gospel.

**Verse 3.** *He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel*. To them Jesus came in the flesh, and to them was the gospel first preached; and though they counted themselves unworthy of eternal life, yet the covenant was not broken, for the true Israel were called into fellowship and still remain so. The mercy which endureth for ever, and the fidelity which cannot forget a promise, secure to the chosen seed the salvation long ago guaranteed by the covenant of grace. All the ends of the earth have seen the salvation of our God. Not to Abraham's seed alone after the flesh, but to the elect among all nations, has grace been given; therefore, let the whole church of God sing unto him a new song. It was no small blessing, or little miracle, that throughout all lands the gospel should be published in so short a time, with such singular success and such abiding results. Pentecost deserves a new song as well as the Passion and the Resurrection; let our hearts exult as we remember it. *Our God*, our own for ever blessed God, has been honoured by those who once bowed down before dumb idols; his

salvation has not only been heard of but seen among all people, it has been experienced as well as explained; his Son is the actual Redeemer of a multitude out of all nations. In these three verses we are taught how to praise the Lord.

**Verse 4.** *Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all the earth.* Every tongue must applaud, and that with the rigour which joy of heart alone can arouse to action. As men shout when they welcome a king, so must we. Loud hosannas, full of happiness, must be lifted up. If ever men shout for joy it should be when the Lord comes among them in the proclamation of his gospel reign. John Wesley said to his people, "Sing lustily, and with a good courage. Beware of singing as if you were half dead or half asleep; but lift up your voice with strength. Be no more afraid of your voice now, nor more ashamed of its being heard, than when you sung the songs of Satan." Make a loud noise, and rejoice, and sing praise; or *Burst forth, and sing, and play.* Let every form of exultation be used, every kind of music pressed into the service till the accumulated praise causes the skies to echo the joyful tumult. There is no fear of our being too hearty in magnifying the God of our salvation, only we must take care the song comes from the heart, otherwise the music is nothing but a noise in his ears, whether it be caused by human throats, or organ pipes, or far resounding trumpets. Loud let our hearts ring out the honours of our conquering Saviour; with all our might let us extol the Lord who has vanquished all our enemies, and led our captivity captive: He will do this best who is most in love with Jesus:

"I have found the pearl of greatest price,  
My heart doth sing for joy;  
And sing I must, a Christ I have.  
Oh, what a Christ have I!"

**Verse 5.** *Sing unto the LORD with the harp.* Skill in music should not be desecrated to the world's evil mirth, it should aid the private devotions of the saint, and then, like George Herbert, he will sing,

"My God, my God,  
My music shall find thee,  
And every string  
Shall have his attribute to sing."

Martin Luther was thus wont to praise the Lord, whom he loved so well. God's praises should be performed in the best possible manner, but their sweetness mainly lies in spiritual qualities. The concords of faith and

repentance, the harmonies of obedience and love are true music in the ear of the Most High, and better please him than "heaving bellows taught to blow, "though managed by the noblest master of human minstrelsy. With the harp. A very sweet instrument of music, and capable of great expression. The repetition of the word is highly poetical, and shows that the daintiest expressions of poetry are none too rich for the praise of God. His worship should be plain, but not uncouth, if we can compass elegancies of expression there are occasions upon which they will be most appropriate; God, who accepts the unlettered ditty of a ploughman, does not reject the smooth verse of a Cowper, or the sublime strains of a Milton. All repetitions are not vain repetitions, in sacred song there should be graceful repeats, they render the sense emphatic, and help to fire the soul; even preachers do not amiss when they dwell on a word and sound it out again and again, till dull ears feel its emphasis.

And the voice of a Psalm, or with a musical voice, as distinguished from common speech. Our voice has in it many modulations; there is the voice of conversation, the voice of complaint, the voice of pleading, the voice of command, and there ought to be with each of us the voice of a Psalm. Man's voice is at its best when it sings the best words in the best spirit to the best of Beings. Love and war must not monopolise the lyric muse; the love of God and the conquests of Immanuel should win to themselves man's sweetest strains. Do we sing enough unto the Lord? May not the birds of the air rebuke our sullen and ungrateful silence? in their brave struggles to achieve their country's independence, and were the repeated expression of their thanksgivings. The Lord of Psalmists and the Son of David, by the words of a Psalm proved himself to be higher than David; and sang Psalms with his apostles on the night before he suffered, when he instituted the holy supper of his love. With Psalms Paul and Silas praised God in the prison at midnight when their feet were made fast in the stocks, and sang so loud that the prisoners heard them. And after his own example the apostle exhorts the Christians at Ephesus and Colossae to teach and admonish one another with Psalms anti hymns and spiritual songs. Jerome tells us that in his day the Psalms were to be heard in the fields and vineyards of Palestine, and that they fell sweetly on the ear, mingling with the songs of birds, and the scent of flowers in spring. The ploughman as he guided his plough chanted the hallelujah, and the reaper, the vine dresser, and the shepherd sang the songs of David. "These," he says, "are our love songs, these the instruments of our agriculture." Sidonius Apollinaris makes his boatmen, as they urge their heavily laden barge up stream, sing Psalms, till the river banks echo again

with the hallelujah, and beautifully applies the custom, in a figure, to the voyage of the Christian life. *J.J.S. Perowne.*

**Verse 5.** *The voice of a Psalm.* In D'Israeli's "Curiosities of Literature" there is a very curious piece upon Psalm singing, in which he mentions the spread of the singing of Psalms in France, which was first started among the Romanists by the version of Clement Marot, the favoured bard of Francis the First. In Marot's dedication occur the following lines:

"Thrice happy they, who may behold,  
And listen in that age of gold!  
As by the plough the labourer strays,  
And carman 'mid the public ways,  
And tradesman in his shop shall swell  
Their voice in Psalm or canticle,  
Singing to solace toil; again  
From woods shall come a sweeter strain!

Shepherd and shepherdess shall vie  
In many a tender Psalmody;  
And the Creator's name prolong,  
As rock and stream return their song!  
Begin then, ladies fair! begin  
The age renew'd that knows no sin!  
And with light heart, that wants no wing,  
Sing! from this holy songbook, sing!"

The singing of these Psalms became so popular that D'Israeli suggests that "it first conveyed to the sullen fancy of the austere Calvin the project" of introducing the singing of Psalms into his Genevan discipline. "This infectious frenzy of Psalm singing, "as Warton almost blasphemously describes it, rapidly propagated itself through Germany as well as France, and passed over to England. D'Israeli says, with a sneer, that in the time of the Commonwealth, "Psalms were now sung at Lord Mayor's dinners and city feasts; soldiers sang them on their march and at parade; and few houses which had windows fronting the streets, but had their evening Psalms." We can only add, would to God it were so again. *C.H.S.*

**Verses 5-6.** These were, literally, the instruments most in use among the Jews, and a spiritual signification has been attached to each instrument. They seem to me to represent the cardinal virtues, the *harp* implying prudence; the

*psaltery*, justice; the *trumpet*, fortitude; and the *cornet*, temperance. *Bellarmino*.

**Verses 5-6.** It is evident that the Psalmist here expresses the vehement and ardent affection which the faithful ought to have in praising God, when he enjoins musical instruments to be employed for this purpose. He would have nothing omitted by believers which tends to animate the minds and feelings of men in singing God's praises. The name of God, no doubt, can, properly speaking, be celebrated only by the articulate voice; but it is not without reason that David adds to this those aids by which believers were wont to stimulate themselves the more to this exercise; especially considering that he was speaking to God's ancient people. There is a distinction, however, to be observed here, that we may not indiscriminately consider as applicable to ourselves everything which was formerly enjoined upon the Jews. I have no doubt that playing upon cymbals, touching the harp and the viol, and all that kind of music which is so frequently mentioned in the Psalms, was a part of the education; that is to say, the puerile instruction of the law: I speak of the stated service of the temple. For even now, if believers choose to cheer themselves with musical instruments, they should, I think, make it their object not to dis sever their cheerfulness from the praises of God. But when they frequent their sacred assemblies, musical instruments in celebrating the praises of God would be no more suitable than the burning of incense, the lighting up of lamps, and the restoration of the other shadows of the law. The Papists, therefore, have foolishly borrowed this, as well as many other things from the Jews. Men who are fond of outward pomp may delight in that noise; but the simplicity which God recommends to us by the apostle is far more pleasing to him. Paul allows us to bless God in the public assembly of the saints only in a known tongue, 1Co 14:16. The voice of man, although not understood by the generality, assuredly excels all inanimate instruments of music; and yet we see what Paul determines concerning speaking in an unknown tongue. What shall we then say of chanting, which fills the ears with nothing but an empty sound? Does any one object that music is very useful for awakening the minds of men and moving their hearts?, I own it; but we should always take care that no corruption creep in, which might both defile the pure worship of God and involve men in superstition. Moreover, since the Holy Spirit expressly warns us of this danger by the mouth of Paul, to proceed beyond what we are there warranted by him, is not only, I must say, unadvised zeal, but wicked and perverse obstinacy. *John Calvin*.

**Verses 5-6.** The song and the stringed instruments belonged to the Levites, and the trumpets to the priests alone. Kitto says the trumpets did not join in

the concert, but were sounded during certain regulated pauses in the vocal and instrumental music. The harps and voices made the sweetness, while the trumpets and horns added the strength; melody and energy should combine in the worship of God. *C.H.S.*

**Verse 6.** *With trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise.* God's worship should be heartily loud. The far resounding trump and horn well symbolise the power which should be put forth in praise.

Before the LORD, the King. On coronation days, and when beloved monarchs ride abroad, the people shout and the trumpets sound till the walls ring again. Shall men be more enthusiastic for their earthly princes than for the divine King? Is there no loyalty left among the subjects of the blessed and only Potentate? *King Jehovah* is his name; and there is none like it, have we no joyful noise for him? Let but the reigning power of Jesus be felt in the soul and we shall cast aside that chill mutter, drowned by the pealing organ, which is now so commonly the substitute for earnest congregational singing.

Say, if your hearts are tuned to sing,  
Is there a subject greater?  
Harmony all its strains may bring,  
But Jesus' name is sweeter.  
Who of his love doth once partake,  
He evermore rejoices;  
Melody in our hearts we make,  
Melody with our voices.

**Verse 7.** *Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof.* Even its thunders will not be too grand for such a theme. Handel, in some of his sublime choruses, would have been glad of its aid to express his lofty conceptions, and assuredly the inspired psalmist did well to call in such infinite uproar. The sea is his, let it praise its Maker. Within and upon its bosom it bears a wealth of goodness, why should it be denied a place in the orchestra of nature? Its deep bass will excellently suit the mystery of the divine glory. The world, and they that dwell therein. The land should be in harmony with the ocean. Its mountains and plains, cities and villages, should prolong the voice of jubilee which welcomes the Lord of all. Nothing can be more sublime than this verse; the muses of Parnassus cannot rival the muse of Zion, the Castellan fount never sparkled like that "fount of every blessing" to which sacred bands are wont to ascribe their inspiration. Yet no song is equal to the majesty of the theme when Jehovah, the King, is to be extolled.

**Verse 8.** *Let the floods clap their hands.* The rolling rivers, the tidal estuaries, the roaring cataracts, are here summoned to pay their homage, and to clap their hands, as men do when they greet their sovereigns with acclamation. Let the hills be joyful together, or in concert with the floods. Silent as are the mighty mountains, let them forget themselves, and burst forth into a sublime uproariousness of mirth, such as the poet described when he wrote those vivid lines—

"Far along,  
From peak to peak, the rattling crags among,  
Leaps the live thunder! Not from one lone cloud,  
But every mountain now hath found a tongue,  
And Jura answers, through her misty shroud,  
Back to the joyous Alps, who call to her aloud."

**Verse 9.** *Before the Lord; for he cometh to judge the earth.* Stiller music such as made the stars twinkle with their soft kind eyes suited his first coming at Bethlehem, but his second advent calls for trumpets, for he is a judge; and for all earth's acclamations, for he has put on his royal splendour. The rule of Christ is the joy of nature. All things bless his throne, yea, and the very coming of it. As the dawn sets the earth weeping for joy at the rising of the sun, till the dewdrops stand in her eyes, so should the approach of Jesus' universal reign make all creation glad. With righteousness shall he judge the world, and the people with *equity*. This is the joy of it. No tyrant and no weakling is he, to oppress the good or to indulge the vain, his law is good, his action right, his government the embodiment of justice. If ever there was a thing to rejoice in upon this poor, travelling earth, it is the coming of such a deliverer, the ascension to the universal throne of such a governor. All hail, Jesus! all hail! Our soul faints with delight at the sound of thins approaching chariots, and can only cry, "Come quickly. Even so, come quickly, Lord Jesus!" Keble's version of the last four verses is so truly beautiful that we cannot deny our readers the luxury of perusing it:

"Ring out, with horn and trumpet ring,  
In shouts before the Lord the King:  
Let ocean with his fulness swing  
In restless unison:"

"Earth's round and all the dwellers there,  
The mighty floods the burden bear,  
And clap the hand: in choral air,  
Join every mountain lone."



"Tell out before the Lord, that he  
Is come, the Judge of earth to be,  
To judge the world in equity,  
Do right to realm and throne."

---

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**TITLE.** The inscription of the psalm in Hebrew is only the single word *rwmzm Mizmor*, "Psalm" (whence probably the title "orphan Mizmor" in the Talmudic treatise *Avodah Zara*). *J.J.S. Perowne*.

**Title.** Hengstenberg remarks, "This is the only psalm which is entitled simply 'a psalm.' This common name of all the psalms cannot be employed here in its general sense, but must have a peculiar meaning." He considers that it indicates that this is the lyric accompaniment of the more decidedly prophetic psalm which precedes it,—in fact, the psalm of that prophecy. He also notes that in the original we have in Ps 98:5-6 words akin to the title brought into great prominence, and perhaps this may have suggested it.

**Title.** It is at least interesting to notice that a song Of Zion which so exults in the king's arrival should be called preeminently *rwmzm*, *Mizmor*; as if the Psalm of Psalms were that which celebrates *Israel, and the earth at large, blessed in Messiah's Advent*. *Andrew A. Bonar*.

**Whole Psalm.** A noble, spirit stirring psalm. It may have been written on the occasion of a great national triumph at the time; but may, perhaps, afterwards be taken up at the period of the great millennial restoration of all things. The victory here celebrated may be in prophetic vision, and that at Armageddon. Then will salvation and righteousness be openly manifested in the sight of the hostile nations. Israel will be exalted; and the blessed conjunction of mercy and truth will gladden and assure the hearts of all who at that time are Israelites indeed. Godliness will form the reigning characteristic of the whole earth. *Thomas Chalmers*.

**Whole Psalm.** The subject of the Psalm is the praise of Jehovah. It consists of three strophes of three verses each. The first strophe shows *why*, the second *how* Jehovah is to be praised; and the third *who* are to praise him. *Frederick Fysh*.

**Whole Psalm.** This psalm is an evident prophecy of Christ's coming to save the world; and what is here *foretold* by David is, in the Blessed Virgin's

Song chanted forth as being *accomplished*. David is the *Voice*, and Mary is the *Echo*.

1. DAVID. "O sing unto the Lord a new song." (The *Voice*.) MARY. "My soul doth magnify the Lord." (The *Echo*.)
2. DAVID. "He hath done marvellous things." (The *Voice*.) MARY. "He that is mighty hath done great things." (The *Echo*.)
3. DAVID. "With his own right hand and holy arm hath he gotten himself the victory." (The *Voice*.) MARY. "He hath showed strength with his arm, and scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts." (The *Echo*.)
4. DAVID. "The Lord hath made known his salvation; his righteousness hath he openly showed, "&c. (The *Voice*.) MARY. "His mercy is on them that fear him, from generation to generation." (The *Echo*.)
5. DAVID. "He hath remembered his mercy and his truth toward the house of Israel." (The *Voice*.) MARY. "He hath holpen his servant Israel, in remembrance of his mercy." (The *Echo*.)

These parallels are very striking; and it seems as if Mary had this psalm in her eye when she composed her song of triumph. And this is a farther argument that the whole psalm, whether it record the deliverance of Israel from Egypt, or the Jews from the Babylonish captivity, is yet to be ultimately understood of the redemption of the world by Jesus Christ, and the proclamation of his gospel through all the nations of the earth: and taken in this view, no language can be too strong, nor poetic imagery too high, to point out the unsearchable riches of Christ. *Adam Clarke*.

**Verse 1.** *O sing unto the LORD a new song.* This is man's end, to seek God in this life, to see God in the next; to be a subjection the kingdom of grace, and a saint in the kingdom of glory. Whatsoever in this world befalleth us, we must sing: be thankful for weal, for woe: songs ought always to be in our mouth, and sometimes a new song: for so David here, "*sing a new song*:" that is, let us put off the old man, and become new men, new creatures in Christ: for the old man sings old songs: only the new man sings a new song; he speaketh with a new tongue, and walks in new ways, and therefore doth new things, and sings new songs; his language is not of Babylon or Egypt, but of Canaan; his communication doth edify men, his song glorify God. Or a *new song*, that is, a fresh song, *nova res, novum canticum*, new for a new benefit. Eph 5:20: "*Give thanks always for all things*." It is very gross to

think God only in gross, and not in parcel. Hast thou been sick and now made whole? praise God with the *leper*, Lu 17:11-19: sing a new song for this new salve. Dost thou hunger and thirst after righteousness, whereas heretofore thou couldest not endure the words of exhortation and doctrine? sing a new song for this new grace. Doth Almighty God give thee a true sense of thy sin, whereas heretofore thou didst draw iniquity with cords of vanity, and sin as it were with cart ropes, and wast given over to work all uncleanness with greediness? *O sing, sing, sing*, a new song for this new mercy.

Or *new*, that is, no common or ordinary song; but as God's mercy toward us is exceeding marvellous and extraordinary, so our thanks ought to be most exquisite, and more than ordinary: not new in regard of the matter, for we may not pray to God or praise God otherwise than he hath prescribed in his word, which is the old way, but new in respect of the manner and making, that as occasion is offered, we may bear our wits after the best fashion to be thankful.

Or, because this Psalm is prophetic, a new song, that is, the song of the glorious angels at Christ's birth, "Glory to God in the highest, and on earth peace, good will toward men," (Lu 2:14); a song which the world never heard before: that the seed of the woman should bruise the serpent's head is an old song, the first that ever was sung; but this was no *plain song*, till Christ did manifest himself in the flesh. In the Old Testament there were many old songs, but in the New Testament, a new song. That "unto us is born a Saviour, which is Christ the Lord," is in many respects a *new song*; for whereas Christ was but shadowed in the Law, he is showed in the Gospel; and *new*, because sung of new men, of all men. For the sound of the Gospel is gone through all the earth, unto the ends of the world (Ro 10:18); whereas in old time God's old songs were sung in Jewry: "His name is great in Israel. In Salem also is his tabernacle, and his dwelling place in Zion," Ps 76:1-2. *John Boys*.

**Verse 1.** *A new song.* O ye who are new in Christ, though formerly old in the Old Adam, sing ye to the Lord. *Psalter of Peter Lombard*, 1474.

**Verse 1.** *He hath done marvellous things.* He has opened his greatness and goodness in the work of redemption. What marvels has not Christ done?

1. He was conceived by the Holy Ghost.
2. Born of a virgin.
3. Healed all manner of diseases.

4. Fed thousands with a few loaves and fishes.
  5. Raised the dead.
  6. And what was more marvellous, died himself.
  7. Rose again by his own power.
  8. Ascended to heaven.
  9. Sent down the Holy Ghost.
  10. And made his apostles and their testimony the instruments of enlightening, and ultimately converting, the world.
- Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 1.** *His right hand.* Since the Psalmist says, that Christ hath gotten him the victory by his right hand and his arm, it is not only a demonstration of his divine and infinite power, but also excludes all other means, as the merits of saints and their meretricious works. *Martin Luther.*

**Verse 1.** *Holy arm.* The creation was the work of God's fingers: "When I consider thy heavens, the work of thy fingers," Ps 8:3; redemption a work of his arm; "*His holy arm* hath gotten him the victory"; yea, it was a work of his heart, even that bled to death to accomplish it. *Thomas Adams.*

**Verse 1.** A clergyman in the county of Tyrone had, for some weeks, observed a little ragged boy come every Sunday, and place himself in the centre of the aisle, directly opposite the pulpit, where he seemed exceedingly attentive to the services. He was desirous of knowing who the child was, and for this purpose hastened out, after the sermon, several times, but never could see him, as he vanished the moment service was over, and no one knew whence he came or anything about him. At length the boy was missed from his usual situation in the church for some weeks. At this time a man called on the minister, and told him a person very ill was desirous of seeing him; but added, "I am really ashamed to ask you to go so far; but it is a child of mine, and he refuses to have any one but you; he is altogether an extraordinary boy, and talks a great deal about things that I do not understand." The clergyman promised to go, and went, though the rain poured down in torrents, and he had six miles of rugged mountain country to pass. On arriving where he was directed, he saw a most wretched cabin indeed, and the man he had seen in the morning was waiting at the door. He was shown in, and found the inside of the hovel as miserable as the outside. In a corner, on a little straw, he beheld a person stretched out, whom he recognised as the little boy who had so regularly attended his church. As he approached the wretched bed the child raised himself up, and, stretching forth his arms, said, "*His own right hand and his holy arm* hath gotten him the victory," and immediately he expired. *K. Arvine.*

**Verse 2.** *The LORD hath made known his salvation.* By the appearance of his Son in the flesh, and the wonders which he did. *His righteousness hath he openly shewed*, etc., in the gospel, to all men; that righteousness which is called the "righteousness of God," and which is enjoyed by faith of Jesus Christ, unto all and upon all them that believe: for there is no difference. Ro 3:22. *B. Boothroyd.*

**Verse 2.** *The LORD hath made known*, etc. The word *uydx* denotes not only a *publication* and promulgation, but also a clear and certain demonstration which produces conviction and causes the matter to be *laid up* in the mind and memory and preserved: for the proper signification of the root *ydy* is *to lay up what is to be preserved*. The word *hlg* is added, which properly means *to uncover, to be uncovered*, hence *he revealed* or *uncovered*, that it might be both naked and clear, for the purpose of more fully illustrating the character of the manifestation of the Gospel, opposed to what is obscure, involved in shadows and types, and veiled in legal ceremonies. Of which the apostle treats expressly in 2Co 3:7-18. Lastly, when it is added, that *in the sight of the nations* this uncovering is done, it signifies that this salvation pertains to them also, that it comes to them without distinction, since the Gospel is nakedly and clearly announced. From which it also clearly appears, that the matter reason of the *new song* are found in such a singular event, since God who formerly permitted the nations to walk in their own ways, now under Messiah calls all without distraction to salvation through faith and newness of life. *Venema.*

**Verse 2.** *Made known:* He says not, *He shewed*, but *He made known*. Adam knew him, and predicted concerning him, "A man shall leave father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife, and they twain shall be one flesh." Abel knew him, who offered the lamb; Seth knew him, and called upon him; Noah knew him, and saved all the race in the ark; Abraham knew him, and offered up his son to him. But because the world had forgotten him and worshipped idols, the Lord made his Jesus *known*, when he sent the Word in flesh to the Jews, and *revealed his righteousness* to the nations, when he justified them through faith. Wherefore did he reveal him to the nations? Because of his mercy. Wherefore old he make him known to the Jews? Because of his truth, that is, his promise. *Honorius, the Continuator of Gerhohus.*

**Verse 3.** *He hath remembered his mercy and his truth.* The psalmist very properly observes, that God in redeeming the world "*remembered his truth*," which he had given to Israel his people—language, too, which implies that he was influenced by no other motive than that of faithfully performing what he had himself promised. The more clearly to show that the promise was not

grounded at all on the merit or righteousness of man, he mentions the "*mercy*" of God first, and afterwards his "*faithfulness*" which stood connected with it. The cause, in short, was not to be found out of God himself, (to use a common expression,) but in his mere good pleasure, which had been testified long before to Abraham and his posterity. The word "*remembered*" is used in accommodation to man's apprehension; for what has been long suspended seems to have been forgotten. Upwards of two thousand years elapsed from the time of giving the promise to the appearance of Christ, and as the people of God were subjected to many afflictions and calamities, we need not wonder that they should have sighed, and given way to ominous fears regarding the fulfilment of this redemption. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 3.** *He hath remembered his mercy and his truth.* His *mercy* moved him to make his promise, and his *truth* hath engaged him to perform it; and he hath been mindful of both, by scattering the blessed influences of his light and bounty over the face of the whole earth, and causing all nations to set and partake of the salvation of God. *Matthew Hole(-1730).*

**Verse 3.** *All the ends of the earth have seen,* etc. O unhappy Judea. *The ends of the earth have seen, the salvation of God,* every land is moved to joy, the whole globe is glad, the floods clap their hands, the hills rejoice; yet the evil hearts of the Jews believe not, but are smitten with the penalty of unbelief in the darkness of their blindness. *Gregory, in Lorinus.*

**Verse 3.** *Have seen.* There is a degree of point in the expression *have seen*; it implies actual faith, united with knowledge, that moves the will to love and to desire; for they cannot be said to have seen God's salvation, who, content with nominal faith never bestow a thought on the Saviour. *Bellarmino.*

**Verse 4.** *Make a joyful noise.* Bless God for a Christ. The Argives when delivered by the Romans from the tyranny of the Macedonians and Spartans, *Quae gaudia, quae vociferationes fuerunt! quid florum in Consulem profuderunt!* what great joys expressed they! what loud outcries made they! The very birds that flew over them fell to the ground, astonished at their noises. The crier at the Nemean games was forced to pronounce the word Liberty, *iterumque, iterumque,* again, and again. *John Trapp.*

**Verses 4-6.** Wherewith is God to be praised? In a *literal* sense with all kind of music: vocal, *sing unto the Lord*: chordal, *Praise him upon the harp*: pneumatical, *with trumpets*, etc. In an *allegorical* exposition (as *Euthymius* interprets it) we must praise God in our actions, and praise him in our

contemplation; praise him in our words, praise him in our works; praise him in our life, praise him at our death; being not only *temples* (as Paul), but (as Clemens Alexaudrinus calls us) *timbrels* also of the Holy Ghost. *John Boys*.

**Verse 5.** *With the harp, with the harp.* The repetition made use of is emphatic, and implies that the most ardent attempts men might make to celebrate the great work of the world's redemption would fall short of the riches of the grace of God. *John Calvin*.

**Verse 5.** *The voice of a psalm.* The sound of the Zimrah, hrmz, here, as in Ps 81:2, is certainly the name of some musical instrument. But what the particular instrument might be, which went by that name, is quite uncertain. *Samuel Horsley*.

**Verse 5.** *The voice of a Psalm.* With psalms Jehoshaphat and Hezekiah celebrated their victories. Psalms made glad the heart of the exiles who returned from Babylon. Psalms gave courage and strength to the Maccabees

**Verse 6.** *Trumpets.* tluux, *Chatsotseroth*: here only in the Psalter. These were the straight trumpets (such as are seen on the Arch of Titus) used by the priests for giving signals. Nu 10:2-10; 1Ch 15:24,28, etc. The *shofar*, rmwv (*cornet*), was the ordinary curved trumpet, cornet, or horn. *William Kay*.

**Verse 6.** *Trumpets.* The word here used is uniformly rendered trumpets in the Scriptures, Nu 10:2,8-10 31:6; *et al.* The trumpet was mainly employed for convening a public assembly for worship, or for assembling the hosts for battle. The original word, xruux *chatsotserah*, is supposed to have been designed to imitate "the broken pulse like sound of the trumpet, like the Latin, *taratantara*." So the German *trarara*, and the Arabic, *hadadera*. The word here used was given to the long, straight trumpet. *Albert Barnes*.

**Verse 6.** *Trumpets.* The trumpet served the same purpose, in a religious and civil sense, as bells among Christians, and the voice among Mohammedans. Indeed, it is understood that Mohammed directed the voice to be employed, in order to mark a distinction between his own sect and the Jews with their trumpets and the Christians with their bells. *Kitto's Pictorial Bible*.

**Verse 6.** *With trumpets.* Origen calls the writings of the evangelists and the apostles *trumpets*, at whose blast all the structures of idolatry and the dogmas of the philosophers were utterly overthrown. He teaches likewise that by the sound of the *trumpets* is prefigured the trumpet of the universal

judgment, at which the world shall fall in ruin, and whose sound shall be joy to the just, and lamentation to the unjust. *Lorinus*.

**Verse 6.** *Before the Lord, the King.* Since it is distinctly added *before Jehovah the King*, and the words, *with trumpets and sound of cornet make a joyful noise*, are used, there seems to be a reference to that public rejoicing commonly manifested at the coronation of kings, or the celebration of undertakings for the public safety. This idea is not foreign to the present passage, since Jehovah is represented as King and Saviour of the people. *Venema*.

**Verses 7-8.** Let the sea roar, and the fulness thereof; the world, and *they that dwell therein. Let the floods clap their hands.*

And thou, majestic main!  
A secret world of wonders in thyself,  
Sound his stupendous praise, whose greater voice  
Or bids you roar, or bids your roarings fall.  
—*James Thomson*.

**Verses 7-8.** These appeals to nature in her great departments—of the sea in its mighty amplitude, and the earth with its floods and hills—form, not a warrant, but a call on Christian ministers to recognise God more in their prayers and sermons as the God of Creation, instead of restricting themselves so exclusively to the peculiar doctrines of Christianity. Do the one, and not leave the other undone. *Thomas Chalmers*.

**Verses 7-8.** The setting forth the praise of Christ for the redemption of sinners, may not only furnish work to all reasonable creatures; but also if every drop of water in the sea, and in every river and flood, every fish in the sea, every fowl of the air, every living creature on the earth, and whatsoever else is in the world: if they all had reason and ability to express themselves; yea, and if all the hills were able by motion and gesticulation to communicate their joy one to another; there is work for them all to set out the praise of Christ. *David Dickson*.

**Verses 7-9.** Matthew Henry on these verses quotes from Virgil's 4th Eclogue the verses (of which we subjoin Dryden's translation) in which the poet, he says, "either ignorantly or basely applies to Asinius Pollio the ancient prophecies which at that time were expected to be fulfilled; "adding that Ludovicus Vives thinks that these and many other things which Virgil says of this long looked for child "are applicable to Christ."



O of celestial seed! O foster son of Jove!  
 See, lab'ring Nature calls thee to sustain  
 The nodding frame of heaven, and earth, and main!  
 See to their base restored, earth, seas, and air;  
 And joyful ages, from behind, in crowding ranks appear.

**Verse 8.** *Let the floods clap their hands.* The clapping of the hands being a token of delight and approbation, and the striking or dashing of the water in a river being, for the noise of it, a resemblance of that, *the rivers* are here said to *clap their hands*. *Henry Hammond.*

**Verse 8.** Though the language be figurative, so far as it gives a voice to the inanimate creation in its various departments, yet, like all the figurative language of Scripture, it expresses a truth—that which the Apostle has stated without a metaphor in the express revelation that the "creation shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." And this because the reason of that bondage will no more exist. It is the consequence of sin: but when the world shall be subjected to the righteous rule of its coming King (as predicted in the last verse of this psalm), then earth and all creation shall own its present Lord, and join its tribute of praise to that of Israel and the nations, and the redeemed and glorified chinch. *William De Burgh.*

**Verse 9.** The Psalter is much occupied in celebrating *the benign fruits which Christ's reign is to yield* in all the earth. It will be a reign of HOLINESS. This is its proper and distinctive nature. Under it, the ends of the earth will fear God, and rejoice in his salvation. It will be a reign of JUSTICE. Under it, the wars and oppressions and cruelties, the unequal laws and iniquitous institutions that have so long vexed and cursed the world, shall find a place no more. This happy reformation is usually foretold in the form of a proclamation that the Lord is coming "*to judge the earth.*" It is important, therefore, to keep in mind the true sense and intention of that oft repeated proclamation. It does not refer, as an unwary reader might suppose, to the Judgment of the Great Day. There is no terror in it. The Psalms that have it for their principal burden are jubilant in the highest degree. The design of the proclamation is to announce Christ in the character of a Peaceful Prince coming to administer equal laws with an impartial hand, and so to cause wrong and contention to cease in the earth. This is Christ's manner of judging the earth. What he has already done in this direction enables us to form a clear conception of what he will yet set himself to do. When he designs to accomplish great and salutary reforms in the political and social institutions of a people, he begins by dislodging bad principles from men's

minds and planting Scriptural principles in their stead; by purging evil passions from men's hearts, and baptising them with the Spirit of truth and justice, godliness and lovingkindness. A sure foundation having been thus laid for a better order of things, he will by some storm of controversy or of revolution sweep away the institutions in which injustice has entrenched itself, and will thus make it possible for righteousness to have free course. Oh what a store of comfort for the down trodden, the enslaved, the needy, is laid up in the announcement that the Lord is coming to be the avenger of all such! Well may all the creatures be invited to clap their hands for joy at the thought that he has taken this work in hand; that he sitteth upon the floods; and that the storms that agitate the nations are the chariot in which he rides to take possession of the earth, and make it an abode of righteousness and peace. *William Binnie.*

---

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** *A new song.* The duty, beauty, and benefit of maintaining freshness in piety, service, and worship.

**Verse 1.** *He hath done marvellous things.*

1. He hath created a marvellous universe.
2. He has established a marvellous government.
3. He hath bestowed a marvellous gift.
4. He hath provided a marvellous redemption.
5. He hath inspired a marvellous book.
6. He hath opened a marvellous fulness.
7. He hath effected a marvellous transformation.

—*W. Jackson.*

**Verse 1.** *The victory.* The victories of God in judgment, and in mercy: especially the triumphs of Christ on the cross, and by his Spirit in the heart, and in and by the church at large.

**Verse 2.** *The Lord hath made known his salvation.*

1. The contents of which it is composed.
2. The reasons for which it has been provided.
3. The price at which it has been procured.
4. The terms on which it shall be imparted.

5. The way in which it must be propagated.
6. The manner in which its neglect will be punished. *W. J.*

**Verse 2.** (*first clause*).

1. What is salvation?
2. Why it is called the Lord's: "Salvation is of the Lord."
3. How he has made it known.
4. For what purpose.
5. With what results. *E.G. Gange.*

**Verse 2.** The great privilege of knowing the gospel.

1. *In what it consists.* (a) Revelation by the Bible. (b) Declaration by the minister. (c) Illumination by the Spirit. (d) Illustration in daily providence.
2. *To what it has led.* (a) We have believed it. (b) We have so far understood it as to growingly rejoice in it. (c) We are able to tell it to others. (d) We abhor those who mystify it.

**Verse 2.** Salvation's glory.

1. It is divine—"his salvation."
2. It is consistent with justice—"his righteousness."
3. It is plain and simple—"openly showed."
4. It is meant for all sorts of men—"heathen."

**Verse 3.** (*first clause*). The Lord's memory of his covenant. Times in which he seems to forget it; ways in which even in those times he proves his faithfulness; great deeds of grace by which at other times he shows his memory of his promises; and reasons why he must ever be mindful of his covenant.

**Verse 3.** (*last clause*). *All the ends of the earth.*

1. Literally. Missionaries have visited every land.
2. Spiritually. Men ready to despair, to perish.
3. Prophetically. Dwell on the grand promises concerning the future, and the triumphs of the church. *E.G.G.*

**Verse 3.** *All the ends of the earth have seen, &c.*

1. The greatest foreigners have seen it; many have "come from the east and the west; "Greeks, Peter's hearers, the Eunuch, Greenlanders, South Sea Islanders, Negroes, Red Indians, &c., &c.
2. The ripest saints have seen it; they are at the light end of the earth, stepping out of the wilderness into Canaan, &c.
3. The vilest sinners have seen it; those who have wandered so far that they could get no farther without stepping into hell. The dying thief. The woman who was a sinner. Those whom Whitefield called "the devil's castaways." *W. J.*

**Verse 4.** The right use of noise.

1. "Make a noise." Awake, O sleeper. Speak, O dumb.
2. "Make a joyful noise." The shout of deliverance, of gratitude, of gladness.
3. "Make a loud noise, all the earth." Nature with her ten thousand voices. The church with myriad saints.
4. "Make a joyful noise unto God." Praise him alone. Praise him for ever. *E.G.G.*

**Verse 6.** Joy a needful ingredient of praise. The Lord as King, an essential idea in adoration. Expression in various ways incumbent upon us, when praising joyfully such a King.

**Verses 7-8.** Nature at worship. The congregation is

1. Vast. Sea, earth, rivers, hills.
2. Varied. Diverse in character, word, aspect, each from each other, constant and alike in this alone, that *all, always* worship God.
3. Happy. In this like the worshippers in heaven, and for the same reason—sin is absent. *E.G.G.*

**Verse 8.** The song of the sea, and the hallelujah of the hills.

**Verse 9.** The last judgment as a theme for thankfulness.

**Verse 9.** *Before the Lord.* Where we are, where our joy should be, where all our actions should be felt to be, where we shall be—"*before the Lord.*" Enquire—What are we before the Lord? What shall we be when he cometh?

---

WORK UPON THE NINETY-EIGHTH PSALM

In "The Works of John Boys, "1626, folio, pp. 34-6, there is a short exposition of this psalm.

# Psalm 99

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

---

This may be called THE SANCTUS, or, THE HOLY, HOLY, HOLY PSALM, for the word "holy" is the conclusion and the refrain of its three main divisions. Its subject is the holiness of the divine government, the sanctity of the mediatorial reign. It seems to us to declare the holiness of Jehovah himself in Ps 99:1-3; it mentions the equity of the king whom the Lord had appointed, as an illustration of the Lord's love of holiness, or more probably it describes the Lord as himself the king, in Ps 99:4-5, and it then sets forth the severely righteous character of God's dealings with those favoured persons whom in former times he had selected to approach him on behalf of the people, Ps 99:6-9. It is a hymn fitted for the cherubim who surround the throne, who are mentioned in Ps 99:1; it is a Psalm most fitting for saints who dwell in Zion, the holy city, and especially worthy to be reverently sung by all who, like David the king, Moses the lawgiver, Aaron the priest, or Samuel the seer, are honoured to lead the church of God, and plead for her with her Lord.

---

## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *The Lord reigneth.* One of the most joyous utterances which ever leaped from mortal lip. The overthrow of the reign of evil and the setting up of Jehovah's kingdom of goodness, justice, and truth, is worthy to be hymned again and again, as we have it here for the third time in the psalms. Let the people tremble. Let the chosen people feel a solemn yet joyful awe, which shall thrill their whole manhood. Saints quiver with devout emotion, and sinners quiver with terror when the rule of Jehovah is fully perceived and felt. It is not a light or trifling matter, it is a truth which, above all others, should stir the depths of our nature. He sitteth between the cherubims. In grandeur of sublime glory, yet in nearness of mediatorial condescension, Jehovah revealed himself above the mercyseat, whereon stood the likeness of those flaming ones who gaze upon his glory, and for ever cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy, Lord God of hosts." The Lord reigning on that throne of grace which is sprinkled with atoning blood, and veiled with the covering wings of mediatorial love, is above all other revelations wonderful, and fitted to excite emotion among all mankind, hence it is added, Let the earth be moved. Not merely "the people," but the whole earth should feel a movement of adoring awe when it is known that on the mercyseat God sits as universal monarch. The pomp of heaven surrounds him, and is symbolised by the outstretched wings of waiting cherubs; let not the earth be less moved to adoration, rather let all her tribes bow before his infinite majesty, yea, let the solid earth itself with reverent tremor acknowledge his presence.

**Verse 2.** *The Lord is great in Zion.* Of old the temple's sacred hill was the centre of the worship of the great King, and the place where his grandeur was most clearly beheld: his church is now his favoured palace, where his greatness is displayed, acknowledged, and adored. He there unveils his attributes and commands the lowliest homage; the ignorant forget him, the wicked despise him, the atheistical oppose him, but among his own chosen he is great beyond comparison. He is great in the esteem of the gracious, great in his acts of mercy, and really great in himself: great in mercy, power, wisdom, justice, and glory. And he is high above all the people; towering above their highest thoughts and loftiest conceptions. The highest are not high to him, yet, blessed be his name, the lowliest are not despised by him. In such a God we rejoice, his greatness and loftiness are exceedingly delightful in our esteem; the more he is honoured and exalted in the hearts of men, the more exultant are his people. If Israel delighted in Saul because he was head and shoulders above the people, how much more should we exult in our God and King, Who is as high above us as the heavens are above the earth.

**Verse 3.** *Let them praise thy great and terrible name:* let all the dwellers in Zion and all the nations upon the earth praise the Lord, or "acknowledge thankfully" the goodness of his divine nature, albeit that there is so much in it which must inspire their awe. Under the most terrible aspect the Lord is still to be praised. Many profess to admire the milder beams of the sun of righteousness, but burn with rebellion against its more flaming radiance: so it ought not to be: we are bound to praise a terrible, God and worship him who casts the wicked down to hell. Did not Israel praise him "who overthrew Pharaoh and his hosts in the Red Sea, for his mercy endureth for ever." The terrible Avenger is to be praised, as well as the loving Redeemer. Against this the sympathy of man's evil heart with sin rebels; it cries out for an effeminate God in whom pity has strangled justice. The well-instructed servants of Jehovah praise him in all the aspects of his character, whether terrible or tender. Grace streaming from the mercy-seat can alone work in us this admirable frame of mind. For it is holy, or *He is holy*. In him is no flaw or fault, excess or deficiency, error or iniquity. He is wholly excellent, and is therefore called holy. In his words, thoughts, acts, and revelations as well as in himself, he is perfection itself. O come let us worship and bow down before him.

**Verse 4.** *The king's strength also loveth judgment.* God is the king, the mercy-seat is his throne, and the sceptre which he sways is holy like himself. His power never exerts itself tyrannically; he is a sovereign, and he is

absolute in his government, but his might delights in right, his force is used for just purposes only. Men in these days are continually arranging the Lord's government, and setting up to judge whether he does right or not; but saintly men in the olden time were of another mind, they were sure that what the Lord did was just, and instead of calling him to account they humbly submitted themselves to his will, rejoicing in the firm persuasion that with his whole omnipotence God was pledged to promote righteousness, and work justice among all his creatures. Thou dost establish equity. Not a court of equity merely, but equity itself thou dost set up, and that not for a time or upon an occasion, but as an established institution, stable as thy throne. Not even for the sake of mercy does the Lord remove or injure the equity of his moral government: both in providence and in grace he is careful to conserve the immaculate purity of his justice. Most kingdoms have an establishment of some kind, and generally it is inequitable; here we have an establishment which is equity itself. The Lord our God demolishes every system of injustice, and right alone is made to stand. Thou executest judgment and righteousness in Jacob. Justice is not merely established, but executed in God's kingdom; the laws are carried out, the executive is as righteous as the legislative. Herein let all the oppressed, yea, and all who love that which is right, find large occasion for praise. Other nations under their despots were the victims and the perpetrators of grievous wrong, but when the tribes were faithful to the Lord they enjoyed an upright government within their own borders, and acted with integrity towards their neighbours. That kingcraft which delights in cunning, favouritism, and brute force is as opposite to the divine Kingship as darkness to light. The palace of Jehovah is no robber's fortress nor despot's castle, built on dungeons, with stones carved by slaves, and cemented with the blood of toiling serfs. The annals of most human governments have been written in the tears of the downtrodden, and the curses of the oppressed: the chronicles of the Lord's kingdom are of another sort, truth shines in each line, goodness in every syllable, and justice in every letter. Glory be to the name of the King, whose gentle glory beams from between the cherubic wings.

**Verse 5.** *Exalt ye the LORD our God.* If no others adore him, let his own people render to him the most ardent worship. Infinite condescension makes him stoop to be called our God, and truth and faithfulness bind him to maintain that covenant relationship; and surely we, to whom by grace he so lovingly gives himself, should exalt him with all our hearts. He shines upon us from under the veiling wings of cherubim, and above the seat of mercy, therefore let us come and worship at his footstool. When he reveals himself in Christ Jesus, as our reconciled God, who allows us to approach even to his



throne, it becomes us to unite earnestness and humility, joy and adoration, and, while we exalt him, prostrate ourselves in the dust before him. Do we need to be thus excited to worship? How much ought we to blush for such backwardness! It ought to be our daily delight to magnify so good and great a God. For he is holy. A second time the note rings out, and as the ark, which was the divine footstool, has just been mentioned, the voice seems to sound forth from the cherubim where the Lord sitteth, who continually do cry, "Holy, Holy, Holy. Lord God of Sabaoth!" Holiness is the harmony of all the virtues. The Lord has not one glorious attribute alone, or in excess, but all glories are in him as a whole; this is the crown of his honour and the honour of his crown. His power is not his choicest jewel, nor his sovereignty, but his holiness. In this all comprehensive moral excellence he would have his creatures take delight, and when they do so their delight is evidence that their hearts have been renewed, and they themselves have been made partakers of his holiness. The gods of the heathen were, according to their own votaries, lustful, cruel, and brutish; their only claim to reverence lay in their supposed potency over human destinies: who would not far rather adore Jehovah, whose character is unsullied purity, unswerving justice, unbending truth, unbounded love, in a word, perfect holiness?

**Verse 6.** *Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call upon his name.* Though not ordained to the typical priesthood, Moses was a true priest, even as Melchizedek had been before him. God has ever had a priesthood beside and above that of the law. The three holy men here mentioned all stood in his courts, and saw his holiness, each one after his own order. Moses saw the Lord in flaming fire revealing each perfect law, Aaron full often watched the sacred fire devour the sin-offering, and Samuel witnessed the judgment of the Lord on Eli's house, because of the error of his way. These each one stood in the gap when the wrath of God broke forth, because his holiness had been insulted; and acting as intercessors, they screened the nation from the great and terrible God, who otherwise would in a dreadful manner have executed judgment in Jacob. Let these men, or such as these, lead us in our worship, and let us approach the Lord at the mercy-seat as they did, for he is as accessible to us as to them. They made it their life's business to call upon him in prayer, and by so doing brought down innumerable blessings upon themselves and others. Does not the Lord call us also to come up into the mount with Moses, and to enter the most holy place with Aaron? Do we not hear him call us by our name as he did Samuel? And do we not answer, "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth"? They called upon the Lord, and he answered them. Not in vain were their prayers; but being a holy God he was true to his promises, and hearkened to them from off the

mercy-seat. Here is reason for praise, for answers to the petitions of some are proofs of God's readiness to hear others. These three men asked large things, they pleaded for a whole nation, and they stayed great plagues and turned away fiery wrath; who would not exercise himself in adoring so great and merciful a God? If he were unholy he would be false to his word and refuse his people's cries; this, then, is recorded for our joy and for his glory, that holy men of old were not suffered to pray in vain.

**Verse 7.** *He spake unto them in the cloudy pillar.* We have had mention of the ark and the shekinah, and now of the fiery cloudy pillar, which was another visible token of the presence of God in the midst of Israel. Responses came to Moses and Aaron out of that glorious overshadowing cloud, and though Samuel saw it not, yet to him also came the mystic voice which was wont to thunder forth from that divine canopy. Men have had converse with God, let men therefore speak to God in return. He has told us things to come, let us in return confess the sins which are past; he has revealed his mind to us, let us then pour out our hearts before him. They kept his testimonies. When others turned aside they were faithful; in their hearts they laid up his word, and in their lives they obeyed it. When he spake to them they observed his will, and therefore when they spake to him he yielded to their desires. This keeping of the divine testimonies is a virtue all too rare in these our days; men run after their own views and opinions, and make light of the truth of God; hence it is that they fail in prayer, and scoffers have even dared to say that prayer avails not at all. May the good Lord bring back his people to reverence his word, and then will he also have respect unto the voice of their cry. And the ordinance that he gave them. His practical precept they observed as well as his doctrinal instruction. Ordinances are not to be trifled with, or testimonies will also be despised; and the converse is also true, a light estimate of inspired dogma is sure to end in neglect of moral virtues. To Moses, Aaron, and Samuel special and personal charges were committed, and they were all true to their trust, for they stood in awe of the Lord, their God, and worshipped him with their whole souls. They were very different men, and had each one a work to do peculiar to himself, yet because each was a man of prayer they were all preserved in their integrity, fulfilled their office, and blessed their generation. Lord, teach us like Moses to hold up our hands in prayer and conquer Amalek, like Aaron to wave the censer between the living and the dead till the plague is stayed, and like Samuel to say to a guilty people, "God forbid that I should sin against the Lord in ceasing to pray for you; "if thou wilt make us mighty with thee in prayer, we shall also be kept faithful before thee in the service which thou hast laid upon us.

**Verse 8.** *Thou answeredst them, O LORD our God.* A sweet title and a cheering fact. Our covenant God in a very special manner heard his three servants when they pleaded for the people. Thou wast a God that forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance *of their inventions*. He forgave the sinners, but he slew their sins. Some apply this verse to Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, and remind us that each of these fell into a fault and received chastisement. Of Samuel they assert that, for having set up his sons as his successors, he was compelled to submit to the anointing of Saul as king, which was a great grief to him: this is to our mind a very doubtful statement, and leads us to abandon the interpretation altogether. We believe that the passage refers to the nation which was spared through the intercession of these three holy men, but yet was severely chastened for its transgressions. In answer to the cry of Moses the tribes lived on, but the then existing generation could not enter Canaan: Aaron's golden calf was broken, though the fire of the Lord did not consume the people; and Israel smarted under the harsh government of Saul, though at Samuel's request its murmurings against the theocratic rule of their fathers' God was not visited with pestilence or famine. So to forgive sin as at the same time to express abhorrence of it, is the peculiar glory of God, and is best seen in the atonement of our Lord Jesus. Reader, are you a believer? Then your sin is forgiven you; but so surely as you are a child of God the rod of paternal discipline will be laid upon you if your walk be not close with God. "You only have I known of all the nations of the earth, therefore I will punish you for your iniquities."

**Verse 9.** *Exalt the LORD our God.* A second time the delightful title of Jehovah our God is used, and it is quickly followed by a third. The Psalm is Trinitarian in its whole structure. In each of his sacred persons the Lord is the God of his people; the Father is ours, the Son is ours, and the Holy Spirit is ours: let us exalt him with all our ransomed powers. And worship at his holy hill. Where he appoints his temple let us resort. No spot of ground is now fenced about as peculiarly holy, or to be regarded as more sacred than another; yet his visible church is his chosen hill, and there would we be found, numbered with his people, and unite with them in worship. For the LORD our God is holy. Again this devout description is repeated, and made the climax of the song. Oh for hearts made pure within, so that we may rightly perceive and worthily praise the infinite perfection of the Triune Lord.

**Whole Psalm.** This psalm has three parts, in which the Lord is celebrated as He who is to come, as He who is, and as he who was. *John Albert Bengel*, 1687-1752.

**Whole Psalm.** In each of the three strophes Jehovah is acknowledged in his peculiar covenant relation to his people. In the first he is "great in *Zion*" (Ps 99:2); in the second, he has "executed righteousness in *Jacob*" (Ps 99:4); and he is "Jehovah *our* God" (Ps 99:5); in the third, the great examples of this covenant relationship are cited from Israel's ancient history; and again God is twice claimed as "Jehovah *our* God" (Ps 99:8-9). *J.J.S. Perowne*.

**Whole Psalm.** There are three psalms which begin with the words, "The Lord (JEHOVAH) reigneth." (Psalms 93, 97, 99.) This is the third and last of these Psalms; and it is remarkable that in this Psalm the words *He is holy* are repeated three times (Ps 99:3,5,9). Thus this Psalm is one of the links in the chain which connects the first revelation of God in Genesis with the full manifestation of the doctrine of the blessed Trinity, which is revealed in the commission of the risen Saviour to his apostles: "Go ye, and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost, "and which prepares the faithful to join in the heavenly Hallelujah of the church glorified, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, which was, and is, and is to come." The other links in this chain in the Old Testament are, the Aaronic benediction, in Nu 6:24-27; and the Seraphic Trisagion, in Isa 6:1-3. *Christopher Wordsworth*.

**Whole Psalm.** Many of the preceding Psalms, in extolling the Dominion and Supremacy of the Messiah, have spoken of him solely as the object of triumph and rejoicing. He has been represented in all the bounteousness of his mercy, and the excess of his lovingkindness; and the ideas of might and majesty, with which he has been accompanied, seem chiefly to have been regarded as the means by which these gracious designs will be carried into a sure effect. There is always a great danger in such a feeling, lest our *reciprocal* covenant should be too much forgotten; and we should rest on our privileges to the exclusion of our practice. This was a constant error to the Jews. "We have Abraham to our Father, "was continually on their lips; as if the given promise to their nation had been inalienable for ever. Subsequent ages have shown the existence of the same false principle amongst the Gentiles. It is a part of the weakness of human nature; and hence was the prophet inspired to warn the world of the evil, and draw their minds to a just sense of the *awfulness* of the Redeemer's majesty. In this view, joined as it is throughout with assertions of his readiness at all times to listen to the

believer and to grant his supplication, the Psalm is at once of great power and of an exceeding consolation. *William Hill Tucker.*

**Verse 1.** *Let the people tremble... let the earth be moved.* That fear which proceeds from simple reverence as well as that which arises from apprehension of evil, produces bodily shaking. Thus this exhortation may concern believing as well as unbelieving nations. *Amyraldus.*

**Verse 1.** *Let the people tremble.* He bids a defiance, as it were, to all his enemies, *orgizesywsan, irascantur, commoveantur, fremant populi*; let the people be angry, fret, and be unquiet, as Ps 2:1. *Let the earth*, that is, the tyrants of the earth, be moved at it; yet let them know that all their endeavours are but vain. *William Nicholson.*

**Verse 1.** *Let the people tremble.* Jarchi refers this to the war of Gog and Magog. *John Gill.*

**Verse 1.** *Let the people tremble.* Albeit the church be compassed about with enemies, as the lily among the thorns, yet because her Lord reigneth in the midst of her, she hath reason not only to comfort herself in him, but also hath ground of defying her enemies, and boasting against them: "*The LORD reigneth; let the people tremble.*" The Lord's people do not worship an unknown God, they know who he is, and where to find him; to wit, in his ordinances, on the throne of grace, reconciling himself to the world in Christ: *He sitteth between the cherubims.* *David Dickson.*

**Verse 1.** *The cherubims.* These were figures, or representations of angels, inclining their faces one towards the other, and touching one another with their wings. Ex 25:18. The use of these was to cover or overshadow the *mercyseat* with their wings, Ex 25:20, and from this *seat* God used to speak unto Moses, Ex 25:22; Nu 7:8-9. Which may be applied unto Christ, whose mediation was signified by the *mercyseat*; whence it is said, that *he is a propitiation* or covering *mercyseat*, Ro 3:25 1Jo 2:2 4:10, because by his obedience all our unrighteousness is covered. *Thomas Wilson(-1621), in "A Complete Christian Dictionary, "1678.*

**Verse 1.** *He sitteth between the cherubims.* Our friend Mr. Charles Stanford, in his delicious work, "Symbols of Christ," has beautifully brought out the connection between Mt 23:37 and Mt 23:38. The house was left desolate because Christ, who was set forth by the symbol of shelter, was rejected by them, and was not permitted to cover them with his wings. It was customary for the Jews to say of a proselyte, "He has taken refuge under the wings of

the Shekinah." We now see that to take shelter under the wings of the Shekinah is to hide beneath the wings of Christ. Beneath that living shield which beats back the destroying stroke, and is broad enough to canopy a fugitive world, we take shelter, and there the promise is fulfilled, "He shall cover thee with his feathers, and under his wings shalt thou trust."

**Verse 1.** *He sitteth between the cherubims.* The cherubim is the seat of God, as the scripture sheweth us, a certain exalted heavenly throne, which we see not; but the word of God knoweth it, knoweth it as his own seat: and the word of God and the Spirit of God hath itself revealed to the servants of God where God sitteth. Not that God doth sit, as doth man, but thou, if thou dost wish that God sit in thee, if thou wilt be good, shalt be the seat of God; for thus is it written, *"The soul of the righteous is the seat of wisdom" [Septuagint translation]*. For a throne is in our language called a seat. For some, conversant with the Hebrew tongue, have interpreted cherubim in the Latin language (for it is a Hebrew term) by the words fulness of knowledge. Therefore, because God surpasses all knowledge, he is said to sit above the fulness of knowledge. Let there be therefore in thee fulness of knowledge, and even thou shalt be the throne of God. *Augustine.*

**Verse 1.** *Let the earth be moved.* Those that submit to him shall be established, and not "moved," Ps 96:10; but they that oppose him will be moved. Heaven and earth shall be shaken, and all nations; but the kingdom of Christ cannot be moved. The "things which cannot be shaken shall remain," Heb 12:27. *Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 2.** *He is high above all the people.* The metaphor is taken from such great objects as trees, animals, palaces, towers, which are the more valued, and are regarded as possessing the greater strength, the higher they rise above others. So De 1:28 2:10,21 9:2, Concerning the Canaanites and the giants. *Martin Geier.*

**Verse 3.** *Let them praise thy great and terrible name,* etc. Although the enemies of the Church of God are in a tumult, and the whole earth is moved, do you nevertheless with joyful spirit entrust your salvation to him, and acknowledge and diligently celebrate his power displayed in the defence of his people and the overthrow of his foes. *Mollerus.*

**Verse 3.** *Thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.* The FATHER'S name is "great," for he is the source, the Creator, the Lord of all; the SON'S name is "terrible," for he is to be our judge; the name of the HOLY GHOST is "holy," for he it is who bestows hallowing and sanctification. The Hebrew

commentators see here the mystic Tetragrammaton hwhy, whose true pronunciation was kept a profound secret by the Rabbins, owing to a feeling of awful reverence; while the Greeks are precise in bidding us take it of that name, which is "*terrible*" to God's enemies, "*holy*" to his friends, and "*great*" to both, the name of JESUS. *Hugo Cardinalis, Genebrardus, and Balthazar Corderius, in Neale's Commentary.*

**Verse 3.** *Let them praise thy terrible name.* What force the experience of a burdened conscience attaches to the expression, "Thy great and *terrible* name; for it is holy!" The misery of sin consists not merely in its consequences, but in its very nature, which is to separate between God and our souls, and to shut us out from God, and God from us. Yet the Spirit of God indicates, in the covenant of grace, a threefold practical influence of his holiness upon us, of which the issue is the opposite of despair. The various steps are marked as praise, exaltation, and worship (Ps 99:3, 5, 9). Of these the last seems by far the most difficult to realise. For it is in the nature of conscious sin to prevent even our approaches to God, to keep us from all comfortable fellowship with God, and to fill us with a heavy sense of our infinite and almost hopeless distance from him. Yet we will "*praise thy great and terrible name; for it is holy.*" Great it is; most glorious and high; far above all human conceptions. Viewed in this light, even the fact otherwise so consoling, "The Lord reigneth," leads only to the inference, "Let the people tremble;" and "He sitteth between the cherubim" (or manifesteth himself as the covenant God) to the conclusion, "Let the earth be moved," or *stagger*. But his name is not only great and terrible in its manifestations, "it is holy," and *therefore* we "praise" it. His greatness is all arrayed on the side of goodness, his power on that of righteousness and truth. *Alfred Edersheim, in "The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms," 1873.*

**Verse 3.** *Thy terrible name... holy.* In acts of man's vindictive justice, there is something of impurity, perturbation, passion, some mixture of cruelty; but none of these fall upon God in the several acts of wrath. When God appears to Ezekiel in the resemblance of fire, to signify his anger against the house of Judah for their idolatry, "from his loins downward there was the appearance of fire, but from the loins upward the appearance of brightness, as the colour of amber." Eze 8:2. His heart is clean in his most terrible acts of vengeance; it is a pure flame wherewith he scorseth and burns his enemies. He is holy in the most fiery appearance. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 3.** *It is holy.* No attribute is sounded out so loftily, with such solemnity, and so frequently by angels that stand before his throne, as this.

Where do you find any other attribute trebled in the praises of it as this? Isa 6:3: "Holy, holy, holy, is the LORD of hosts: the whole earth is full of his glory; "and Re 4:8: "The four living creatures rest not day and night saying, Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, "&c. His power of sovereignty as Lord of hosts is but once mentioned, but with a ternal repetition of his holiness. Do you hear in any evangelical song any other perfection of the divine nature thrice repeated? Where do we read of the crying out, Eternal, eternal, eternal; or Faithful, faithful, faithful, Lord God of hosts! Whatsoever other attribute is left out, this God would have to fill the mouths of angels and blessed spirits for ever in heaven... As it seems to challenge an excellence above all his other perfections, so it is the glory of all the rest; as it is the glory of the Godhead, so it is the glory of every perfection in the Godhead; as his power is the strength of them, so his holiness is the beauty of them; as all would be weak without almightiness to back them, so all would be uncomely without holiness to adorn them: should this be sullied all the rest would lose their honour and their comfortable efficacy; as at the same instant that the sun should lose its light, it would lose its heat, its strength, its generative and quickening virtue. As sincerity is the lustre of every grace in a Christian, so is purity the splendour of every attribute in the Godhead. His justice is a holy justice, his wisdom a holy wisdom, his arm of power a "holy arm, " Ps 98:1; his truth or promise a "holy promise, "Ps 105:42. *Holy* and *true* go hand and hand, Re 6:10. "His *name*, " which signifies all his attributes in conjunction, "*is holy*." *Stephen Charnock*.

**Verse 4.** *The king's strength.* They will remember his strength with joy, because he *loveth judgment*, and there is no reason, therefore, to be afraid of him in consequence of his great strength, so long as they continue to walk in the good way. *George Phillips*.

**Verses 4-5.** Our King *loveth righteousness*: he will execute perfect justice, tempered with perfect mercy. He will judge every man according to his works, summing up and completing the unnoticed righteousness of his providence by an open manifestation to the universe of his holiness and equity. "We believe that he will come to be our judge, "therefore let us magnify and exalt him with our lips and hearts; and let us fall down and worship the man Christ Jesus, who took our nature, even his manhood, from the earth, which is his footstool, into the eternity of the Godhead, in which he is equal to the Father. As heaven, which is the throne of God, and earth, which is his footstool, form one universe, so is God and man one Christ, the everlasting Lord, "holy and true, "in whom we sinners may appeal from the



throne of eternal justice to the footstool of eternal mercy. *"Plain Commentary."*

**Verse 5** (*second clause*). Mark the peculiar expression, *Worship at his footstool*. What humility and subjection does it imply! It is the worship of one whose heart has been subdued by divine grace. *W. Wilson.*

**Verse 5.** Bishop Horsley thus renders this verse:

"Exalt ye Jehovah our God,  
And make prostration before his footstool;  
It is holy."

Thus he connects "holy" with Jehovah's footstool, mentioned in the preceding clause. There appears to me great propriety and beauty in this construction, which divides the poem into three members. Of these the first terminates with ascribing "holiness" to the *name* of Jehovah: the second, with ascribing the same property to his *abode*: and then, at the conclusion of the hymn, "holiness," essential holiness, is ascribed to Jehovah himself. Our Bible marginal translation recognizes this construction of the 5th verse. *Richard Mant.*

**Verse 6.** *Moses and Aaron among his priests*, or chief officers; as in 1Ch 18:17. Moses was, if not a priest, yet a continual intercessor for the people, and a type of Christ the great Mediator of his church. *Aben-Ezra* called him *Cohen haccohanim*, the priest of priests; and Philo, writing his life, concludeth, This was the life and death of Moses the king, the lawgiver, the prophet, and the chief priest. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 6.** Moses twice performed acts essentially priestly (Ex 24:4-8 and Ex 40:22, compared with Le 8:1-36), at the ratification of the covenant, and at the consecration of the priests. For this reason he could the more readily be placed here among the priestly mediators. *C. B. Moll.*

**Verse 6. Priests.** The word *cohen* is not confined as a title to the priests of the Levitical order, it is applied to Melchizedek and others. Moses is included among God's priests in accordance with the true idea of a priest, as being the official exponent of the divine love and mercy—one who represented God though acting in the interests of man. *Robert JBaker Girdlestone, in "Synonyms of the Old Testament."*

**Verse 6.** *His priests.* At the foundation of this there is another spiritual idiom, that, namely, according to which all are called priests who possess what constitutes the essence of the ordinary priestly office (although not the externals), inward connection with God, free access to the throne of grace, and the gift and power of intercessory prayer. This figurative idiom occurs even in the law itself, compare Ex 19:6, where it is said to all Israel, "Ye shall be unto me a kingdom of priests, and an holy nation." *F.W. Hengstenberg.*

**Verse 6.** Priests. The word *cohen*, Priest, is from *cahan*, to plead a cause, as an intercessor, mediator, or advocate; hence the strict propriety of its use here in reference to Moses. *C. H. S.*

**Verse 6.** *They that call upon his name.* The Hebrew word which we translate to call upon God, notes a sort of men whose chief business or trade was to call upon or invoke the name of God, and in this instance it implies that it was the special calling of these men to call upon God. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verses 6-9.** This third strophe is in reality a prophetic picture of the future holy worship of God, in which Moses, Aaron, and Samuel appear as the living representatives of the redeemed church, like the four and twenty elders in the more fully developed Apocalyptic scene of St. John. Revelation 5. *Joseph Francis Thrupp.*

**Verse 7.** *They kept his testimonies.* For this reason they were so promptly heard, even as the Lord himself says, "If a man love me he will keep my words," and again, "If ye abide in me and my words abide in you, ye shall ask what ye will and it shall be done unto you." *And the ordinance that he gave them.* They not only observed the precepts which bind men in general, but the peculiar obligation of governing, directing, and teaching the people committed to them. *Bellarmino.*

**Verse 8.** The construction of the verse seems to be this: "O Lord our God, thou didst hear or answer them, "that is, the aforementioned typical mediators, Moses, Aaron, and Samuel: "thou becamest a forbearing God for them, "or, at their intercession; and that "even when punishing, "or, when thou hadst begun to punish "the wicked deeds of them, "that is, not of Moses, Aaron, and Samuel, but of the people, who had transgressed, and for whom they interceded. This was the case when Moses interceded for the idolaters, Ex 22:32, Aaron for the schismatics, Nu 16:47, and Samuel for the whole nation, 1Sa 7:9. *George Horne.*

**Verse 8.** *Thou answeredst them... forgavest them.* Oh, the blessed assurance that nothing can disturb our standing in the covenant. Answer and forgiveness are certain, though vengeance is taken of our inventions. How every word and expression here seems to go right to our hearts! The very designation of our sins and punishments is so true. Yet, withal, we are not shut out from God. We are able to speak to, and to hear him; we receive what we need, and much more; and, above all, we have the sweet, abiding sense of forgiveness, notwithstanding "our inventions." When we smart under chastisements or disappointments, we know that it is the fire which burns up the hay, wood, and stubble—a Father's dealings in compassion and mercy. We willingly, we gladly take these chastisements, which now are to us fresh pledges of our safety. For safe, eternally safe, remains the foundation, and unclosed the way of access. O surely with all our heart do we accord: *"Exalt Jehovah our God, and worship at his holy hill; for Jehovah our God is holy."* Alfred Ederheim.

**Verse 8.** The words of this verse have in them three remarkable particulars.

1. The behaviour of the men it speaks of, which is partly good, and partly evil. The former verse saith, "They kept God's testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them; "this insinuates (what was also expressed, Ps 99:6) that they used to call upon God; all this was very good. But withal they did sometimes some things amiss, they had some inventions, by-paths, and steps awry, which, as they needed pardon, so they occasionally incensed him so much against them that he would not let them escape altogether, without taking some vengeance for such untowardness.

2. God's graciousness in a double respect: 1, in answering them, granting their suits and supplications ordinarily. 2. In forgiving them, pardoning their failings and faults evermore; never dealing with them altogether according to their sins, but in the midst of any offence of theirs, or judgment of his, remembering mercy.

3. His holy justice, notwithstanding, taking vengeance on their inventions; chastening them for some faults sometimes, and not letting them always go unpunished, how faithful soever they were generally, or how gracious soever he was eternally. *Herbert Palmer (1601-1647), in a Sermon entitled "The Glass of God's Providence."* 1644.

**Verse 8.** *Thou wast a God that forgavest them,* literally "for them; "on account of their intercessions. God did not destroy those for whom his devoted servants pleaded, in the day of threatened vengeance. Their sins,

indeed, he visited with the rod of divine chastisement; but their forfeited lives he spared in answer to prayer. *John Morison.*

**Verse 8.** *Thou... forgavest them, though thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.* Because he loves the person, and hates only the sin; therefore he preserves the one, destroys only the other. This is all the fruit, to take away his sin. The covenant that is made with us in Christ is not a covenant made with works, but with persons; and therefore, though the works be often hateful, yet he goes on to love the persons; and that he may continue to love them, destroys out of them what he hates, but cutteth not them off. A member that is leprous or ulcerous, a man loves it as it is "his own flesh," Eph 5:29, though he loathes the corruption and putrefaction that is in it; and therefore he doth not presently cut it off, but purgeth it daily, lays plasters to it to eat the corruption out: whereas a wart or even a wen that grows to a man's body, a man gets it cut off, for he doth not reckon it as his flesh. *Thomas Goodwin.*

**Verse 8.** *Thou tookest vengeance of their inventions.* It is not a light punishment, but a "vengeance," "he takes on their inventions; "to manifest that he hates sin as sin, and not because the worst persons commit it. Perhaps, had a profane man touched the ark, the hand of God had not so suddenly reached him. But when Uzzah, a man zealous for him, as may be supposed by his care for the support of the tottering ark, would step out of his place, he strikes him down for his disobedient action, by the side of the ark, which he would indirectly (as not being a Levite) sustain, 2Sa 6:7. Nor did our Saviour so sharply reprove the Pharisees, and turn so short from them as he did from Peter, when he gave a carnal advice, and contrary to that wherein was to be the greatest manifestation of God's holiness, viz, the death of Christ, Mt 16:23. He calls him Satan, a name sharper than the title of the devil's children, wherewith he marked the Pharisees, and given (besides him) to none but Judas, who made a profession of love to him, and was outwardly ranked in the number of his disciples. A gardener hates a weed the more for being in the bed with the most precious flowers. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 8.** *Thou tookest vengeance.* Sometimes the sins of a people may be such, that God will not pardon them as to temporal punishments; nay, not the godly themselves. Even they may have been partakers with others in their sins, or may have so provoked God themselves, and sinned in such a way as to cause his name to be blasphemed; so that he is concerned in honour to bring some exemplary punishment upon them. So it was with David (2Sa 12:10-14.): though he pardoned him as to the guilt of eternal death, saved his soul, and spared his life, which was forfeited to divine justice for the murder

of Uriah; yet the prophet announced that sharp afflictions must come on him, the sword must never "depart front his house, "and the child begotten in adultery must die, and his wives must be given to his neighbours. So, in Ps 99:8, it seems to be spoken of Moses himself, and other godly among the Israelites who died in the wilderness, and were not permitted to come into the land of promise, that "*God forgave them, "yet "took vengeance of their inventions, " John Collins (1687) in the Morning Exercises.*

**Verse 8.** *Vengeance of their inventions.* It is remarkable, that in the preceding verses mention is made of Moses, and Aaron, and Samuel in a way which seems to imply that they were upon the psalmist's mind when he uttered the declaration of the text. These three persons, all eminent for their piety, were also conspicuous for having suffered the Divine displeasure on account of their failings. Moses angered the Lord at the waters of strife, and he is not suffered to enter the promised land; Aaron provoked the Divine anger by making the golden calf, and would have been destroyed, had not Moses by fervent intercession turned away the anger of the Lord lest he should destroy him; so Samuel placed his sons over Israel, who walked not in his ways, and therefore God gave Israel a king, whose crimes caused the prophet to go down with sorrow to the grave. *Stephen Bridge, 1852.*

---

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

#### **Verse 1.**

1. The doctrine of divine sovereignty enunciated.
2. The apprehension of divine sovereignty demanded. It ought to be spiritually apprehended. God wants to be King in the hearts of men. All mortals must tremble before the Immortal; especially the wicked.
3. The accessories of divine sovereignty hinted at. Sovereignty never forsakes the mercyseat. Angels are represented on the mercyseat, the ministers of sovereignty,
4. The effect of divine sovereignty described. Men should be "moved" to fear and obey the King before whom angels bow. Men should be moved to seek the mercy which angels study. *William Durban.*

**Verse 1.** *He sitteth between the cherubims, etc.*

1. Statement made; where God dwells, on the mercyseat. To hear prayer, and confession, and to grant salvation.
2. Effect produced—"Earth moved; "to admiration, to prayer, to sorrowful contrition, to draw near, etc. *E. G. Gange.*

**Verse 2.**

1. God is great in Zion in Himself, all his perfections are here, which cannot be said of creation, or of his Law, or of the heaven of angels.
2. Great in his works of saving sinners, which he cannot do elsewhere.
3. Great in his glory as displayed in redemption through his Son.
4. Great in his love to his redeemed. *G. R.*

**Verse 2.** *The Lord is great in Zion.*

1. In the condescension he displays—Zion is his "habitation, "his "rest."
2. In the glory he manifests—power and glory are in the sanctuary, Ps 68:2.
3. In the assemblage he draws. "Every one in Zion appeareth before God, "Ps 84:7.
4. In the blessings he imparts.
5. In the authority he exerts. *W. Jackson.*

**Verse 3.** The terrors of the Lord, connected with holiness, and worthy of praise.

**Verse 4.**

1. Trace the process of the working of right principles through three stages—Love, Establishment, Execution.
2. Illustrate from God's character and action.
3. Apply to national, and to daily, life. *C. D.*

**Verse 5.** *Exalt the Lord your God.*

1. Why? For what he is to you. For what he has done for you. For what he has told you.
2. How? In your affection. In your meditation. In your supplication. In your conversation. In your profession. In your consecration. In your co-operation. In your expectation. *W. J.*

**Verse 5.**

1. The loyal enthusiasm of worship, it exalts the Lord.
2. The humble diffidence of worship, not aspiring to his exaltation it kneels at his footstool.
3. The good reason for worship.—"He is holy." *C. D.*

**Verses 6-7.**

1. Prayer offered. Moses the prophet, Aaron the priest, Samuel the ruler, "They called, "&c.
2. Prayer answered. "He answered them, ""he spake, "&c.
3. Prayer vindicated. They kept the other testimonies, &c. *G. R.*

**Verse 7.** (first clause). The revelation of the cloud, or what God foreshadowed to Israel in the cloudy pillar.

1. That God was willing to commune with man.
2. That sinful man could not see God and live.
3. That God should become incarnate, veiled in flesh as in the cloud.
4. That he should be their shelter, protector, guide.
5. That God manifest in the flesh should lead them to the Promised Land—Heaven. *C. D.*

**Verse 8.** Mercy and judgment, or the sea of glass mingled with fire. *C. D.*

**Verse 8.** Observe,

1. That God's vengeance for sin does not prevent his forgiveness of sin; and,
2. That God's forgiveness of sin does not prevent his taking vengeance.

*Stephen Bridge*

**Verse 9.** *The Lord our God.* A very sweet topic will be found in the consideration of the questions, "In what respect is Jehovah ours? and in what relations does he stand to his people?"

---

### WORK UPON THE NINETY-NINTH PSALM

In "The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms." By the Rev. Dr. EDERSHEIM, Tarquay. Arranged for every Sunday in the year. Re-issue. 1873. There are expositions of Psalms 99, 101, and 102.



# Psalm 100

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

**TITLE.** A Psalm of Praise; or rather of thanksgiving. This is the only psalm bearing this precise inscription. It is all ablaze with grateful adoration, and has for this reason been a great favourite with the people of God ever since it was written. "Let us sing the Old Hundredth" is one of the every-day expressions of the Christian church, and will be so while men, exist whose hearts are loyal to the Great King. Nothing can be more sublime this side heaven than the singing of this noble psalm by a vast congregation. Watts' paraphrase, beginning "Before Jehovah's awful throne," and the Scotch "All people that on earth do dwell," are both noble versions; and even Tare and Brady rise beyond themselves when they sing—

"With one consent let all the earth  
To God their cheerful voices raise."

In this divine lyric we sing with gladness the creating power and goodness of the Lord, even as before with trembling we adored his holiness.

## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *Make a joyful noise unto the LORD, all ye lands.* This is a repetition of Ps 98:4. The original word signifies a glad shout, such as loyal subjects give when their king appears among them. Our happy God should be worshipped by a happy people; a cheerful spirit is in keeping with his nature, his acts, and the gratitude which we should cherish for his mercies. In every land Jehovah's goodness is seen, therefore in every land should be be praised. Nearer will the world be in its proper condition till with one unanimous shout it adores the only God. O ye nations, how long will ye blindly reject him? Your golden age will never arrive till ye with all your hearts revere him.

**Verse 2.** *Serve the LORD with gladness.* "Glad homage pay with awful mirth." He is our Lord, and therefore he is to be served; he is our gracious Lord, and therefore to be served with joy. The invitation to worship here given is not a melancholy one, as though adoration were a funeral solemnity, but a cheery gladsome exhortation, as though we were bidden to a marriage feast. Come before his presence with singing. We ought in worship to realise the presence of God, and by an effort of the mind to approach him. This is an act which must to every rightly instructed heart be one of great solemnity, but at the same time it must not be performed in the servility of fear, and

therefore we come before him, not with weepings and wailings, but with Psalms and hymns. Singing, as it is a joyful, and at the same time a devout, exercise, should be a constant form of approach to God. The measured, harmonious, hearty utterance of praise by a congregation of really devout persons is not merely decorous but delightful, and is a fit anticipation of the worship of heaven, where praise has absorbed prayer, and become the sole mode of adoration. How a certain society of brethren can find it in their hearts to forbid singing in public worship is a riddle which we cannot solve. We feel inclined to say with Dr. Watts

"Let those refuse to sing  
Who never knew our God;  
But favourites of the heavenly king  
Must speak his praise abroad."

**Verse 3.** *Know ye that the Lord, he is God.* Our worship must be intelligent. We ought to know whom we worship and why. "Man, know thyself," is a wise aphorism, yet to know our God is truer wisdom; and it is very questionable whether a man can know himself until he knows his God. Jehovah is God in the fullest, most absolute, and most exclusive sense, he is God alone; to know him in that character and prove our knowledge by obedience, trust, submission, zeal, and love is an attainment which only grace can bestow. Only those who practically recognise his Godhead are at all likely to offer acceptable praise. It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves. Shall not the creature reverence its maker? Some men live as if they made themselves; they call themselves "self-made men," and they adore their supposed creators; but Christians recognise the origin of their being and their well-being, and take no honour to themselves either for being, or for being what they are. Neither in our first or second creation dare we put so much as a finger upon the glory, for it is the sole right and property of the Almighty. To disclaim honour for ourselves is as necessary a part of true reverence as to ascribe glory to the Lord. "Non nobis, domine!" will for ever remain the true believer's confession. Of late philosophy has laboured hard to prove that all things have been developed from atoms, or have, in other words, made themselves: if this theory shall ever find believers, there will certainly remain no reason for accusing the superstitious of credulity, for the amount of credence necessary to accept this dogma of scepticism is a thousandfold greater than that which is required even by an absurd belief in winking Madonnas, and smiling Bambinos. For our part, we find it far more easy to believe that the Lord made us than that we were developed by a long chain of natural selections from floating atoms which fashioned themselves.

We are his people, and the sheep of his pasture. It is our honour to have been chosen from all the world besides to be *his* own people, and our privilege to be therefore guided by his wisdom, tended by his care, and fed by his bounty. Sheep gather around their shepherd and look up to him; in the same manner let us gather around the great Shepherd of mankind. The avowal of our relation to God is in itself praise; when we recount his goodness we are rendering to him the best adoration; our songs require none of the inventions of fictions, the bare facts are enough; the simple narration of the mercies of the Lord is more astonishing than the productions of imagination. That we are the sheep of his pasture is a plain truth, and at the same time the very essence of poetry.

**Verse 4.** *Enter into his gates with thanksgiving.* To the occurrence of the word *thanksgiving* in this place the Psalm probably owes its title. In all our public service the rendering of thanks must abound; it is like the incense of the temple, which filled the whole house with smoke. Expiatory sacrifices are ended, but those of gratitude will never be out of date. So long as we are receivers of mercy we must be givers of thanks. Mercy permits us to enter his gates; let us praise that mercy. What better subject for our thoughts in God's own house than the Lord of the house. And into his courts with praise. Into whatever court of the Lord you may enter, let your admission be the subject of praise: thanks be to God, the innermost court is now open to believers, and we enter into that which is within the veil; it is incumbent upon us that we acknowledge the high privilege by our songs. Be thankful unto him. Let the praise be in your heart as well as on your tongue, and let it all be for him to whom it all belongs. And bless his name. He blessed you, bless him in return; bless his name, his character, his person. Whatever he does, be sure that you bless him for it; bless him when he takes away as well as when he gives; bless him as long as you live, under all circumstances; bless him in all his attributes, from whatever point of view you consider him.

**Verse 5.** *For the Lord is good.* This sums up his character and contains a mass of reasons for praise. He is good, gracious, kind, bountiful, loving; yea, God is love. He who does not praise the good is not good himself. The kind of praise inculcated in the Psalm, viz., that of joy and gladness, is most fitly urged upon us by an argument from the goodness of God. His mercy is everlasting. God is not mere justice, stern and cold; he has bowels of compassion, and wills not the sinner's death. Towards his own people mercy is still more conspicuously displayed; it has been theirs from all eternity, and shall be theirs world without end. Everlasting mercy is a glorious theme for sacred song. And his truth endureth to all generations. No fickle being is he,

promising and forgetting. He has entered into covenant with his people, and he will never revoke it, nor alter the thing that has gone out of his lips. As our fathers found him faithful, so will our sons, and their seed for ever. A changeable God would be a terror to the righteous, they would have no sure anchorage, and amid a changing world they would be driven to and fro in perpetual fear of shipwreck. It were well if the truth of divine faithfulness were more fully remembered by some theologians; it would overturn their belief in the final fall of believers, and teach them a more consolatory system. Our heart leaps for joy as we bow before One who has never broken his word or changed his purpose.

"As well might he his being quit  
As break his promise or forget."

Resting on his sure word, we feel that joy which is here commanded, and in the strength of it we come into his presence even now, and speak good of his name.

---

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**TITLE.** This is the only Psalm in the whole collection entitled "*A Psalm of Praise*." It is supposed to have received this appellation because peculiarly adapted, if not designed to be sung, when the *sacrifices of thanksgiving* were offered. See Le 7:12. The Greeks think it was written by David, who here invites all the world to join with the Israelites in the service of God, whose divine sovereignty he here recognises. *Samuel Burder*.

**Whole Psalm.** If we are right in regarding Psalms 93-99 as forming one continuous series, one great prophetic oratorio, whose title is "Jehovah is King," and through which there runs the same great idea, this Psalm may be regarded as the doxology which closes the strain. We find lingering in it notes of the same great harmony. It breathes the same gladness; it is filled with the same hope, that all nations shall bow down before Jehovah, and confess that he is God. *J.J.S. Perowne*.

**Whole Psalm.** This Psalm contains a promise of Christianity, as winter at its close contains the promise of spring. The trees are ready to bud, the flowers are just hidden by the light soil, the clouds are heavy with rain, the sun shines in his strength; only a genial wind from the south is wanted to give a new life to all things. "*The Speaker's Commentary*," 1873.

**Whole Psalm.** Luther would have immortalized his name had he done no more than written the majestic air and harmony to which we are accustomed to sing this Psalm, and which, when the mind is in a truly worshipping frame, seems to bring heaven down to earth, and to raise earth to heaven, giving us anticipations of the pure and sublime delights of that noble and general assembly in which saints and angels shall for ever celebrate the praises of God. *Ingram Cobbin.*

**Verse 2.** The first half of this verse is from Ps 2:11, only that instead of "*with fear*," "there, where the psalmist has to do with fierce rebels, there is substituted here "*gladness*" or joy. *F.W. Hengstenberg.*

**Verse 2.** *Serve the LORD with gladness.* It is a sign the oil of grace hath been poured into the heart "when the oil of gladness" shines on the countenance. Cheerfulness credits religion. *Thomas Watson.*

**Verse 2.** *Serve the LORD.* It is our privilege to serve the Lord in all things. It is ours to please the Lord in loosing the latchet of a shoe; and to enjoy the expression of his favour therein. The servant of God is not serving at the same time another master; he has not been hired for occasional service; he abides in the service of his God, and cannot be about anything but his Master's business; he eats, he drinks, he sleeps, he walks, he discourses, he findeth recreation, all by the way of serving God. *Serve the Lord with gladness.* Can you bear to be waited upon by a servant who goes moping and dejected to his every task? You would rather have no servant at all, than one who evidently finds your service cheerless and irksome. *George Bowen.*

**Verse 3.** *Know ye that the LORD he is God, &c.* From the reasons of this exhortation, learn, that such is our natural atheism, that we have need again and again to be instructed, *that the Lord is God*; of whom, and through whom, and for whom are all things. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 3.** *It is he that made us... we are his.* Now, the ground of God's property in all things is his creating of all... Accordingly, you may observe in many scriptures, where the Lord's propriety is asserted, this, as the ground of it, is annexed: Ps 89:11-12, the heavens, the earth, the whole world, and all therein is thine. Why so? "Thou hast founded them." And so are all the regions and quarters of the world, northern and southern, western and eastern; for Tabor was on the west and Hermon on the east; all are thine, for thou hast created them. So sea and land, Ps 95:5. As all things measured by time, so time itself, the measure of all, Ps 74:16-17. "Thou hast made the light," *i.e.* the moon for the night and the sun for the day. He lays claim to all

the climes of the earth, and all the seasons of the year on this account; he made them. This will be more evident and unquestionable, if we take notice of these particulars:

1. He made all for himself. He was not employed by any to make it for another, for in that case sometimes the maker is not the owner; but the Lord did employ himself in that great work, and for himself did he undertake and finish it. Pr 16:4 Col 1:15-16.

2. He made all things of nothing, either without any matter at all, or without any but what himself had before made of nothing. A potter when he makes an earthenware vessel, if the clay be not his own which he makes it of, he is not the full owner of the vessel, though he formed it: "the form is his, the matter is another's; "but since the Lord made all of nothing, or of such matter as himself had made, all is wholly his, matter and form, all entirely.

3. He made all without the help or concurrence of any other. There was none that assisted him, or did in the least co-operate with him in the work of creation... Those that assist and concur with another in the making of a thing may claim a share in it; but here lies no such claim in this case, where the Lord alone did all, alone made all. All is his only.

4. He upholds all things in the same manner as he created, continues the being of all things in the same way as he gave it. He does it of himself, without other support, without any assistant. All would fall into nothing in a moment, if he did not every moment bear them up. So that all things on this account have still their being from him every moment, and their well-being too, and all the means which conduce to it; and therefore all are his own.

*David Clarkson.*

**Verse 3.** *It is he that hath made us.* The emperor Henry, while out hunting on the Lord's day called Quinquagesima, his companions being scattered, came unattended to the entrance of a certain wood; and seeing a church hard by, he made for it, and feigning himself to be a soldier, simply requested a mass of the priest. Now that priest was a man of notable piety, but so deformed in person that he seemed a monster rather than a man. When he had attentively considered him, the emperor began to wonder exceedingly why God, from whom all beauty proceeds, should permit so deformed a man to administer his sacraments. But presently, when mass commenced, and they came to the passage, *Know ye that the Lord he is God*, which was chanted by a boy, the priest rebuked the boy for singing negligently, and said with a loud voice, *It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.* Struck by

these words, and believing the priest to be a prophet, the emperor raised him, much against his will, to the archbishopric of Cologne, which see he adorned by his devotion and excellent virtues. *From "Roger of Wendover's (1237) Flowers of History."*

**Verse 3.** *It is he that hath made us... we are his.* Many a one has drawn balsatalc consolation from these words; as for instance Melancthon when disconsolately sorrowful over the body of his son in Dresden on the 12th July, 1559. But in *"He made us and we are his,* "there is also a rich mine of comfort and of admonition, for the Creator is also the Owner, his heart clings to his creature, and the creature owes itself entirely to him, without whom it would not have had a being, and would not continue in being. *F. Delitzsch.*

**Verse 3.** *He that made us, i.e. made us what we are, a people to himself; as in Ps 95:5, 1Sa 12:6, and De 32:6. It was not we that made ourselves his (compare Eze 29:3). "He (and not we ourselves) made us His people, and the flock whom he feeds." Andrew A. Bonar.*

**Verse 3.** *Not we* is added, because any share, on the part of the church, in effecting the salvation bestowed upon her, would weaken the testimony which this bears to the exclusive Godhead of the Lord. *F. W. Hengstenberg.*

**Verses 3, 5.** Know ye what God is in himself, and what he is to you. Knowledge is the mother of devotion, and of all obedience; blind sacrifices will never please a seeing God. "Know" it, *i.e.* consider and apply it, and then you will be more close and constant, more inward and serious, in the worship of him. Let us know, then, these seven things concerning the Lord Jehovah, with whom we have to do in all the acts of religious worship.

1. *That the Lord he is God,* the only living and true God; that he is a being infinitely perfect, self-existent, and self-sufficient, and the fountain of all being.

2. That he is our Creator: *It is he that hath made us, and not we ourselves.* We do not, we could not make ourselves; it is God's prerogative to be his own cause; our being is derived and depending.

3. That therefore *he is our rightful owner.* The Masorites, by altering one letter in the Hebrew, read it, "He made us, and his we are, "or, "to him we belong." Put both the readings together, and we learn, that because God "made us, and not we ourselves, "therefore we are not our own but his.

4. That *he is our sovereign Ruler. We are his people*, or subjects, and he is our prince, our rector or governor, that gives laws to us as moral agents, and will call us to an account for what we do.

5. That *he is our bountiful Benefactor*; we are not only his sheep whom he is entitled to, but *the sheep of his pasture*, whom he takes care of.

6. That he is a God of infinite mercy and good (Ps 100:5); *The Lord is good*, and therefore doth good; *his mercy his everlasting*.

7. That he is a God of inviolable truth and faithfulness; *His truth endureth to all generations*, and no word of his shall fall to the ground as antiquated or revoked. *Matthew Henry*.

**Verse 4.** *Enter into his gates*; for to the most guilty are the gates of his church open. *Francis Hill Tucker*.

**Verse 4.** *With thanksgiving*. On the word *hrwt* the word used in *Le 7:12* for *sacrifices of thanksgivings*], *Rabbi Menachen* remarks: *All sacrifices will be abolished; but the sacrifice of thanksgiving will remain*. *George Phillips*.

**Verse 4.** The former part of this Psalm may have been chanted by the precentor when the peace-offering was brought to the altar; and this last verse may have been the response, sung by the whole company of singers, at the moment when fire was applied to the offering. *Daniel Cresswell*.

**Verse 5.** *His mercy is everlasting*. The everlasting unchangeable mercy of God, is the first motive of our turning to him, and of our continuing steadfast in his covenant, and it shall be the subject of unceasing praise in eternity. As the Lord is good, and his mercy everlasting, so the full perfection of these attributes in a perfect state will call forth praise unwearied from hearts that ever faint. *W. Wilson*.

---

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Whole Psalm.** This is a bunch of the grapes of Eshcol. It is a taste of what is still the promised land. The Jewish church came to its perfection in the reign of Solomon, but a greater than Solomon is here. The perfection of the New Testament church is here anticipated. This psalm teaches,



1. *That there will be a joyful state of the whole world (Ps 100:1).* (a) To whom the address is given—to "all lands, "and all in those lands. (b) The subject of the address—"Make a joyful noise." What a doleful noise it has made! (c) By whom the address is given, by him who secures what he commands.

2. *That this joyful state of the whole world will arise from the enjoyment of the Divine Being (Ps 100:2).* (a) Men have long tried to be happy without God. (b) They will find at last that their happiness is in God. The conversion of an individual in this respect is a type of the conversion of the world.

3. *That this enjoyment of God will arise from a new relation to him (Ps 100:3).* (a) Of knowledge on our part: he will be known as the Triune God, as a covenant God, as the God of salvation—as God. (b) Of rightful claim on his part; (1.) by right of creation—"He hath made us; " (2.) By light of redemption—"Ye were not a people, but are now the people of God, "&c.; "I have redeemed thee: thou art mine"; (3.) by right of preservation—"We are the sheep, "&c.

4. *That this new relation to God will endear to us the ordinances of his house (Ps 100:4).* (a) Of what the service will consist—"thanksgiving" and praise. (b) To whom it will be rendered. Enter into *his* gates—*his* courts—be thankful unto *him*—bless *his* name. That this service will be perpetual; begin on earth, continued in heaven. This fact is founded—

5. *That this service will be perpetual; begun on earth, continued in heaven.* This fact is founded—(a) Upon essential goodness. "For the Lord is good." (b) Upon everlasting mercy. "His mercy, "etc. (c) Upon immutable truth. "His truth, "etc. *G. R.*

**Verse 2.** *Serve the LORD with gladness.*

1. For he is the best of beings.
2. For his commandments are not grievous.
3. For he is your Saviour, as well as Creator; your friend, as well as Lord.
4. The angels, so much greater than yourself, know no reason why they should not serve him with gladness.
5. In serving him you serve yourself.

6. You make religion attractive.

7. You get fitness for heaven. *George Bowen.*

**Verse 2** (*first clause*) A true heart,

1. Is humble—*serves*.

2. Is pious—"serve the Lord."

3. Is active—*serves*.

4. Is consequently joyful—"with gladness."

**Verse 2.** (*first clause*). "Serving the Lord with gladness." See "Spurgeon's Sermons, "No. 769.

**Verse 3.** *Know ye that the LORD he is God.* That you may be true amid superstition, hopeful in contrition, persistent in supplication, unwearied in exertion, calm in affliction, firm in temptation, bold in persecution, and happy in dissolution. *W. J.*

**Verse 3.** *We are his people.* We have been twice born, as all his people are. We love the society of his people. We are looking unto Jesus like his people. We are separated from the world as his people. We experience the trials of his people. We prefer the employment of his people. We enjoy the privileges of his people. *W. J.*

**Verse 4.** A Discourse of Thankfulness which is due to God for his benefits and blessings. A Sermon by Thomas Goodwin. Works, vol. 9 pp. 499-514. Nichol's *edition*.

**Verse 4.**

1. The privileges of access.

2. The duty of thankfulness.

3. The reasons for enjoying both.

**Verse 5.**

1. The inexhaustible fount—the goodness of God.

2. The ever-flowing stream—the mercy of God.

3. The fathomless ocean—the truth of God. "O the depths!" *W. Durban.*

# Psalm 101

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

---

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

---

## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *I will sing of mercy and judgment.* He would extol both the love and the severity, the sweets and the bitters, which the Lord had mingled in his experience; he would admire the justice and the goodness of the Lord. Such a song would fitly lead up to godly resolutions as to his own conduct, for that which we admire in our superiors we naturally endeavour to imitate. Mercy and judgment would temper the administration of David, because he had adoringly perceived them in the dispensations of his God. Everything in God's dealings with us may fittingly become the theme of song, and we have not viewed it aright until we feel we can sing about it. We ought as much to bless the Lord for the judgment with which he chastens our sin, as for the mercy with which he forgives it; there is as much love in the blows of his hand as in the kisses of his mouth. Upon a retrospect of their lives instructed saints scarcely know which to be most grateful for—the comforts which have, or the afflictions which have purged them. Unto thee, O LORD, will I sing. Jehovah shall have all our praise. The secondary agents of either the mercy or the judgment must hold a very subordinate place in our memory, and the Lord alone must be hymned by our heart. Our soul's sole worship must be the lauding of the Lord. The psalmist forsakes the minor key, which was soon to rule him in the one hundred and second psalm, and resolves that, come what may, he will sing, and sing to the Lord too, whatever others might do.

**Verse 2.** *I will behave myself wisely in a perfect way.* To be holy is to be wise; a perfect way is a wise way. David's resolve was excellent, but his practice did not fully tally with it. Alas! he was not always wise or perfect,

but it was well that it was in his heart. A king had need be both sage and pure, and, if he be not so in intent, when he comes to the throne, his after conduct will be a sad example to his people. He who does not even resolve to do well is likely to do very ill. Householders, employers, and especially ministers, should pray for both wisdom and holiness, for they will need them both. O when wilt thou come unto me?—an ejaculation, but not an interruption. He feels the need not merely of divine help, but also of the divine presence, that so he may be instructed, and sanctified, and made fit for the discharge of his high vocation. David longed for a more special and effectual visitation from the Lord before he began his reign. If God be with us we shall neither err in judgment nor transgress in character; his presence brings us both wisdom and holiness; away from God we are away from safety. Good men are so sensible of infirmity that they cry for help from God, so full of prayer that they cry at all seasons, so intense in their desires that they cry with sighs and groanings which cannot be uttered, saying, "O when wilt thou come unto me?" I will walk within my house with a perfect heart. Piety must begin at home. Our first duties are those within our own abode. We must have a perfect heart at home, or we cannot keep a perfect way abroad. Notice that these words are a part of a song, and that there is no music like the harmony of a gracious life, no psalm so sweet as the daily practice of holiness. Reader, how fares it with your family? Do you sing in the choir and sin in the chamber Are you a saint abroad and a devil at home? For shame! What we are at home, that we are indeed. He cannot be a good king whose palace is the haunt of vice, nor he a true saint whose habitation is a scene of strife, nor he a faithful minister whose household dreads his appearance at the fireside.

**Verse 3.** *I will set no wicked thing before mine eyes.* I will neither delight in it, aim at it or endure it. If I have wickedness brought before me by others I will turn away from it, I will not gaze upon it with pleasure. The psalmist is very sweeping in his resolve, he declines the least, the most reputable, the most customary form of evil—no wicked thing; not only shall it not dwell in his heart, but not even before his eyes, for what fascinates the eye is very apt to gain admission into the heart, even as Eve's apple first pleased her sight and then prevailed over her mind and hand. I hate the work of them that turn aside. He was warmly against it; he did not view it with indifference, but with utter scorn and abhorrence. Hatred of sin is a good sentinel for the door of virtue. There are persons in courts who walk in a very crooked way, leaving the high road of integrity; and these, by short cuts, and twists, and turns, are often supposed to accomplish work for their masters which simple honest hearts are not competent to undertake; but David would not employ

such, he would pay no secret service money, he loathed the practices of men who deviate from righteousness. He was of the same mind as the dying statesman who said, "Corruption wins not more than honesty." It is greatly to be deplored that in after years he did not keep himself clear in this matter in every case, though, in the main he did; but what would he have been if he had not commenced with this resolve, but had followed the usual crooked Policy of Oriental princes? How much do we all need divine keeping! We are no more perfect than David, nay, we fall far short of him in many things; and, like him, we shall find need to write a psalm of penitence very soon after our psalm of good resolution. It shall not cleave to me. I will disown their ways, I will not imitate their policy: like dirt it may fall upon me, but I will wash it off, and never rest till I am rid of it. Sin, like pitch, is very apt to stick. In the course of our family history crooked things will turn up, for we are all imperfect, and some of those around us are far from being what they should be; it must, therefore, be one great object of our care to disentangle ourselves, to keep clear of transgression, and of all that comes of it: this cannot be done unless the Lord both comes to us, and abides with us evermore.

**Verse 4.** *A froward heart shall depart from me.* He refers both to himself and to those round about him; he would neither be crooked in heart himself, nor employ persons of evil character in his house; if he found such in his court he would chase them away. He who begins with his own heart begins at the fountain head, and is not likely to tolerate evil companions. We cannot turn out of our family all whose hearts are evil, but we can keep them out of our confidence, and let them see that we do not approve of their ways. I will not know a wicked person. He shall not be my intimate, my bosom friend. I must know him as a man or I could not discern his character, but if I know him to be wicked, I will not know him any further, and with his evil I will have no communion. "To know" in Scripture means more than mere perception, it includes fellowship, and in that sense it is here used. Princes must disown those who disown righteousness; if they know the wicked they will soon be known as wicked themselves.

**Verse 5.** *Whose privily slandereth his neighbor, him will I cut off.* He had known so bitterly the miseries caused by slanderers that he intended to deal severely with such vipers when he came into power, not to revenge his own ills, but to prevent others from suffering as he had done. To give one's neighbour a stab in the dark is one of the most atrocious of crimes, and cannot be too heartily reprobated, yet such as are guilty of it often find patronage in high places, and are considered to be men of penetration, trusty

ones who have a keen eye, and take care to keep their lords well posted up. King David would lop the goodly tree of his state of all such superfluous boughs, Him that hath an high look and a proud heart him will not I *suffer*. Proud, domineering, supercilious gentlemen, who look down upon the poor as though they were so many worms crawling in the earth beneath their feet, the psalmist could not bear. The sight of them made him suffer, and therefore he would not suffer them. Great men often affect aristocratic airs and haughty manners, David therefore resolved that none should be great in his palace but those who had more grace and more sense than to indulge in such abominable vanity, Proud men are generally hard, and therefore very unfit for office; persons of high looks provoke enmity and discontent, and the fewer of such eople about a court the better for the stability of a throne. If all slanderers were now cut off, and all the proud banished, it is to be feared that the next census would declare a very sensible diminution of the population.

**Verse 6.** *Mine eyes shall be upon the faithful of the land, that they may dwell with me.* He would seek them out, engage their services, take care of them, and promote them to honour: this is a noble occupation for a king, and one which will repay him infinitely better than listening to the soft nothings of flatterers. It would be greatly for the profit of us all if we chose our servants rather by their piety than by their cleverness; he who gets a faithful servant gets a treasure, and he ought to do anything sooner than part with him. Those who are not faithful to God will not be likely to be faithful to men; if we are faithful ourselves, we shall not care to have those about us who cannot speak the truth or fulfil their promises; we shall not be satisfied until all the members of our family are upright in character. He that walketh in a perfect way, he shall serve me. What I wish myself to be, that I desire my servant to be. Employers are to a great degree responsible for their servants, and it is customary to blame a master if he retains in his service persons of notorious character; therefore, lest we become partakers of other men's sins, we shall do well to decline the services of bad characters. A good master does well to choose a good servant; he may take a prodigal into his house for the sinner's good, but if he consults his own he will look in another quarter. Wicked nurses have great influence for evil over the minds of little children, and ungodly servants often injure the morals of the older members of the family, and therefore great care should be exercised that godly servants should be employed as far as possible. Even irreligious men have the sense to perceive the value of Christian servants, and surely their own Christian brethren ought not to have a lower appreciation of them.

**Verse 7.** *He that worketh deceit shall not dwell within my house.* He had power to choose his courtiers, and he meant to exercise it. Deceit among most orientals is reckoned to be a virtue, and is only censured when it is not sufficiently cunning, and therefore comes to be found out; it was therefore all the more remarkable that David should have so determinedly set his face against it. He could not tell what a deceitful man might be doing, what plots he might be contriving, what mischief he might be brewing, and therefore he resolved that he would at any rate keep him out of his house, that his palace might not become a den of villainy. Cheats in the market are bad enough, but deceivers at our own table we cannot bear. He that telleth lies shall not tarry in my sight. He would not have a liar within sight or hearing; lie loathed the mention of him. Grace makes men truthful, and creates in them an utter horror of everything approaching to falsehood. If David would not have a liar in his sight, much less will the Lord; neither he that loves nor he who makes a lie shall be admitted into heaven. Liars are obnoxious enough on earth; the saints shall not be worried with them in another world.

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

**Verse 8.** *That I may cut off all wicked doers from the city of the LORD.* As the kingdom of David was only a faint image of the kingdom of Christ, we

ought to set Christ before our view; who, although he may bear with many hypocrites, yet as he will be the judge of the world, will at length call them all to on account, and separate the sheep from the goats. And if it seems to us that he tarries too long, we should think of that morning which will suddenly dawn, that all filthiness being purged away, true purity may shine forth.—*John Calvin.*

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

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

---

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Whole Psalm.** The contents of this psalm show that it was written at some remarkable period of David's life. Three different times have been fixed upon as respectively giving occasion for the solemn resolutions which are announced in it. The first is supposed to be when David, immediately after the death of Saul, succeeded to the government of a part of the kingdom; the second, when the whole kingdom was united under the dominion of David; and the third, when he removed the ark from the house of Obededom to Zion, and placed it in the vicinity of his own abode. It is certainly of little importance which of these periods we select, but the second verse of the psalm has some appearance of relating to the last mentioned. The psalmist here says, When wilt thou come to me? which seems to intimate that when he was to have the symbols of God's presence so near to him, he experienced a solemn sentiment respecting the holiness that was now more than ever incumbent upon him—a sentiment which induced him to form the sacred purposes and resolutions which he has specified. These purposes relate to the character of the persons whom he would select for his household, and those whom he would employ in carrying on his government, which appeared to be more firmly established by the divine condescension that was manifested to him, in having the earthly residence of God placed so near to himself. It was quite in agreement with David's character to form purposes of more



fervent and steadfast obedience, in proportion to the advantages and favours which the divine goodness bestowed upon him.—*William Walford*.

**Whole Psalm.** This psalm has been appropriately called "*The Householder's Psalm*"; and assuredly if every master of a family would regulate his household by these rules of the conscientious psalmist, there would be a far greater amount, not merely of domestic happiness and comfort, but of fulfilment of the serious and responsible duties which devolve on the respective members of a household. David in some measure may be supposed to speak of the regulation of a royal court and household; and of course with such we in our humbler sphere can have but little in common; yet though there may not be the same duties and the same requirements, yet the same principles should actuate all alike, and the same virtues that adorn the lowlier station may shed a radiance even on the highest.—*Barton Bouchier*.

**Whole Psalm.** This is the psalm which the old expositors used to designate "*The Mirror for Magistrates*"; and an excellent mirror it is. It would mightily accelerate the coming of the time when every nation shall be Christ's possession, and every capital a "City of the Lord", if all magistrates could be persuaded to dress themselves by it every time they go forth to perform the functions of their godlike office. When Sir George Villiers became the favourite and prime minister of King James, Lord Bacon, in a beautiful Letter of Advice, counselled him to take this psalm for his rule in the promotion of courtiers. "In those the choice had need be of holiest and faithful servants, as well as of comely outsiders who can bow the knee and kiss the hand. King David (Ps 101:6-7) propounded a rule to himself for the choice of his courtiers. He was a wise and a good king; and a wise and a good king shall do well to follow such a good example; and if he find any to be faulty, which perhaps cannot suddenly be discovered, let him take on him this resolution as King David did, '*There shall no deceitful person dwell in my house.*'" It would have been well both for the Philosopher and the Favourite if they had been careful to walk by this rule.—*William Binnie*.

**Whole Psalm.** Eyring, in his "Life of Ernest the Pious" (Duke of Saxe Gotha), relates that he sent an unfaithful minister a copy of Ps 101:1-8, and that it became a proverb in the country when an official had done anything wrong: He will certainly soon receive the prince's psalm to read.—*F. Delitzsch*.

**Whole Psalm.** Ps 101:1-8 was one beloved by the noblest of Russian princes, Vladimir Monomachos; and by the gentlest of English reformers,

Nicholas Ridley. But it was its first leap into life that has carried it so far into the future. It is full of a stern exclusiveness, of a noble intolerance, not against theological error, not against uncourtly manners, not against political insubordination, but against the proud heart, the high look, the secret slanderer, the deceitful worker, the teller of lies. These are the outlaws from king David's court; these are the rebels and heretics whom he would not suffer to dwell in his house or tarry in his sight.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, in "Lectures on the History the Jewish Church", 1870.*

**Whole Psalm.** Such a hymn of praise as the grand doxology of Ps 99:1-9 could not die away without an echo. Accordingly Ps 100:1-5 may be regarded as forming the chorus of the church, and this as taking up and applying that part of the doxology which celebrated the *present* manifestation of the "King in his beauty."—*Alfred Edersheim.*

**Whole Psalm.** Mr. Fox reports that Bishop Ridley often read and expounded this psalm to his household, hiring them with money to get it by heart.—*Thomas Lye, in "The Morning Exercises."*

**Verse 1.** *I will sing.* If thou bestowest mercies upon me; or if thou bringest any judgment upon me; before thee, O Lord, will I sing my hymn for all.—*Chaldee Paraphrase.*

**Verse 1.** *I will sing.* The manner of expression imports a *cordial* resolution; heart and will are engaged in it; there is twice *I will* in the text. The manner of expression imports a *humble* resolution; I cannot sing of merit; but I will sing of mercy, and through mercy I will sing of mercy. To sing of mercy must be a humble song, for mercy towards a miserable sinner is a melting word; and to sing of judgment must be a humble song, for judgment in every sense is an awful word. The manner of the expression imports a *skilful* harper, a dexterous musician, even in a spiritual sense; he knew what should be the subject of the song, and he says, "I will sing of mercy and judgment"; and he knew what should be the object of the song, or to whom it should be sung, and therefore says, "To thee, O Lord, I will sing"; he knew who should be the singer, and therefore says, "I will" do it; he knew what should be the manner; and therefore says, "I will sing of mercy and judgment; to thee, O Lord, will I *sing*." It is before the Lord he resolves to sing, as he did before the ark, which was a type of Christ; and so is it s song to the praise of God in Christ. The manner of the expression imports a *firm, fixed, and constant* resolution; so the redoubling of it seems to import; "I will sing, I will sing." He had a mind this exercise of singing should not go down, but be his continual trade, "I will sing, I will sing"; I will sing on earth and I will sing

in heaven; I will sing in time and I will sing in eternity. And, indeed, all on whom the spirit of praise and gratitude is poured out resolve never to give over singing... David had heard once, yea, twice, that mercy as well as power belongs to the Lord; and therefore not only once, but twice in a breath he resolves to sing unto the Lord. The word hath a great deal of elegance and emphasis in it; I will sing of mercy, I will sing of judgment; O, I will sing, O Lord, I will sing; and I will sing unto thee.—*Ralph Erskine*.

**Verse 1.** This song of the sweet singer of Israel is peculiar to earth; they do not sing of *judgment* in heaven, for there is no sin there; they do not sing of *mercy* in hell, for there is no propitiation for sin there. Time was when the song was not heard even on earth; for in Paradise man walked in innocence, and walking in innocence he walked in the light of his Father's face.—*Hugh Stowell*, 1856.

**Verse 1.** *I will sing of mercy and judgment.* It comes all to this, as if the psalmist should say, "I will sing of *merciful judgements*"; for judgment is mercy, as it is the matter of the song: or, to take them separately, "I will sing of mercy *in mercies*, and, I will sing of mercy *in judgment*"; and so I will sing of my blinks and of my showers; I will sing both of my cloudy and my clear day; both of my ups and downs.—*Ralph Erskine*.

**Verse 1.** *Mercy and judgment.* As the pedge of the ship S.Paul sailed in was *Castor and Pollux*, twin brothers, so the badge of this Psalm is *Mercy and Judgment*, inseparable companions; of whom it may be said, as our prophet sometimes spake of Saul and Jonathan, "They were lovely and pleasant in their lives, and in their deaths they were not divided." These are the two brightest stars in the firmament of majesty; the two fairest flowers, and choicest jewels in the imperial crown; like the carnation and the lily, the ruby and the sapphire, or the carbuncle and the diamond, yielding a mutual and interchangeable lustre each to other. They resemble not unfitly the two supporters of the king's arms, or the two seraphim stretching out their golden wings over the propitiatory, or the white and red rose in the same escutcheon.

We read that Solomon set up two goodly pillars in the porch of the temple, the one called *Jachin*, the other *Boaz*, which signify stability and strength; such pillars of the state are *mercy and judgment*. The throne of the King is borne up by them, as Solomen's was with lions of ivory on each side. Therefore I as in one place it is said that "*the throne is established by justice*" (Pr 16:12); so in another that it is "*upheld by mercy*" (Pr 20:28); justice being as the bones and sinews in the body politic, and mercy as the veins and

arteries. They are the two hands of action, the two eyes of virtue, and the two wings of honour. And as the eyes, if they be rightly set, do both look one way; so do mercy and judgment, however in the apprehension of the vulgar they seem to look contrary ways. And as the treble and the bass accord best music; so do they in managing the commonwealth. Wherefore David promiseth to make them both sound tunable in his song without jar or discord: *"I will sing of mercy and judgment."* ...

As mercy is here set in the first place; so shall the sentence of mercy and absolution be first pronounced at the last day. And it is a laudable custom of princes, at their first entrance to their kingdoms, to shew mercy, by hearing the mourning of the prisoner, and delivering the children of death, by loosing the bands of wickedness, by taking off the heavy burdens, by letting the oppressed go free, and by breaking every yoke of former extortions. Thus, our prophet himself, as soon as the crown was settled on his head, made inquiry if there remained yet alive any of the house of Saul, on whom he might shew mercy (2Sa 9:1). O how fair a thing is this mercy in the time of anguish and trouble! It is like a cloud of rain that cometh in the time of drought. But this *mercy*, here spoken of in the first part of our prophet's song, stretcheth further; unfolding itself in *clemency*, in *courtesy*, and in *compassion*. In *clemency*, by pardoning malefactors; in *compassion*, by relieving the afflicted; in *courtesy*, towards all.—*George Hakewill*, or *Hakewell*, 1579-1649.

**Verse 1.** *Mercy and judgment.* What is the history of every poor sinner, plucked as a brand from the fire and brought to heaven in peace at last, but a history of "mercy and judgment"? Judgment first awakes to terror and to fear; mercy meets the poor, trembling, returning prodigal, and falls on his neck, and kisses, and forgives. Then, through all his chequered course, God hems up his way with judgment, that he may not wander, and yet brightens his path with mercy, that he may not faint. Is there a child of God that can look into the varied record of his heart or of his outward history, and not see goodness and severity, severity and goodness, tracking him all his journey through? Has he ever had a cup so bitter that he could say, "There is no mercy here"? Has he ever had a lot so bright that he could say, "There is no chastisement or correction here"? Has he ever had any bad tidings, and there have been no good tidings set over against them to relieve them? Has he ever had a sky so dark that he could see in it no star, or a cloud so unchequered that he could trace no rainbow of promise there? . . . What a beautifully woven web of judgment and mercy does every man's secret history, in his way through the wilderness of life to the land of promise, present! and how

good, and how wholesome, and how kindly, and how gracious is this blessed intermingling of both! How do we need the judgment, to keep us humble and watchful and pure! and how do we need the mercy to keep us hopeful, and to nerve our efforts, and to stir our hearts, and to sustain us in patience, amid life's battle and struggle, and disappointment and vexation! Oh, how good it is for us, that we should thus, therefore, have the rod and staff together—the rod to chasten, and the staff to solace and sustain! How good it is for us, that we should have to "*sing of mercy and judgment!*" And yet, what is judgment itself, but mercy with a sterner aspect? And what are the chidings of judgment, but the sterner tones of the voice of a Father's love? For even judgment is one of the "all things" that "work together for good to them that love God, to them that are the called according to his purpose."—*Hugh Stowell*.

**Verse 1.** *Mercy and judgment.* God intermixeth mercy with affliction: he steeps his sword of justice in the oil of mercy; there was no night so dark, but Israel had a pillar of fire in it; there is no condition so dismal, but we may see a pillar of fire to give light. If the body be in pain, conscience is in peace,—there is mercy: affliction is for the prevention of sin,—there is mercy. In the ark there was a rod and a pot of manna, the emblem of a Christian's condition, mercy interlined with judgment.—*Thomas Watson*.

**Verse 2.** *I will behave myself wisely.* The first thing he vows touching himself, is wise behaviour; prudence, not sapience; not wise contemplation, but wise action. It is not wise thoughts, or wise speaking, or wise writing, or wise gesture and countenance, will serve the turn, but wise behaviour: the former are graceful, but the other needful. For as the apostle saith of godliness, "Having a show of godliness, but denying the power thereof"; so certainly there are those who in point of wisdom and sufficiency that do little or nothing thoroughly, but *magno conatu nugas*, they make much ado about small matters; using all the perspectives of shifting they can devise to make an empty *superficies* seem a body that hath depth and bulk.—*George Hakewill*.

**Verse 2.** *I will walk.* Walking is a word often used in Holy Scripture, and especially by our prophet in this book of the Psalms; yet more often figuratively than properly. It shall not be amiss, then, out of the property and nature of it, to consider the duties included and implied in it. The natural acts of it, then, are three; *motion*, *progress*, and *moderations*. As it includes motion, so is it opposed to lying, or standing, or sitting; as it includes *progress in motion*, so is it opposed to jumping or capering up and down in

the same place; as it includes *moderation*, in a *progressive motion*, so is it opposed to violent running.—*George Hakewill*.

**Verse 2.** *I will walk within my house.* Much, though not all of the power of godliness, lies within doors. It is in vain to talk of holiness if we can bring no letters testimonial from our holy walking with our relations. Oh, it is sad when they that have reason to know us best, by their daily converse with us, do speak least for our godliness! Few so impudent as to come naked into the streets: if men have anything to cover their haughtiness they will put it on when they come abroad. But witat art thou within doors? What care and conscience to discharge thy duty to thy near relations? He is a bad husband that hath money to spend among company abroad, but none to lay in provisions to keep his family at home. And can he be a good Christian that spends all his religion abroad, and leaves none for his nearest relations at home? That is, a great zealot among strangers, and little or nothing of God comes from him in his family? Yea, it were well if some that gain the reputation of Christians abroad, did not fall short of others that pretend not to profession in those moral duties which they should perform to their relations. There are some who are great strangers to profession, who yet are loving and kind in their way to their wives. What kind of professors then are they who are dogged and currish to the wife of their bosom? Who by their tyrannical lording it over them embitter their spirit, and make them cover the Lord's altar with tears and weeping? There are wives to be found that are not clamorous, peevish, and froward to their husbands, who yet are far from a true work of grace in their hearts; do they then walk as becomes holiness who trouble the whole house with their violent passions? There are servants who from the authority of a natural conscience, are kept from railing and reviling language, when reproved by their masters, and shall not grace keep pace with nature? Holy David knew very well how near this part of a saint's duty lies to the very heart of godliness; and therefore, when he makes his solemn vow to walk holily before God, he instanceth this, as one stage wherein he might eminently discover the graciousness of his spirit; "*I will walk within my house with a perfect heart.*"—*William Gurnall*.

**Verse 2.** *Within my house.* It is easier for most men to walk with a perfect heart in the *church*, or even in the *world*, than in their *own families*. How many are as meek as lambs among others, when at home they are wasps or tigers.—*Adam Clarke*.

**Verse 2.** *Within my house with a perfect heart.* Even in our best directed establishments, as well as in private families, cultivation is still in a great measure confined to intellect alone; and the direct exercise and training of

the moral and religious sentiments and affections are rarely thought of as essential to their full and vigorous development. Moral precepts are, no doubt, offered in abundance; but these address themselves chiefly to the intellect. We must not be satisfied with merely exclaiming, "Be kind, just, and affectionate", when perhaps at the very moment we are counteracting the effect of the advice by our own opposite conduct. "She told me not to lie", said Guy Rivers in speaking of his mother, "and she set me the example herself by frequently deceiving my father, and teaching me to disobey and deceive him." Conduct like this is more common in real life than is supposed, although generally less flagrant in degree. Parents and teachers indeed too often forget that the sentiments *feel* and *do not reason*, and that, consequently, even a stupid child may, by the instinctive operation of its moral nature at once detect and revolt at the immorality of practices, the true character of which its *reason* is unable to penetrate or expose. It is one of the most effectual methods of cultivating and exciting the moral sentiments in children, to set before them the manifestations of these in our habitual conduct. . . . What kind of moral duties does the parent encourage, who, recommending kindness, openness, and justice, *tricks* the child into the confession of a fault, and then basely punishes it, having previously promised forgiveness? And how is openness best encouraged—by practising it in conduct, or by neglecting it in practice, and prescribing in words. Is it to be cultivated by thrusting suspicions in the face of honest intentions? And how is justice to be cultivated by a guardian who *speaks* about it, recommends it, and *in practice* charges each of four pupils the whole fare of a hackney-coach? Or what kind of moral education is that which says, "Do as I bid you, and I will give you sweet-meats or money, or I will tell your mama how good you were", holding out the lowest and most selfish propensities as the motives to moral conduct? Did space permit, I might indeed pursue the whole round of moral and religious duties, and ask similar questions at each. But it is needless. These examples will suffice; and I give them, not as applicable generally either to parents or teachers, but simply as individual instances from among both, which have come within the sphere of my own knowledge, and which bear directly upon the principle under discussion.—*Andrew Combe, in "The Principles of Physiology", 1836.*

**Verse 3.** *Wicked thing.* The original hath it, if we will render it word for word, "*I will set no word of Belial before mine eyes.*" But *word* is figuratively there put for *thing*; as likewise Ps 41:8; and so is it rendered both by *Montanus* in the margin, and in the text by *Junius*; howbeit, in his comment upon this psalm, he precisely follows the original, applying it

against sycophants and flatterers, the mice and moths of court.—*George Hakewill*.

**Verse 3.** *I hate the work of them that turn aside.* Mr. Schultens hath shown in his commentary on Pr 7:25 that *hvj* hath a much stronger and more significant meaning than that of mere *turning aside*; and that it is used of an unruly horse, that champs upon the bit through his fiery impatience; and when applied to a bad man, denotes one impatient of all restraint, of unbridled passions, and that is headstrong and ungovernable in the gratification of them, trampling on all the obligations of religion and virtue. Such as these are the deserved objects of the hatred of all good men, whose criminal deviations and presumptuous crimes they detest; none of which *shall cleave to them*; they will not harbour the love of, or inclination to them, nor habitually commit them, or encourage the practice of them. Persons of this character are too frequently about the courts of princes, but it is their honour and interest, as far as ever they can, to discountenance them.—*Samuel Chandler*.

**Verse 3.** *It shall not cleave to me.* A bird may light upon a man's house; but he may choose whether she shall nestle or breed there, or no: and the devil or his instruments may represent a wicked object to a man's sight; but he may choose whether he will entertain or embrace it or no. For a man to set wicked things before his eyes is nothing else but to sin of set purpose, to set himself to sin, or to sell himself to sin, as Ahab did, 1Ki 21:1-29.—*George Hakewill*.

**Verse 3.** *It shall not cleave to me.* A wicked plan or purpose is thus represented as having a tendency to fasten itself on a man, or to "*stick to him*"—as pitch, or wax, or a *burr* does.—*Albert Barnes*.

**Verse 4.** *A froward heart.* The original sense of *vqe* is *torsit, contorsit*, to twist together, and denotes, when applied to men, persons of a perverse, subtle disposition, that can twist and twine themselves into all manner of shapes, and who have no truth and honour to be depended on.—*Samuel Chandler*.

**Verse 4.** *A froward heart.* By which I understand "*from-wardness*"—giving way to sudden impulses of anger, or quick conception, and casting it forth in words or deeds of impetuous violence.—*Thomas Chalmers*.



**Verse 5.** *Privily slandereth*—literally, he that *tongueth* his neighbour secretly. *Will I not suffer*, is properly, "him I cannot", i.e., cannot live with, cannot bear about me, as the same verb is used in Isa 1:13.—*Henry Cowles.*

**Verse 5.** *Him that hath an high look.* Pride will sit and show itself in the eyes as soon as anywhere. A man is seen what he is *in oculis, in poculis, in loculis* (in his eyes, his cups, and his resorts) say the Rabbins. See Pr 6:17.—*John Trapp.*

**Verse 5.** *Proud heart.* From *bxr latus* or *dilatatus est*, is the noun *bxr*, here, *broad, or wide, or large*; and being applied to the *heart* or *soul*, it notes *largeness of desires*.—*Henry Hammond.*

**Verse 5.** Detraction, ambition, and avarice are three weeds which spring and flourish in the rich soil of a court. The psalmist declareth his resolution to undertake the difficult task of eradicating them for the benefit of his people, that Israelites might not be harassed by informers, or repressed by insolent and rapacious ministers. Shall we imagine these vices less odious in the eyes of that King whose character was composed of humility and charity; or will Christ admit those tempers into the court of heaven, which David determined to exclude from his court upon earth?—*George Horne.*

**Verses 5-10.** Perfect, as prophetic of Christ, is the delineation of his associates and disciples. The perverse; the evil-doers; the slanderers, and the proud found no fellowship with him. There were no common principles; no bond of union between them. There was "a gulph" interposed, as in the parable, which they could not pass; and what they saw of Christ, they beheld only from a distance. Nor even now, as then, can "the deceitful" dwell in Christ's "house"—his holy temple; nor the man of "lies be established" by his love and favour. They must renounce their vices before they can be admitted to his covenant; or, however they may claim communion with *Him*, he in return can have no sympathy with them.—*William Hill Tucker.*

---

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Whole Psalm.** This is a psalm of wills and shalls. There are nine wills and five shalls. Resolutions should be made,

1. With deliberation; not, therefore, upon trifling matters.
2. With reservation. "If the Lord will, "etc.

3. With dependence upon divine strength for their fulfilment.  
—*G.R.*

**Verse 1.—**

1. The sweet work that is resolved upon is to "sing."
2. The sweet singer that thus resolves, namely, David, "I will sing."
3. The sweet subject of the song, "mercy and judgment."
4. The sweet object of this praise, and the manner in which he would sing it—"Unto thee, O Lord, will I sing."

—*Ralph Ershikine.*

**Verse 1.** What there is in mercy that affords ground of singing.

1. The freeness and undeservedness of mercy.
2. The unexpectedness of mercy. When I was expecting a frown I got a smile; when I was expecting nothing but wrath, I got a glance of love; instead of a stroke of vengeance, I got a view of glory.
3. The seasonableness of mercy is a ground of singing—grace to help in time of need.
4. The greatness and riches of mercy make the recipients thereof sing.
5. The sweetness of mercy makes them sing.
6. The sureness and firmness of mercy make them sing—"The sure mercies of David."

—From *Ralph Erskine's* Sermon, entitled "*The Militant's Song*".

**Verse 1.—**

1. The different conditions of the righteous man in this life. Not all mercy, nor all judgment, but mercy and judgment.
2. His one duty and privilege in reference to them: "I will sing, "etc.

- (a) Because they are both from God.
  - (b) Because they are both from love.
  - (c) Because they are both for present good.
  - (d) Because they are both preparative for the heavenly rest.
- G.R.*

**Verse 1.** The blending of song with holy living. The bell of praise and the pomegranate of holy fruitfulness should both adorn the Lord's priests.

**Verse 2.**

- 1. The end desired: "To behave wisely, "etc.; consistency of conduct.
- 2. The means employed: "When wilt thou come, "etc.; only when God is with us we walk in a perfect way.
- 3. The test proposed: "Within my house, "where I am most myself and am best known.

—*G.R.*

**Verse 2.**—The wisdom of holiness.

- 1. In selecting our sphere of duty.
- 2. In timing, :arranging, and balancing duties.
- 3. In managing others according to their tempers.
- 4. In avoiding disputes with adversaries.
- 5. In administering rebuke, giving alms, rendering advice, etc.; the blending of the serpent with the dove.

**Verse 2.** —*O when wilt thou come unto me?* A devout ejaculation.

- 1. Revealing the psalmist's need of the divine presence in order to holiness.
- 2. His intense longing.
- 3. His full expectation.
- 4. His the rough appreciation of the condescending visit.

**Verse 2** (last clause). Home piety. Its duty, excellence, influence, sphere, and reward. Note also the change of heart and firmness of purpose necessary to it.

**Verse 3.**

1. The sight of wickedness is to be avoided: "I will set no wicked thing, "etc.
2. When seen it is to be loathed: "I Hate, "etc.
3. When felt it is to be repudiated. It may touch me, but "it shall not cleave to me."

**Verse 4.** The need of extreme care in the choice of our intimates.

**Verse 5.** The detestable nature of slander, hurting three persons at once—the speaker, hearer, and person slandered.

**Verse 6.** The duty of believers who are wealthy to encourage and employ persons of pious character.

**Verse 8.** The work of the great King when he comes in judgment.

---

### WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED AND FIRST PSALM

In CHANDLER's *"Life of David"*, Vol. II, pp. 16-20, there is an Exposition of this Psalm. "King David's Vow for Reformation of Himselfe, his Family, his Kingdome. Delivered in twelve sermons before the Prince his Highhesse vpon Psalme 101. By GEORGE HAKEWILL, Dr. in Diuinity. London 1622."

# Psalm 102

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

---

**TITLE.** A prayer of the afflicted, when he is overwhelmed, and poureth out his complaint before the Lord. This Psalm is a prayer far more in spirit than in words. The formal petitions are few, but a strong stream of supplication runs from beginning to end, and like an under-current, finds its way heavenward through the moanings of grief and confessions of faith which make up the major part of the Psalm. It is a prayer of the afflicted, or of "a sufferer," and it bears the marks of its parent age; as it is recorded of Jabez that "his mother bore him with sorrow," so may we say of this Psalm; yet as Rachel's Benoni, or child of sorrow, was also her Benjamin, or son of her right hand, so is this Psalm as eminently expressive of consolation as of desolation. It is scarcely correct to call it a penitential Psalm, for the sorrow of it is rather of one suffering than sinning. It has its own bitterness, and it is not the same as that of the Fifty-first. The sufferer is afflicted more for others than for himself, more for Zion and the house of the Lord, than for his own house. When he is overwhelmed, or sorely troubled, and depressed. The best of men are not always able to stem the torrent of sorrow. Even when Jesus is on board, the vessel may fill with water and begin to sink. And poureth out his complaint before the LORD. When a cup is overwhelmed or turned bottom over, all that is in it is naturally poured out; great trouble removes the heart from all reserve and causes the soul to flow out without restraint; it is well when that which is in the soul is such as may be poured out in the presence of God, and this is only the case where the heart has been renewed by divine grace. The word rendered "complaint" has in it none of the idea of fault-finding or repining, but should rather be rendered "moaning,"—the expression of pain, not of rebellion. To help the memory we will call this Psalm THE PATRIOT'S PLAIN.

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

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

**Verse 1.** *Hear my prayer, O LORD.* Or O JEHOVAH. Sincere supplicants are not content with praying for praying's sake, they desire really to reach the ear and heart of the great God. It is a great relief in time of distress to acquaint others with our trouble, we are eased by their hearing our lamentation, but it is the sweetest solace of all to have God himself as a sympathizing listener to our plaint. That he is such is no dream or fiction, but an assured fact. It would be the direst of all our woes if we could be indisputably convinced that with God there is neither hearing nor answering; he who could argue us into so dreary a belief would do us no better service than if he had read us our death-warrants. Better die than be denied the mercy-seat. As well be atheists at once as believe in an unhearing, unfeeling God. And let my cry come unto thee. When sorrow rises to such a height that words become too weak a medium of expression, and prayer is intensified into a cry, then the heart is even more urgent to have audience with the Lord. If our cries do not enter within the veil, and reach to the living God, we may as well cease from prayer at once, for it is idle to cry to the winds; but, blessed be God, the philosophy which suggests such a hideous idea is disproved by the facts of every day experience, since thousands of the saints can declare, "Verily, God hath heard us."

**Verse 2.** *Hide not thy face from me in the day when I am in trouble.* Do not seem as if thou didst not see me, or wouldst not own me. Smile now at any rate. Reserve thy frowns for other times when I can bear them better, if, indeed, I can ever bear them; but now in my heavy distress, favour me with looks of compassion. Incline thine ear unto me. Bow thy greatness to my weakness. If because of sin thy face is turned away, at least let me have a side view of thee, lend me thine ear if I may not see thine eye. Turn thyself to me again if, my sin has turned thee away, give to thine ear an inclination to my prayers. In the day when I call answer me speedily. Because the case is urgent, and my soul little able to wait. We may ask to have answers to prayer as soon as possible, but we may not complain of the Lord if he should think it more wise to delay. We have permission to request and to use importunity, but no right to dictate or to be petulant. If it be important that the deliverance should arrive at once, we are quite right in making an early time a point of our entreaty, for God is as willing to grant us a favour now as to-morrow, and he is not slack concerning his promise. It is a proverb concerning favours from human hands, that "he gives twice who gives quickly," because a gift is enhanced in value by arriving in a time of urgent necessity; and we may be sure that our heavenly Patron will grant us the best gifts in the best manner, granting us grace to help in time of need. When answers come upon the heels of our prayers they are all the more striking,

more consoling, and more encouraging. In these two verses the psalmist has gathered up a variety of expressions all to the same effect; in them all he entreats an audience and answer of the Lord, and the whole may be regarded as a sort of preface to the prayer which follows.

**Verse 3.** *For my days are consumed like smoke.* My grief has made life unsubstantial to me, I seem to be but a puff of vapour which has nothing in it, and is soon dissipated. The metaphor is very admirably chosen, for, to the unhappy, life seems not merely to be frail, but to be surrounded by so much that is darkening, defiling, blinding, and depressing, that, sitting down in despair, they compare themselves to men wandering in a dense fog, and themselves so dried up thereby that they are little better than pillars of smoke. When our days have neither light of joy nor fire of energy in them, but become as a smoking flax which dies out ignobly in darkness, then have we cause enough to appeal to the Lord that he would not utterly quench us. And my bones are burned as an hearth. He became as dry as the hearth on which a wood fire has burned out, or as spent ashes in which scarcely a trace of fire can be found. His soul was ready to be blown away as smoke, and his body seemed likely to remain as the bare hearth when the last comforting ember is quenched. How often has our piety appeared to us to be in this condition! We have had to question its reality, and fear that it never was anything more than a smoke; we have had the most convincing evidence of its weakness, for we could not derive even the smallest comfort from it, any more than a chilled traveller can derive from the cold hearth on which a fire had burned long ago. Soul-trouble experienced in our own heart will help us to interpret the language here employed; and church-troubles may help us also, if unhappily we have been called to endure them. The psalmist was moved to grief by a view of national calamities, and these so wrought upon his patriotic soul that he was wasted with anxiety, his spirits were dried up, and his very life was ready to expire. There is hope for any country which owns such a son; no nation can die while true hearts are ready to die for it.

**Verse 4.** *My heart is smitten,* like a plant parched by the fierce heat of a tropical sun, *and withered like grass,* which dries up when once the scythe has laid it low. The psalmist's heart was as a wilted, withered flower, a burned up mass of what once was verdure. His energy, beauty, freshness, and joy, were utterly gone, through the wasting influence of his anguish. So that I forget to eat my bread, or "because I forget to eat my bread." Grief often destroys the appetite, and the neglect of food tends further to injure the constitution and create a yet deeper sinking of spirit. As the smitten flower no longer drinks in the dew, or draws up nutriment from the soil, so a heart

parched with intense grief often refuses consolation for itself and nourishment for the bodily frame, and descends at a doubly rapid rate into weakness, despondency, and dismay. The case here described is by no means rare, we have frequently met with individuals so disordered by sorrow that their memory has failed them even upon such pressing matters as their meals, and we must confess that we have passed through the same condition ourselves. One sharp pang has filled the soul, monopolized the mind, and driven everything else into the background, so that such common matters as eating and drinking have been utterly despised, and the appointed hours of refreshment have gone by unheeded, leaving no manifest faintness of body, but an increased weariness of heart.

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

**Verse 6.** *I am like a pelican of the wilderness,* a mournful and even hideous object, the very image of desolation. I am like an owl of the desert; loving solitude, moping among ruins, hooting discordantly. The Psalmist likens himself to two birds which were commonly used as emblems of gloom and wretchedness; on other occasions he had been as the eagle, but the griefs of his people had pulled him down, the brightness was gone from his eye, and the beauty from his person; he seemed to himself to be as a melancholy bird sitting among the fallen palaces and prostrate temples of his native land. Should not we also lament when the ways of Zion mourn and her strength languishes? Were there more of this holy sorrow we should soon see the Lord returning to build up his church. It is ill for men to be playing the peacock with worldly pride when the ills of the times should make them as mournful as the pelican; and it is a terrible thing to see men flocking like vultures to devour the prey of a decaying church, when they ought rather to be lamenting among her ruins like the owl.

**Verse 7.** *I watch, and am like a sparrow alone upon the house top:* I keep a solitary vigil as the lone sentry of my nation; my fellows are too selfish, too careless to care for the beloved land, and so like a bird which sits alone on the housetop, I keep up a sad watch over my country. The Psalmist compared himself to a bird,—a bird when it has lost its mate or its young, or is for some other reason made to mope alone in a solitary place. Probably he



did not refer to the cheerful sparrow of our own land, but if he did, the illustration would not be out of place, for the sparrow is happy in company, and if it were alone, the sole one of its species in the neighbourhood, there can be little doubt that it would become very miserable, and sit and pine away. He who has felt himself to be so weak and inconsiderable as to have no more power over his times than a sparrow over a city, has also, when bowed down with despondency concerning the evils of the age, sat himself down in utter wretchedness to lament the ills which he could not heal. Christians of an earnest, watchful kind often find themselves among those who have no sympathy with them; even in the church they look in vain for kindred spirits; then do they persevere in their prayers and labours, but feel themselves to be as lonely as the poor bird which looks from the ridge of the roof, and meets with no friendly greeting from any of its kind.

**Verse 8.** *Mine enemies reproach me all the day.* Their rage was unrelenting and unceasing, and vented itself in taunts and insults, the Psalmist's patriotism and his griefs were both made the subjects of their sport. Pointing to the sad estate of his people they would ask him, "Where is your God?" and exult over him because their false gods were in the ascendant. Reproach cuts like a razor, and when it is continued from hour to hour, and repeated all the day and every day, it makes life itself undesirable. And they that are mad against me are sworn against me. They were so furious that they bound themselves by oath to destroy him, and used his name as their usual execration, a word to curse by, the synonym of abhorrence and contempt. What with inward sorrows and outward persecutions he was in as ill a plight as may well be conceived.

**Verse 9.** *For I have eaten ashes like bread.* He had so frequently cast ashes upon his head in token of mourning, that they had mixed with his ordinary food, and grated between his teeth when he ate his daily bread. One while he forgot to eat, and then the fit changed, and he ate with such a hunger that even ashes were devoured. Grief has strange moods and tenses. And mingled my drink with weeping. His drink became as nauseous as his meat, for copious showers of tears had made it brackish. This is a telling description of all-saturating, all-embittering sadness,—and this was the portion of one of the best of men, and that for no fault of his own, but because of his love to the Lord's people. If we, too, are called to mourn, let us not be amazed by the fiery trial as though some strange thing had happened unto us. Both in meat and drink we have sinned; it is not therefore wonderful if in both we are made to mourn.

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

**Verse 11.** *My days are like a shadow that declineth.* His days were but a shadow at best, but now they seem to be like a shadow which was passing away. A shadow is unsubstantial enough, how feeble a thing must a declining shadow be? No expression could more forcibly set forth his extreme feebleness. And I am withered like grass. He was like grass, blasted by a parching wind, or cut down with a scythe, and then left to be dried up by the burning heat of the sun. There are times when through depression of spirit a man feels as if all life were gone from him, and existence had become merely a breathing death. Heart-break has a marvellously withering influence over our entire system; our flesh at its best is but as grass, and when it is wounded with sharp sorrows, its beauty fades, and it becomes a shrivelled, dried, uncomely thing.

**Verse 12.** Now the writer's mind is turned away from his personal and relative troubles to the true source of all consolation, namely, the Lord himself, and his gracious purposes towards his own people. But thou, O Lord, shalt endure for ever. I perish, but thou wilt not, my nation has become almost extinct, but thou art altogether unchanged. The original has the word "sit, "—"thou, Jehovah, to eternity shalt sit:" that is to say, thou reignest on, thy throne is still secure even when thy chosen city lies in ruins, and thy peculiar people are carried into captivity. The sovereignty of God in all things is an unfailing ground for consolation; he rules and reigns whatever happens, and therefore all is well.

Firm as his throne his promise stands,  
And he can well secure,

What I have committed to his hands.  
Till the decisive hour.

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

**Verse 13.** *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy upon Zion.* He firmly believed and boldly prophesied that apparent inaction on God's part would turn to effective working. Others might remain sluggish in the matter, but the Lord would most surely bestir himself. Zion had been chosen of old, highly favoured, gloriously inhabited, and wondrously preserved, and therefore by the memory of her past mercies it was certain that mercy would again be showed to her. God will not always leave his church in a low condition; he may for a while hide himself from her in chastisement, to make her see her nakedness and poverty apart from himself, but in love he must return to her, and stand up in her defence, to work her welfare. For the time to favour her, yea, the set time, is come. Divine decree has appointed a season for blessing the church, and when that period has arrived, blessed she shall be. There was an appointed time for the Jews in Babylon, and when the weeks were fulfilled, no bolts nor bars could longer imprison the ransomed of the Lord. When the time came for the walls to rise stone by stone, no Tobiah or Sanballat could stay the work, for the Lord himself had arisen, and who can restrain the hand of the Almighty? When God's own time is come, neither Rome, nor the devil, nor persecutors, nor atheists, can prevent the kingdom of Christ from extending its bounds. It is God's work to do it;—he must "arise"; he will do it, but he has his own appointed season; and meanwhile we must, with holy anxiety and believing expectation, wait upon him.

**Verse 14.** *For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof.* They delight in her so greatly that even her rubbish is dear to them. It was a good omen for Jerusalem when the captives began to feel a homesickness, and began to sigh after her. We may expect the modern Jews to be restored to their own land when the love of their country begins to sway them, and casts out the love of gain. To the church of God no token can be more full of hope than to see the members thereof deeply interested in all

that concerns her; no prosperity is likely to rest upon a church when carelessness about ordinances, enterprises, and services is manifest; but when even the least and lowest matter connected with the Lord's work is carefully attended to, we may be sure that the set time to favour Zion is come. The poorest church member, the most grievous backslider, the most ignorant convert, should be precious in our sight, because forming a part, although possibly a very feeble part, of the new Jerusalem. If we do not care about the prosperity of the church to which we belong, need we wonder if the blessing of the Lord is withheld?

**Verse 15.** *So the heathen shall fear the name of the LORD.* Mercy within the church is soon perceived by those without. When a candle is lit in the house, it shines through the window. When Zion rejoices in her God, the heathen begin to reverence his name, for they hear of the wonders of his power, and are impressed thereby. And all the kings of the earth thy glory. The restoration of Jerusalem was a marvel among the princes who heard of it, and its ultimate resurrection in days yet to come will be one of the prodigies of history. A church quickened by divine power is so striking an object in current history that it cannot escape notice, rulers cannot ignore it, it affects the Legislature, and forces from the great ones of the earth a recognition of the divine working. Oh that we might see in our days such a revival of religion that our senators and princes might be compelled to pay homage to the Lord, and own his glorious grace. This cannot be till the saints are better edified, and more fully builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Internal prosperity is the true source of the church's external influence.

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

those opposed to her, we are fully prepared to own that it will be a glorious work of omnipotent grace should she ever rise to her pristine grandeur and purity.

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

**Verse 18.** *This shall be written for the generation to come.* A note shall be made of it, for there will be destitute ones in future generations,—“the poor shall never cease out of the land,”—and it will make glad their eyes to read the story of the Lord's mercy to the needy in former times. Registers of divine kindness ought to be made and preserved; we write down in history the calamities of nations,—wars, famines, pestilences, and earthquakes are recorded; how much rather then should we set up memorials of the Lord's lovingkindness! Those who have in their own souls endured spiritual destitution, and have been delivered out of it, cannot forget it; they are bound to tell others of it, and especially to instruct their children in the goodness of the Lord. And the people which shall be created shall praise the LORD. The Psalmist here intends to say that the rebuilding of Jerusalem would be a fact in history for which the Lord would be praised from age to age. Revivals of religion not only cause great joy to those who are immediately concerned in them, but they give encouragement and delight to the people of God long after, and are indeed perpetual incentives to adoration throughout the church of God. This verse teaches us that we ought to have an eye to posterity, and especially should we endeavour to perpetuate the memory of God's love to his church and to his poor people, so that young people as they grow up may know that the Lord God of their fathers is good and full of compassion. Sad

as the Psalmist was when he wrote the dreary portions of this complaint, he was not so absorbed in his own sorrow, or so distracted by the national calamity, as to forget the claims of coming generations; this, indeed, is a clear proof that he was not without hope for his people, for he who is making arrangements for the good of a future generation has not yet despaired of his nation. The praise of God should be the great object of all that we do, and to secure him a revenue of glory both from the present and the future is the noblest aim of intelligent beings.

**Verses 19-20.** For he hath looked down from the heights of his *sanctuary*, or "leaned from the high place of his holiness," from heaven did the LORD behold the earth, looking out like a watcher from his tower. What was the object of this leaning from the battlements of heaven? Why this intent gaze upon the race of men? The answer is full of astounding mercy; the Lord does not look upon mankind to note their grandees, and observe the doings of their nobles, but to hear the groaning of the prisoner; to loose those that are *appointed to death*. Now the groans of those in prison so far from being musical are very horrible to hear, yet God bends to hear them: those who are bound for death are usually ill company, yet Jehovah deigns to stoop from his greatness to relieve their extreme distress and break their chains. This he does by providential rescues, by restoring health to the dying, and by finding food for the famishing: and spiritually this deed of grace is accomplished by sovereign grace, which delivers us by pardon from the sentence of sin, and by the sweetness of the promise from the deadly despair which a sense of sin had created within us. Well may those of us praise the Lord who were once the children of death, but are now brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God. The Jews in captivity were in Haman's time appointed to death, but their God found a way of escape for them, and they joyfully kept the feast of Purim in memorial thereof; let fill souls that have been set free from the crafty malice of the old dragon with even greater gratitude magnify the Lord of infinite compassion.

**Verse 21.** *To declare the name of the LORD in Zion, and his praise in Jerusalem.* Great mercy displayed to those greatly in need of it, is the plainest method of revealing the attributes of the Most High. Actions speak more loudly than words; deeds of grace are a revelation even more impressive than the most tender promises. Jerusalem restored, the church re-edified, desponding souls encouraged, and all other manifestations of Jehovah's power to bless, are so many manifestoes and proclamations put up upon the walls of Zion to publish the character and glory of the great God. Every day's experience should be to us a new gazette of love, a court circular

from heaven, a daily despatch from the headquarters of grace. We are bound to inform our fellow Christians of all this, making them helpers in our praise, as they hear of the goodness which we have experienced. While God's mercies speak so eloquently, we ought not to be dumb. To communicate to others what God has done for us personally and for the church at large is so evidently our duty, that we ought not to need urging to fulfil it. God has ever an eye to the glory of his grace in all that he does, and we ought not wilfully to defraud him of the revenue of his praise.

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

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

**Verse 24.** *I said, O my God, take me not away in the midst of my days.* He betook himself to prayer. What better remedy is there for heart-sickness and depression? We may lawfully ask for recovery from sickness and may hope to be heard. Good men should not dread death, but they are not forbidden to love life: for many reasons the man who has the best hope of heaven may nevertheless think it desirable to continue here a little longer, for the sake of his family, his work, the church of God, and even the glory of God itself. Some read the passage, "Take me not up, "let me not ascend like

disappearing smoke, do not whirl me away like Elijah in a chariot of fire, for as yet I have only seen half my days, and that a sorrowful half; give me to live till the blustering morning shall have softened into a bright afternoon of happier existence. Thy years are throughout all generations. Thou livest, Lord; let me live also. A fulness of existence is with thee, let me partake therein. Note the contrast between himself pining and ready to expire, and his God living on in the fulness of strength for ever and ever; this contrast is full of consolatory power to the man whose heart is stayed upon the Lord. Blessed be his name, he faileth not, and, therefore, our hope shall not fail us, neither will we despair for ourselves or for his church.

**Verse 25.** *Of old hast thou laid the foundation of the earth.* Creation is no new work with God, and therefore to "create Jerusalem a praise in the earth" will not be difficult to him. Long ere the holy city was laid in ruins the Lord made a world out of nothing, and it will be no labour to him to raise the walls from their heaps and replace the stones in their courses. We can neither continue our own existence nor give being to others; but the Lord not only is, but he is the Maker of all things that are; hence, when our affairs are at the very lowest ebb we are not at all despairing, because the Almighty and Eternal Lord can yet restore us. And the heavens are the work of thine hands. Thou canst therefore not merely lay the foundations of Zion, but complete its roof, even as thou hast arched in the world with its ceiling of blue; the loftiest stories of thine earthly palace shall be piled on high without difficulty when thou dost undertake the building thereof, since thou art architect of the stars, and the spheres in which they move. When a great labour is to be performed it is eminently reassuring to contemplate the power of him who has undertaken to accomplish it; and when our own strength is exhausted it is supremely cheering to see the unfailing energy which is still engaged on our behalf.

**Verse 26.** *They shall perish, but thou shalt endure.* The power which made them shall dissolve them, even as the city of thy love was destroyed at thy command; yet neither the ruined city nor the ruined earth can make a change in thee, reverse thy purpose, or diminish thy glory. Thou standest when all things fall. Yea, all of them shall wax old like a garment; as a vesture shalt *thou change them, and they shall be changed.* Time impairs all things, the fashion becomes obsolete and passes away. The visible creation, which is like the garment of the invisible God, is waxing old and wearing out, and our great King is not so poor that he must always wear the same robes; he will ere long fold up the worlds and put them aside as worn out vestures, and he will array himself in new attire, making a new heaven and a new earth



wherein dwelleth righteousness. How readily will all this be done. "Thou shalt change them and they shall be changed; "as in the creation so in the restoration, omnipotence shall work its way without hindrance.

**Verse 27.** *But thou art the same*, or, "thou art he." As a man remains the same when he has changed his clothing, so is the Lord evermore the unchanging One, though his works in creation may be changed, and the operations of his providence may vary. When heaven and earth shall flee away from the dread presence of the great Judge, he will be unaltered by the terrible confusion, and the world in conflagration will effect no change in him; even so, the Psalmist remembered that when Israel was vanquished, her capital destroyed, and her temple levelled with the ground, her God remained the same self-existent, all-sufficient being, and would restore his people, even as he will restore the heavens and the earth, bestowing at the same time a new glory never known before. The doctrine of the immutability of God should be more considered than it is, for the neglect of it tinges the theology of many religious teachers, and makes them utter many things of which they would have seen the absurdity long ago if they had remembered the divine declaration, "I am God, I change not, therefore ye sons of Jacob are not consumed." And thy years shall have no end. God lives on, no decay can happen to him, or destruction overtake him. What a joy is this! We may lose our dearest earthly friends, but not our heavenly Friend. Men's days are often suddenly cut short, and at the longest they are but few, but the years of the right hand of the Most High cannot be counted, for they have neither first nor last, beginning nor end. O my soul, rejoice thou in the Lord always, since he is always the same.

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

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

---

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**TITLE.** *A prayer, etc.* The prayer following is longer than others. When Satan, the Law-Adversary, doth extend his pleas against us, it is meet that we should enlarge our counter pleas for our own souls; as the powers of darkness do lengthen and multiply their wrestlings, so must we our counter wrestlings of prayer. Eph 6:12,18. *Thomas Cobbet*, 1667.

**Title.** *When he... poureth out, etc.* Here we have the manner of the church's prayer suitable to her extremity illustrated by a simile taken from a vessel overcharged with new wine or strong liquor, that bursts for vent. Oh the heart-bursting cries she sends out all the day! Here is no lazy, slothful, lip labour, stinted forms of prayer, no empty sounds of verbal expressions, which can never procure her a comfortable answer from her God, or the least ease to her burdened soul; but poured-out prayers as *Hannah*, 1Sa 1:15, and *Jeremy*, La 2:12, pressed forth with vehemence of spirit and heart pangs of inward grief: thus the Lord deals with his church and people; ere he pour out cups of consolation they must pour out tears in great measure. *Finiens Canus Vove*.

**Title.**

This is the mourner's prayer when he is faint,  
And to the Eternal Father breathes his plaint. *John Keble*.

**Whole Psalm.** The psalm has been attributed to *Daniel*, to *Jeremiah*, to *Nehemiah*, or to some of the other *prophets* who flourished during the time of the captivity. The author of the Epistle to the Hebrews has applied Ps 102:25-27 to our Lord, and the perpetuity of his kingdom. *Adam Clarke*.

**Whole Psalm.** I doubt whether, without apostolic teaching, any of us would have had the boldness to understand it; for in many respects it is the most remarkable of all the Psalms—the Psalm of "THE AFFLICTED ONE"—while his soul is overwhelmed within him in great affliction, and sorrow, and anxious fear. *Adolph Saphir*, in *"Expository Lectures on the Epistle to the Hebrews."*

**Verse 1.** *Hear my prayer, O LORD, and let my cry come unto thee.* When, at any time we see the beggars, or poor folks, that are pained and grieved with hunger and cold, lying in the streets of cities and towns, full of sores, we are somewhat moved inwardly with pity and mercy; but if we our own selves attend and give ear to their wailings, cryings, and lamentable noises that they make, we should be much more stirred to show our pity and mercy on them; for no man else can show the grief of the sick and sore persons, so well and in so pathetic a manner as he himself. Therefore, since the miserable crying and wailing of those that suffer bodily pain and misery can prevail so much upon the hearts of mortal creatures; I doubt not, Good Lord, but thou, who art all merciful, must needs be inclined to exercise thy mercy, if *my* sorrowful cry and petition may *come unto* thine ears, or into thy presence. *John Fisher (1459-1535) in "A Treatise concerning the fruitful Sayings of David," 1714.*

**Verse 1.** *My prayer.* His own, and not another's; not what was composed for him, but composed by him; which came out of his own heart, and out of unfeigned lips, and expressed under a feeling sense of his own wants and troubles; and though dictated and inwrought in his heart by the Spirit of God, yet, being put up by him in faith and fervency, it is called his own, and which he desires might be heard. *John Gill*.

**Verse 1.** *My cry.* Lest my praying should not prevail, behold, O God, I raise it to a cry; and crying, I may say, is the greatest bell in all the ring of praying: for louder than crying I cannot pray. O, then, if not my prayer, at least *let my cry come unto thee*. If I be not heard when I cry, I shall cry for not being heard; and if heard when I cry, I shall cry to be heard yet more; and so whether heard or not heard, I shall cry still, and God grant I may cry still; so thou be pleased, O God, to "hear my prayer," and to "let my cry come unto thee." *Sir R. Baker*.

**Verses 1-2.** This language is the language of godly sorrow, of faith, of tribulation, and of anxious hope: of *faith*, for the devout suppliant lifts up his heart and voice to heaven, "as seeing him who is invisible," (Heb 11:27) and entreats him to hear his prayer and listen to his crying: of *tribulation*, for he describes himself as enduring affliction, and unwilling to lose the countenance of the Lord *in his time of his trouble*: of *anxious hope*, for he seems to expect, in the midst of his groaning, that his prayers, like those of Cornelius, will "go up for a memorial before God" who will hear him, "and that right soon." *Charles Oxenden, in "Sermons on the Seven Penitential Psalms," 1838.*

**Verses 1-2.** The Lord suffereth his babbling children to speak to him in their own form of speech, (albeit the terms which they use be not fitted for his spiritual, invisible, and incomprehensible majesty); such as are, "*Hear me, "hide not thy face, "incline thine ear to me,*" and such like other speeches. *David Dickson.*

**Verses 1-2.** Note, David sent his prayer as a sacred ambassador to God. Now there are four things requisite to make an embassy prosperous. The ambassador must be regarded with favourable eye: he must be heard with a ready ear: he must speedily return when his demands are conceded. These four things David as a suppliant asks from God his King. *Le Blanc.*

**Verse 2.** *Incline thine ear unto me.* The great exhaustion of the afflicted one is hinted at: so worn out is he, that he is hardly able to cry any more, but with a faint voice only feebly mutters, like a weak sick man, whose voice if we would catch, we must incline the ear. *Martin Geier.*

**Verse 3.** *Consumed like smoke,* would be better read, "pass away as *in smoke*," as if they disappeared into smoke and ashes. *Burned as an hearth*, is not a felicitous translation, for a "hearth" should be incombustible. Better "burned as a faggot," as any fuel. The sentiment, My days waste away to nothing, turn to no good account, are lost. *Henry Cowles.*

**Verse 3.** *My days are consumed like smoke;* or, as Hebrew, literally, "*in (into) smoke.*" The very same expression which David in Ps 37:20 had used of "the enemies of the Lord:" "They shall consume into smoke" (compare Ps 68:2). Hereby the ideal sufferer virtually complains that the lot of the wicked befalls him, though being righteous (Ps 101:1-8). *A. R. Fausset.*

**Verse 3.** *My days are consumed like smoke.* As the smoke is a vapour proceeding from the fire, yet hath no heat in it: so my days are come from

the torrid zone of youth into the region of cold and age; and as the smoke seems a thick substance for the present, but presently vanisheth into air; so my days made as great shew at first as if they would never have been spent; but now, alas, are wasted and leave me scarce a being. As the smoke is fuliginous and dark, and affords no pleasure to look upon it; so my days are all black and in mourning; no joy nor pleasure to be taken in them. And as the smoke ascends indeed, but by ascending wastes itself and comes to nothing: so my days are wasted in growing, are diminished in increasing; their plenty hath made a scarcity, and the more they have been the fewer they are. And how, indeed, can my days choose but be consumed as smoke, when my bones are burned as an hearth? for as when the hearth is burned there can be made no more fire upon it; so, when my bones, which are as the hearth upon which my fire of life is made, come once to be burned; how can any more fire of life be made upon them? and when no fire can be made, what will remain but only smoke? *Sir R. Baker.*

**Verse 3.** *As an hearth.* Or, as a *trivet*, or, *gridiron*; so the Targum: or, as a *frying-pan*: so the Arabic version. *John Gill.*

**Verse 4.** *My heart is smitten and withered like grass.* The metaphor here is taken from grass, cut down in the meadow. It is first "*smitten*" with the *scythe*, and then "*withered*" by the sun. Thus the Jews were smitten with the judgments of God; and they are now withered under the fire of the *Chaldeans*. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 4.** *I forget to eat my bread.* I have heard of some that have forgotten their own names, but I never heard of any that forget to eat his meat; for there is a certain prompter called hunger that will make a man to remember his meat in spite of his teeth. And yet it is true, when the heart is blasted and withered like grass, such a forgetfulness of necessity will follow. Is it that the withering of the heart is the prime cause of sorrow; at least cause of the prime sorrow; and immoderate sorrow is the mother of stupidity, stupifying and benumbing the animal faculties, that neither the understanding nor the memory can execute their functions? Or is it, that sorrow is so intentire to that it sorrows for, that it cannot intent to think anything else? Or is it, that nature makes account, that to feed in sorrow were to feed sorrow, and therefore thinks best to forbear all eating? Or is it, that as sorrow draws moisture from the brain and fills the eyes with water; so it draws a like juice from other parts, which fills the stomach instead of meat? However it be, it shews a wonderful operation that is in sorrow; to make not only the stomach to refuse its meat, but to make the brain forget the stomach, between whom there is so natural a sympathy and so near a correspondence. But as the

vigour of the heart breeds plenty of spirits, which convey to all the parts, gives everyone a natural appetite; so when the heart is blasted and withered like grass, and that there is no more any rigour in it, the spirits are presently at a stand, and then no marvel if the stomach lose its appetite, and forget to eat bread. *Sir R. Baker.*

**Verse 4.** *I forget to eat my bread.* When grief hath thus dejected the spirits, the man has no appetite for that food which is to recruit and elevate them. Ahab, smitten with one kind of grief, David with another, and Daniel with a third, all forgot, or refused, to eat their bread. 1Ki 21:4; 2Sa 12:16; Da 10:3. Such natural companions are mourning and fasting. *Samuel Burder.*

**Verse 5.** *My bones cleave to my skin.* When the bones cleave to the skin, both are near cleaving to the dust. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 5.** That grief readily causes the body to pine away is very well known. It is related of Cardinal Wolsey, by an eye-witness, that when he heard that his master's favour was turned from him, he was wrung with such an agony of grief, which continued a whole night, that in the morning his face was dwindled away into half its usual dimensions.

**Verse 6.** *I am like a pelican of the wilderness.* The Kaath was a bird of solitude that was to be found in the "*wilderness*," *i.e.*, far from the habitations of man. This is one of the characteristics of the pelican, which loves not the neighbourhood of human beings, and is fond of resulting to broad, uncultivated lands, where it will not be disturbed. In them it makes its nest and hatches its young, and to them it retires after feeding, in order to digest in quiet the ample meal which it has made. Mr. Tristram well suggests that the metaphor of the Psalmist may allude to the habit common to the pelican and its kin, of sitting motionless for hours after it has gorged itself with food, its head sunk on its shoulders, and its bill resting on its breast. *J.G. Wood.*

**Verse 6.** *A pelican of the wilderness.* Here only *at Hulet* have I seen the pelican of the wilderness, as David calls it. I once had one of them shot just below this place, and, as it was merely wounded in the wing, I had a good opportunity to study its character. It was certainly the most sombre, austere bird I ever saw. It gave one the blues merely to look at it. David could find no more expressive type of solitude and melancholy by which to illustrate his own sad state. It seemed as large as a half-grown donkey, and when fairly settled on its stout legs, it looked like one. The pelican is never seen but in these unfrequented solitudes. *W.M. Thomson.*

**Verse 6.** Consider that thou needest not complain, like Elijah, that thou art left *alone*, seeing the best of God's *saints* in all ages have smarted in the same kind—instance in *David*:indeed sometimes he boasts how he "lay in green pastures, and was led by still waters; "but after he bemoans that he "sinks in deep mire, where there was no standing." What is become of those green pastures? parched up with the drought. Where are those still waters troubled with the tempest of affliction. The same David compares himself to an "owl, "and in the next Psalm resembles himself to an "eagle." Do two fowls fly of more different kind? The one the *scorn*, the other the *sovereign*;the one the *slowest*, the other the *swiftest*;the one the most *sharp-sighted*, the other the most *dim-eyed* of all birds. Wonder not, then, to find in thyself sudden and strange alterations. It fared thus with all God's servants in their agonies of temptation; and be confident thereof, though now run aground with grief, in due time thou shalt be all afloat with comfort. *Thomas Fuller.*

**Verse 6.** *Owl.* Some kind of owl, it is thought, is intended by the Hebrew word *cos*, translated "little owl" in Le 11:17; De 14:16, where it is mentioned amongst the unclean birds. It occurs also in Ps 102:6. *I am like a pelican of the wilderness: I am like an owl of ruined places* (A. V., "desert"). The Hebrew word *cos* means a "cup" in some passages of Scripture, from a root meaning to "receive, "to "hide, "or "bring together"; hence the pelican, "the cup, "or "pouch-bird, "has been suggested as the bird intended. In this case the verse in the Psalm would be rendered thus: "I am become like a pelican in the wilderness, even as the pouch-bird in the desert places." But the fact that both the pelican and the *cos* are enumerated in the list of birds to be avoided as food is against this theory, unless the word changed its meaning in the Psalmist's time, which is improbable. The expression *cos* "of ruined places" looks very much as if some owl were denoted. The Arabic definitely applies a kindred expression as one of the names of an owl, viz., *um elcharab*, i.e. "mother of ruins." The Septuagint gives nukkktikorax as the meaning of *cos*;and we know from Aristotle that the Greek word was a synonym of wtov, evidently, from his description of the bird, one of the cared owls. Dr. Tristram is disposed to refer the *cos* to the little *Athene Persica*, the most common of all the owls in Psalestine, the representative of the *A noetua* of Southern Europe. The Arabs call this bird "boomah, "from his note; he is described "as a grotesque and comical-looking little bird, familiar and yet cautious; never moving unnecessarily, but remaining glued to his perch, unless he has good reason for believing that he has been aetected, and twisting and turning his head instead of his eyes to watch what is going on." He is to be found amongst rocks in the wadys or trees by the

water-side, in olive yards, in the tombs and on the ruins, on the sandy mounds of Beersheba, and on "the spray-beaten fragments of Tyre, where his low wailing note is sure to be heard at sunset, and himself seen bowing and keeping time to his own music." *W. Houghton, in "Cassell's Biblical Educator," 1874,*

**Verse 6.** *Owl of the desert.*

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower,  
The moping owl does to the moon complain  
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,  
Molest her ancient solitary reign.  
—*Thomas Gray (1716-1771).*

**Verse 7.** *I watch.* During the hours allotted to sleep "*I wake,*" like a little bird which sits solitary on the house-top, while all beneath enjoy the sleep which he giveth to his beloved. *Alfred Edersheim.*

**Verse 7.** *A sparrow alone upon the house-top.* When one of them has lost its mate—a matter of every-day occurrence—he will sit on the house-top alone, and lament by the hour his sad bereavement. *W. M. Thomson.*

**Verse 7.** *I am as a sparrow alone,* etc. It is evident that the "sparrow alone and melancholy upon the house-tops" cannot be the lively, gregarious sparrow which assembles in such numbers on these favourite feeding-places *the house-tops of the East.* We must therefore look for some other bird, and naturalists are now agreed that we may accept the *Blue Thrush* (*Petrocosyphus cyaneus*) as the particular tzippor, or small bird, which sits alone on the house-tops. The colour of this bird is a dark blue, whence it derives its popular name. Its habits exactly correspond with the idea of solitude and melancholy. The Blue Thrushes never assemble in flocks, and it is very rare to see more than a pair together. It is fond of sitting on the tops of houses, uttering its note, which, however agreeable to itself, is monotonous and melancholy to human ear. *J.G. Wood, in "Bible Animals."*

**Verse 7.** *A sparrow.* Most readers are struck with the incongruity of the image, as it appears in our version, intended by the Psalmist to express a condition of distress and desolation. The sparrow is found, indeed, all over the East, in connection with houses, as it is with ourselves; but it is everywhere one of the most social of birds, cheerful to impertinence; and mischievously disposed, instead of being retiring in its habits, and melancholy in its demeanour. The word, in the original, is a general term for



all the small birds, insectivorous and frugivorous, denominated clean, and that might be eaten according to the law, the thrushes, larks, wagtails, finches, as well as sparrows. It seems to be, indeed, a mere imitation of their common note, like the one which we have in the word "chirrup." Most critics are, therefore, content with the rendering, "solitary bird," or "solitary little bird." But this is very unsatisfactory. It does not identify the species: and there is every probability that there must have been a particular bird which the Psalmist, writing at the close of the Babylonish captivity, had in his eye, corresponding to his representation of it, and illustrative of his isolated condition. Such there is at the present day, of common occurrence in Southern Europe and Western Asia. Its history is very little known to the world, and its existence has hitherto escaped the notice of all biblical commentators. Remarkably enough, the bird is commonly, but erroneously, called a sparrow, for it is a real thrush in size, in shape, in habits, and in song. It differs singularly from the rest of the tribe, throughout all the East, by a marked preference for sitting solitary upon the habitation of man. It never associates with any other, and only at one season with its own mate; and even then it is often seen quite alone upon the house-top, where it warbles its sweet and plaintive strains, and continues its song, moving from roof to roof. America has its solitary thrush, of another species, and of somewhat different habits. The dark solitary cane and myrtle swamps of the southern states are there the favourite haunts of the recluse bird; and the more dense and gloomy these are the more certainly is it to be found flitting in them.—"*The Biblical Treasury*".

**Verse 7. Alone.** But little do men perceive what solitude is, and how far it extendeth; for a crowd is not company, and faces are but a gallery of pictures, and talk but a tinkling cymbal where there is no love. The Latin adage meeteth it a little: "*magna civitas, magno solitudo*"; "because in a great town friends are scattered, so that there is not that fellowship, for the most part, which is in less neighbourhoods; but we may go further, and affirm most truly, that it is a mere and miserable solitude to want true friends, without which the world is but a wilderness; and even in this sense also of solitude, whosoever in the frame of his nature and affections is unfit for friendship, he taketh it of the beast, and not from humanity. *Francis Bacon*."

**Verse 7. Alone.** See the reason why people in trouble love solitariness. They are full of sorrow; and sorrow, if it have taken deep root, is naturally reserved, and flies all conversation. Grief is a thing that is very silent and private. Those people that are very talkative and clamorous in their sorrows, are never very sorrowful. Some are apt to wonder, *why melancholy people*

*delight to be so much alone*, and I will tell you the reason of it. 1. Because the disordered humours of their bodies alter their temper, their humours, and their inclinations, that *they are no more the same that they used to be*; their very distemper is averse to what is joyous and diverting; and they that wonder at them may as wisely wonder why they will be diseased, which they would not be if the knew how to help it; but the Disease of Melancholy is so obstinate, and so unknown to all but those who have it, that nothing but the power of God can totally overthrow it, and I know no other cure for it. 2. *Another reason why they choose to be alone is*, because *people do not generally mind what they say*, nor believe them, but rather deride them, which they do not use so cruelly to do with those that are in other distempers; and no man is to be blamed for avoiding society, when it does not afford the common credit to his words that is due to the rest of men. But, 3, Another, and the principal reason why people in trouble and sadness choose to be alone is, because *they generally apprehend themselves singled out to be the marks of God's peculiar displeasure*, and they are often by their sharp afflictions a terror to themselves, and a wonder to others. It even breaks their hearts to see how low they are fallen, how oppressed, that were once as easy, as pleasant, as full of hope as others are, Job 6:21: "Ye see my casting down, and are afraid." Ps 71:7. "I am as a wonder unto many." And it is usually unpleasant to others to be with them. Ps 88:18: "Lover and friend hast thou put far from me, and mine acquaintance into darkness." And though it was not so with the friends of Job, to see a man whom they had once known happy, to be so miserable; one whom they had seen so very prosperous, to be so very poor, in such sorry, forlorn circumstances, did greatly affect them; he, poor man, was changed, they knew him not, Job 2:12-13, "And when they lifted up their eyes afar off, and knew him not, they lifted up their voice, and wept; and they rent every one his mantle, and sprinkled dust upon their heads toward heaven. So they sat down with him upon the ground seven days and seven nights, and none spake a word unto him: for they saw that his grief was very great." As the prophet represents one under spiritual and great afflictions, "That he sitteth alone, and keepeth silence," La 3:28. *Timothy Rogers* (1660-1729), in *"A Discourse on Trouble of Mind, and the Disease of Melancholy."*

**Verse 8.** *Mine enemies reproach me.* It is true what Plutarch writes, that men are more touched with reproaches than with other injuries; affliction, too, gives a keener edge to calumny, for the afflicted are more fitting objects of pity than of mockery. *Mollerus.*

**Verse 8.** *Mine enemies reproach me*, etc. If I be where they are they rail at me to my face; and if I be not amongst them they revile me behind my back; and they do it not by starts and fits, that might give me some breathing time; but they are spitting their poison *all the day long*; and not single and one by one, that might leave hope of resisting; but they make combinations, and enter leagues against me; and to make their leagues the stronger, and less subject to dissolving, they bind themselves by oath, and take the sacrament upon it. And now sum up all these miseries and afflictions; begin with my fasting; then take my groaning; then add my watching; then the shame of being wondered at in company; then the discomfort of sitting disconsolate alone; and, lastly, add to these the spite and malice of my enemies; and what marvel, then, if these miseries joined all together make me altogether miserable; what marvel if I be nothing but skin and bone, when no flesh that were wise would ever stay upon a body to endure such misery. *Sir R. Baker.*

**Verse 8** (*last clause*). Swearing by one, means, to make his name a by-word of execration, or an example of cursing. (Isa 65:15; Je 29:22 42:18). *Carl Bernard Moll, in Lange's Commentary.*

**Verse 9.** *I have eaten ashes like bread.* Though the bread indeed be strange, yet not so strange as this,—that having complained before of forgetting to eat his bread, he should now on a sudden fall to *eating of ashes like bread*. For had he not been better to have forgotten it still, unless it had been more worth remembering? For there is not in nature so unfit a thing to eat as *ashes*; it is worse than Nebuchadnezzar's grass. *Sir R. Baker.*

**Verse 9.** *I have mingled my drink with weeping.* If you think his bread to be bad, you will find his drink to be worse; for *he mingles his drink with tears*: and what are tears, but brinish and salt humours? and is brine a fit liquor to quench one's thirst? May we not say here, the remedy is worse than the disease? for were it not better to endure any thirst, than to seek to quench it with such drink? Is it not a pitiful thing to have no drink to put in the stomach, but that which is drawn out of the eyes? and yet whose case is any better? No man certainly commits sin, but with a design of pleasure; but sin will not be so committed; for whosoever commit sin, let them be sure at some time or other to find a thousand times more trouble about it than ever they found pleasure in it. For all sin is a kind of surfeit, and there is no way to keep it from being mortal but by this strict diet of eating ashes like bread and mingling his drink with tears. O my soul, if these be works of repentance in David, where shall we find a penitent in the world besides himself? To talk of repentance is obvious in everyone's mouth; but where is any that eats ashes like bread, and mingles his drink with tears? *Sir R. Baker.*

**Verse 10.** *For thou hast lifted me up, and cast me down.* Thou hast lifted me up of a great height, in that thou madest me like unto thine image, touching my reasonable soul, and hast given me power, by thy grace, to inherit the everlasting joys of heaven, both body and soul, if I did live here after thy commandments. What greater gift canst thou give me, Lord, than to have the fruition of thee that art all in all things? How canst thou lift me higher than to eternal beatitude? But then, alas, thou hast letten me fall down again, for thou hast joined my noble soul with an earthly, heavy, and a frail body; the weight and burden thereof draweth down my mind and heart from the consideration of thy goodness, and from well doing, unto all kinds of vices, and to the regarding of temporal things according to his nature. The earthly mansion keepeth down the understanding. Thus setting me up, as it were, above the wind, thou hast given me a very great fall (Job 30:22). I am in creation above all other kind of earthly creatures, and almost equal with angels; but being in this estate thou hast knit a knot thereto, that for breaking the least of thy commandments I shall suffer damnation. So that without thy continual mercy and help I am in worse case herein than any brute beast, whose life or soul dieth with the body. *Sir Anthony Cope* (1551).

**Verse 10.** *For thou hast lifted me up and cast me down.* That is that I might fall with greater poise. *Significatur gravissima collisio.* Here the prophet accuseth not God of cruelty, but bewaileth his own misery. *Miserum est fuisse felicem*, it is no small unhappiness to have been happy. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 11** (*first clause*). My days (my term of life) are as the lengthened shade, the lengthening shade of evening, that shows the near approach of night. The comparison, though not strictly expressed, is beautifully suggestive of the thought intended. *Thomas J. Conant.*

**Verse 11** (*last clause*). The *and I*, in the Hebrew, stands in designed contrast to "But thou," Ps 102:12. *A. R. Fausset.*

**Verse 13.** *Thou shalt arise, and have mercy, etc. Tu miserebere,* "Thou shalt, "as the Shunamite to the prophet, catching hold on his feet, though Gehazi thrust her away, *Vivit Dominus*, "As the Lord liveth, and as thy soul liveth, I will not let thee go; "and, as Jacob to the angel, when he had wrestled the whole night with him, *Non dimittam*, I will not let thee loose till I have a blessing from thee. *From "A Sermon at Paules Crosse on behalfe of Paules Church, March 26, 1620. By the B. of London" John King.*

**Verse 13.** *The set time.* There is a certain set time for God's great actions. He lets the powers of darkness have their hour, and God will take his hour. He

hath a set time for the discovery of his mercy, and he will not stay a jot beyond it. What is this time? Ps 102:9, etc. When they "eat ashes like bread, and mingle their drink with weeping; "when they are most humble, and when the servants of God have moral affection to the church; when their humble and ardent affections are strong, even to the ruin and rubbish of it; when they have a mighty desire and longing for the reparation of it, as the Jews in captivity had for the very dust of the temple: Ps 102:14: "For thy servants take pleasure in her stones, and favour the dust thereof." "*For*" there notes it to be a reason why the set time was judged by them to be come. That is God's set time when the church is most believing, most humble, most affectionate to God's interest in it, and most sincere. Without faith we are not fit to desire mercy, without humility we are not fit to receive it, without affection we are not fit to value it, without sincerity we are not fit to improve it. Times of extremity contribute to the growth and exercise of these qualifications. *Stephen Charnock*.

**Verse 14.** *For thy servants take pleasure in her stones.* That is, they are still attached to her, and regard her with extreme affection, although in ruins. Jerusalem itself affords at this day a touching illustration of this passage. There is reason to believe that a considerable portion of the *lower part* of the walls which enclose the present mosque of Omar, which occupies the site of the ancient Jewish temple, are the same, or at least the southern, western, and eastern sides are the same as those of Solomon's temple. At one part where the remains of this old wall are the most considerable and of the most massive character—where two courses of masonry, composed of massive blocks of stone, rising to the height of thirty feet—is what is called the Wailing Place of the Jews. "Here," says Dr. Olin, "at the foot of the wall, is an open place paved with flags, where the Jews assemble every Friday, and in small numbers on other days, for the purpose of praying and bewailing the desolations of their holy places. Neither the Jews nor Christians are allowed to enter the Haram, which is consecrated to Mohammedan worship, and this part of the wall is the nearest approach they can make to what they regard as the precise spot within the forbidden enclosure upon which the ancient temple stood. They keep the pavement swept with great care, and take off their shoes, as on holy ground. Standing or kneeling with their faces towards the ancient wall, they gaze in silence upon its venerable stones, or pour forth their complaints in half-suppressed, though audible tones. This, to me, was always a most affecting sight, and I repeated my visit to this interesting spot to enjoy and sympathise with the melancholy yet pleasing spectacle. The poor people sometimes sobbed aloud, and still found tears to pour out for the desolations of their 'beautiful house.' 'If I forget thee, O Jerusalem, let my

right hand forget her cunning. If I do not remember thee, let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth; if I prefer not Jerusalem above my chief joy.'" *Kitto's Pictorial Bible*.

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

So sincere is God to his people, that he gives his own glory in hostage to them for their security; his own robes of glory are locked up in their prosperity and salvation: he will not, indeed he cannot, present himself in all his magnificence and royalty, till he hath made up his intended thoughts of mercy to his people; he is pleased to prorogue the time of his appearing in all his glory to the world till he hath actually accomplished their deliverance, that he and they may come forth together in their glory on the same day:

*"When the LORD shall build up Zion, he shall appear in his glory."* The sun is ever glorious in the most cloudy day, but appears not so till it hath scattered the clouds that muffle it up from the sight of the lower world: God is glorious when the world sees him not: but his declarative glory then appears, when the glory of his mercy, truth and faithfulness break forth in his people's salvation. Now, what shame must this cover thy face with, O Christian, if thou shouldst not sincerely aim at thy God's glory, who loves thee, yea, all his children so dearly, as to ship his own glory and your happiness in one bottom, that he cannot now lose the one, and save the other! *William Gumall*.

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

There are two reasons why the Lord appears thus glorious in this work rather than in any other. First, because it is a work that infinitely pleaseth him. Men choose to appear in their clothes and behaviour suitable to the work that they are to be employed in: the woman of Tekoah must feign herself to be a mourner when she goes on a mournful message; and David, when he goes on a doleful journey, covers his face, and puts on mourning apparel; but when Solomon is to be crowned, he goes in all his royalty; and a bride adorns herself gloriously when she is to be married: verily so doth the Lord, when he goes about a work he takes no pleasure in, he puts on his mourning apparel, he covers himself with a cloud and the heavens with blackness; when he is to do a strange work of judgment, then he mourns, "How shall I give thee up Ephraim? how shall I deliver thee Israel? how shall I make thee as Admah? how shall I set thee as Zeboim? mine heart is turned within me, my repentings are kindled together." Ho 11:8. But the building of Zion doth infinitely please him, because Zion is as the apple of his eye to him; he bought Zion at a dear rate, with his own blood; he lays Zion in his bosom, he is ravished with Zion, Zion is his love, his dove, his fair one; he hath chosen

Zion, and loves the gates of it, better than all the palaces of Jacob; and being so pleasing to him, no marvel if he put on all his glorious apparel when he is to adorn and build up Zion. And, secondly, it is because all the glory that he looks for to eternity must arise out of this one work of building Zion; this one work shall be the only monument of his glory to eternity: this goodly world, this heaven and earth, that you see and enjoy the use of, is set up only as a shop, as a workshop, to stand only for a week, for six or seven thousand years, ("a thousand years is with the Lord but as a day"); and when his work is done he will throw this piece of clay down again, and out of this he looks for no other glory than from a *cabul*, a land of dirt, or a shepherd's cottage, or a gourd which springs up in a night and withers in a day; but this piece he sets up for a higher end, to be the eternal mansion of his holiness and honour; this is his *metropolis*, his temple, his house where his fire and furnace is, his court, his glorious high throne, and therefore his glory is much concerned in this work. When Nebuchadnezzar would have a city for the honour of his kingdom, and the glory of his majesty, he will make it a stately piece. Solomon made all his kingdom very rich and glorious, but he made his court, and especially his throne, another manner of thing, so stately that the like was not to be seen in any other kingdom; and therefore no wonder though he appear in his glory in building up of that, which we may boldly say must be one day made as glorious as his wisdom can contrive, and his power bring to pass. *Stephen Marshall, in a Sermon preached to the Right Honourable the House of Peers, entitled "God's Master-Piece," 1645.*

**Verses 16.-17.** Shall build—shall appear—will regard—and will *not despise*. These futures, in the original, are all present; *buildeth—appeareth—regardeth—and despiseth not*. The Psalmist, in his confidence of the event, speaks of it as doing. *Samuel Horsley.*

**Verse 17.** *He will regard the prayer of the destitute*, etc. The persons are here called "*the destitute*." The Hebrew word which is here translated "destitute" doth properly signify *myrica*, a low shrub, *humiles myrica*, low shrubs that grow in wildernesses, some think they were *juniper shrubs*, some a kind of wild *tamaris*, but a base wild shrub that grew nowhere but in a desolate forlorn place; and sometimes the word in the text is used to signify the deserts of Arabia, the sandy desert place of Arabia, which was a miserable wilderness. Now when this word is applied to men, it always means such as were *forsaken* men, *despised* men; such men as are stripped of all that is comfortable to them: either they never had children, or else their children are taken away from them, and all comforts banished, and themselves left utterly forlorn, like the barren heath in a desolate howling

wilderness. These are the people of whom my text speaks, that the Lord will regard the prayer of *"the destitute"*; and this was now the state of the Church of God when they offered up this prayer, and yet by faith did foretell that God would grant such a glorious answer. . . . This is also a lesson of singular comfort to every afflicted soul, to assure them their prayers and supplications are tenderly regarded before God. I have often observed such poor forsaken ones, who in their own eyes are brought very low, that of all other people they are most desirous to beg and obtain the prayers of their friends, when they see any that hath gifts, and peace, and cheerfulness of spirit, and liberty, and abilities to perform duties, O how glad they are to get such a man's prayers I "I beseech you, will you pray for me, will you please to remember me at the throne of grace, "whereas, in truth, if we could give a right judgment, all such would rather desire the *poor*, and the *desolate*, to be *mediators* for them; for, certainly, whomsoever God neglects, he will listen to the cry of those that are forsaken and destitute. And therefore, O thou afflicted and tossed with tempests, who thinkest thou art wholly rejected by the Lord, continue to pour out thy soul to him; thou hast a faithful promise from him to be rewarded: *he will regard the prayer of the destitute*. Stephen Marshall, in a Sermon entitled *"The Strong Helper,"* 1645.

**Verse 17.** *He will regard the prayer of the destitute.* It is worthy of observation that he ascribes the redemption and restoration of the people to the prayers of the faithful. That is truly a free gift, and dependent wholly upon the divine mercy, and yet God himself often attributes it to our prayers, to stir us up and render us the more active in the pursuit of prayer. *Mollerus*.

**Verse 17.** *The prayer of the destitute.* A man that is destitute knows how to pray. He needs not any instructor. His miseries indoctrinate him wonderfully in the art of offering prayer. Let us know ourselves destitute, that we may know how to pray; destitute of strength, of wisdom, of due influence, of true happiness, of proper faith, of thorough consecration, of the knowledge of the Scriptures, of righteousness. These words introduce and stand in immediate connection with a prophecy of glorious things to be witnessed in the latter times. We profess to be eager for the accomplishment of those marvellous things; but are we offering the prayer of the destitute? On the contrary, is not the Church at large too much like the church at Laodicea? Will not a just interpretation of many of its acts and ways bring forth the words, "I am rich and increased in goods, and have need of nothing?" And do not its prayers meet with this reproachful answer, "Thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked, and knowest it not. Thy temporal affluence implies not spiritual affluence. Thy spiritual condition is inversely as the



worldly prosperity that has turned thy head. I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire. Give all thy trashy gold—trashy while it is with thee—give it to my poor; and I will give thee true gold, namely, a sense of thy misery and meanness; a longing for grace, purity, usefulness; a love of thy fellow-men; and my love shed abroad in thy heart." *George Bowen.*

**Verse 17.** *Not despise their prayer.* How many in every place (who have served the Lord in this great work) hath prayer helped at a dead lift? Prayer hath hitherto saved the kingdom. I remember a proud boast of our enemies, when we had lost *Bristol* and the *Vies*, they then sent abroad even into other kingdoms a triumphant paper, wherein they concluded all was now subdued to them, and among many other confident expressions, there was one to this purpose, *Nil restat superare Regem*, etc., which might be construed two ways; either thus,—*There remains nothing for the King to conquer, but only the prayers of a few fanatic people*; or thus,—*There is nothing left to conquer the King, but the prayers of a few fanatic people*: everything else was lost, all was now their own. And indeed we were then in a very low condition. Our strongholds taken, our armies melted away, our hearts generally failing us for fear, multitudes flying out of the kingdom, and many deserting the cause as desperate, making their peace at *Oxford*; nothing almost left us but *preces et lachrymae*; but blessed be God, *prayer was not conquered*; they have found it the hardest wall to climb, the strongest brigade to overthrow; it hath hitherto preserved us, it hath raised up unexpected helps, and brought many unhopèd for successes and deliverances. Let us therefore, under God, set the crown upon the head of prayer. Ye nobles and worthies, be ye all content to have it so; it will wrong none of you in your deserved praise; God and man will give you your due. *Many of you have done worthily, but prayer surpasses you all*: and this is no new thing, prayer hath always had the pre-eminence in the building of Zion. God hath reserved several works for several men and several ages; but in all ages and among all men, prayer hath been the chiefest instrument, especially in the building up of Zion. *Stephen Marshall.*

**Verse 17.** *Not despise their prayer.* He will, then, give ear to the suits of the poor, and not reject their supplications. But who will believe this? Is it likely that when God is in his glory, he will attend to such mean things as hearkening to the poor? Can it stand with the honour of his glory to stand reading petitions, and specially of men that come in *forma pauperis*? scarce credible indeed with men, who, raised in honour, keep a distance from the poor and count it a degree of falling to look downwards: but credible enough with God, who counts it his glory to regard the inglorious; and being the

Most High, yet looks as low as to the lowest, and favours them most who are most despised. And this did Christ after his transfiguration, when he had appeared in his glory; he then shewed acts of greatest humility; he then washed the disciples' feet; and made Peter as much wonder to see his humbleness, as he had done before to see his glory. *Sir R. Baker.*

**Verse 18.** *Shall praise the LORD.* The people whom God in mercy brings from a low and mean condition, are the people from whom God promises to receive praise and glory. Indeed, such is the selfishness of our corrupt nature, that if we are anything, or do anything, we are prone to forget God, and sacrifice to our own nets, and burn incense to our own yarn; inasmuch, that whenever God finds a people who shall either trust in him, or praise him, it must be "an afflicted and poor people," (Zep 3:11-13; Ps 22:22-25), or a people brought from such an estate: free grace is even most valued by such a people. And if you look all the Scripture over, you will find that all the praises and songs of deliverance that have been made to God have proceeded from a people that have thus judged of themselves, as those that were brought to nothing; but God in mercy had brought them back again from the gates of death, and usually until they had such apprehensions of themselves they never gave unto God the glory due unto his name. *Stephen Marshall.*

**Verse 18.** Expositors observe upon this text, that this redeemed Church takes no thought *concerning themselves*, about their own *ease, pleasure, wealth, gain*, or anything else which might accrue unto themselves by this deliverance, to make their own life easy or sweet; but their thoughts and studies are wholly laid out, how the present and succeeding generations should give all glory to God for it. . . . There are three special reasons why this should be the great work of the Lord's saved and rescued people, and why indeed they can do no other than study thus to exalt him.

1. One is, because they well know that the Lord hath reserved nothing to himself but only his glory; the benefits he gives to them; all the sweetness and honey that can be found in them he gives them leave to suck out; but his glory and his praise is his own, and that which he hath wholly reserved; of that he is jealous, lest it should either be denied, eclipsed, diminished, or any the least violation offered to it in any kind. All God's people know this of him, and therefore they cannot but endeavour to preserve it for him.

2. Secondly, besides, they know, as God is jealous in that point, so it is all the work that he hath appointed them to do; he hath therefore separated them to himself out of all nations of the world, to be his peculiar ones for this very end, that they might give him all the glory and praise of his mercy. "I have(

said God) *created* him, *formed*, and *made* him for my glory." Isa 43:7. This is the law of his new creation, which is as powerful in them as the law of nature, or the first creation, is in the rest of his works. And therefore with a holy and spiritual naturalness (if I may so call it) the hearts of all the saints are carried to give God the glory, as really as the stones are carried to the centre, or the fire to fly upwards: this is fixed in their hearts, the work of grace hath moulded them to it, that they can do no other but endeavour to exalt God, it being the very end why their spiritual life and all their other privileges are conferred upon them.

3. Yea, thirdly, they know their own interests are much concerned in God's glory, they never are losers by it: if in any work of God he want his praise, they will want their comfort; but if God be a gainer, they shall certainly be no losers. Whatever is poured upon the head of Christ—what ointment soever of praise or glory, it will in a due proportion fall down to the skirts of his garments; nor is there any other way to have any sweetness, comfort, praise, or glory to be derived unto themselves, but by giving all unto him to whom alone it belongeth, and then although he will never give away his glory—the glory of being the *fountain*, the *first*, *supreme*, *original giver* of all good; yet they shall have the glory of instruments, and of fellow workers with him, which is a glory and praise sufficient. *Stephen Marshall*.

**Verse 18** (*first clause*). Calvin translates thus,—*This shall be registered for the generations to come*; and observes,—"The Psalmist intimates, that this will be a memorable work of God, the praise of which shall be handed down to succeeding ages. Many things are worthy of praise, which are soon forgotten; but the prophet distinguishes between the salvation of the Church, for which he makes supplication, and common benefits. By the word *register* he means that the history of this would be worthy of having a place in the public records, that the remembrance of it might be transmitted to future generations."

**Verse 18.** *This shall be written*. Nothing is more tenacious than man's, memory when he suffers an injury; nothing more lax if a benefit is conferred. For this reason God desires lest his gifts should fall out of mind, to have them committed to writing. *Le Blanc*.

**Verse 20.** *To hear the groaning of the prisoner*. God takes notice not only of the prayers of his afflicted people, which are the language of grace; but even of their groans, which are the language of nature. *Matthew Henry*.

**Verse 20.** *Appointed unto death.* Who, in their captivity, are experiencing so much affliction, that it is manifest their cruel enemies are desirous of destroying them utterly; or, at least, of bringing them into such a low and pitiable state, as to blot out their name from among the nations of the earth.  
*William Keatinge Clay.*

**Verse 24.** *O my God.* The leaving out one word in a will may mar the estate and disappoint all a man's hopes; the want of this one word, *my* (God) is the wicked man's loss of heaven, and the dagger which will pierce his heart in hell to all eternity. The degree of satisfaction in any good is according to the degree of our union to it, (hence our delight is greater in food than in clothes, and the saint's joy is greater in God in the other world than in this, because the union is nearer;) but where there is no property there is no union, therefore no complacency. The pronoun *my* is as much worth to the soul as the boundless portion. All our comfort is locked up in that private cabinet. Wine in the glass doth not cheer the heart, but taken down into the body. The property of the Psalmist's in God was the mouth whereby he fed on those dainties which did so exceedingly delight him. No love potion was ever so effectual as this pronoun. When God saith to the soul, as Ahab to Benhadad "Behold, I am thine, and all that I have," who can tell how the heart leaps for joy in, and expires almost in desires after him upon such news! Others, like strangers, may behold his honour and excellencies, but this saint only, like the wife, enjoyeth him. Luther saith, Much religion lieth in pronouns. All our consolation, indeed, consisteth in this pronoun. It is the cup which holdeth all our cordial waters. I will undertake as bad as the devil is, he shall give the whole world, were it in his power, more freely than ever he offered it to Christ for his worship, for leave from God to pronounce those two words. MY GOD. All the joys of the believer are hung upon this one string; break that asunder, and all is lost. I have sometimes thought how David rolls it as a lump of sugar under his tongue, as one loth to lose its sweetness too soon: "I will love thee, O LORD, my strength, my buckler, and the horn of my salvation, and my high tower," Ps 18:1-2. This pronoun is the door at which the King of saints entereth into our hearts, with his whole train of delights and comforts. *George Swinnock.*

**Verse 24.** *Take me not away,* is more exactly, *Take me not up,* with possible reference to the case of Elijah, "taken up." *Henry Cowles.*

**Verse 24.** *Take me not away in the midst of my days.* The word is, "Let me not ascend in the midst of my days," that is, before I have measured the usual course of life. Thus, *to ascend* is the same as *to be cut off*; death cuts off the best from this world, and then they ascend to a better. The word *ascend* is

conceived to have in it a double allusion; first, to corn which is taken up by the hand of the reaper, and then laid down on the stubble. Secondly, unto the light of a candle, which as the candle spends, or as that which is the food of the fire is spending, ascends, and at last goes out and vanisheth. *Joseph Caryl*.

**Verse 24.** *Thy years are throughout all generations.* The Psalmist says of Christ, "*Thy years are throughout all generations,*" Ps 102:24; which Psalm the apostle quoteth of him, Heb 1:10. Let us trace his existence punctually through all times. Let us go from point to point, and see how in particulars the Scriptures accord with it. The first joint of time we will begin that chronology of his existence withal is that instant afore he was to come into the world.

*First,* We find him to have existed just afore he came into the world, the instance of his conception, Heb 10:5, in these words, "Wherefore when he comes into the world, says he, A body hast thou prepared me." Heb 10:7, "Lo, I come to do thy will, O God." Here is a person distinct from God the Father, a *me*, an *I*, distinct also from that human nature he was to assume, which he terms a "body prepared."... Therefore besides and afore that human nature there was a divine person that existed, that was not of this world, but that came into it, "when he cometh into the world, he says, "etc., to become a part of it, and be manifested in it.

*Secondly,* We find him to have existed afore John the Baptist, though John was conceived and born some months afore him. I note these several joints of time because the Scripture notes them, and hath set a special mark upon them: Joh 1:15. "John bare witness of him, "and cried, saying, "This was he of whom I spake, He that cometh after me is preferred before me: for he was before me." This priority of existence is that which John doth specially give witness to. And it is priority in existence, for he allegeth it as a reason why he was preferred afore him; "for he was before me."

*Thirdly,* We find him existing when all the prophets wrote and spake, 1Pe 1:11. The Spirit of Christ is said to have been in all the prophets, even as Paul, who came after Christ, also speaks, "You seek a proof of Christ speaking in me, "2Co 13:3. And therefore he himself, whose Spirit it was, or whom he sent, must needs exist as a person sending him.

*Fourthly,* We find him existing in Moses' time, both because it was he that was tempted in the wilderness, "Neither let us tempt Christ as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed of serpents, " 1Co 10:9; and it was Christ

that was the person said to be tempted by them, as well as now by us, as the word kai "as they also, "evidently shows. And it points to that angel that was sent with them, Ex 23:20-21, in whom the name of God was, and who as God had the power of pardoning sins, Ex 23:21. See also Ac 7:35, Heb 12:26.

*Fifthly*, We find him existing in and afore Abraham's time: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, Before Abraham was, I am, "Joh 8:58.

*Sixthly*, We find him existing in the days of Noah, 1Pe 3:19. He says of Christ, that he was "put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit." He evidently distinguisheth of two natures, his divine and human, even as Ro 1:3-4 and elsewhere; and then declares how by that divine nature, which he terms "Spirit, "in which he was existent in Noah's times, he went and preached to those of the old world, whose souls are now in prison in hell. These words, "in Spirit, "are not put to signify the subject of vivification; for such neither his soul nor Godhead could be said to be, for that is not quickened which was not dead; but for the principal and cause of his vivification, which his soul was not, but his Godhead was. And besides by his Spirit is not meant his soul, for that then must be supposed to have preached to souls in hell (where these are affirmed to be). Now, there is no preaching where there is no capacity of faith. But his meaning is, that those persons that lived in Noah's time, and were preached unto, their souls and spirits were now, when this was written, spirits in prison, that is, in hell. And therefore he also adds this word "sometimes": who were sometimes disobedient in Noah's days. These words give us to understand that this preaching was performed by Noah ministerially, yet by Christ in Noah; who according to his divine person was extant, and went with him, as with Moses, and the church in the wilderness, and preached unto them.

*Seventhly*, He was extant at the beginning of the world, "In the beginning was the Word." In which words, there being no predicate or attribute affirmed of this word, the sentence or affirmation is terminated or ended merely with his existence: "he was, "and he was then, "in the beginning." He says not that he was made in the beginning, but that "he was in the beginning." And it is in the beginning absolutely, without any limitation. And therefore Moses's beginning, Ge 1:1, is meant, as also the words after show, "All was made by him that was made; "and, Ge 1:10, the world he came into was made by him. And as from the beginning is usually taken from the first times or infancy of the world; so then, when God began to create, then was our Christ. And this here is set in opposition (Joh 1:14) unto the time of his being made flesh, lest that should have been thought his

beginning. And unto this accords that of Heb 1:10, where, speaking of Christ, out of Ps 102:24, *Thou, Lord, in the beginning hast laid the foundations of the earth*; so as to be sure he existed then. But further, in Ps 102:24, it runs thus, *Thy years are throughout all generations*. We have run, you see, through all generations since the creation, and have found his years throughout them all. And yet lest that should be taken only of the generations of this world, he adds (as Rivet expounds it), *Before thou laidst the foundation of the earth*.

*Eighthly*, So then we come to this, that he hath been before the creation, yea, from everlasting.

But, *Ninthly*, If you would have his eternity yet more express, see Heb 7:3, where mentioning Melchisedec, Christ's type, he renders him to have been his type in this—"Without father, without mother, without descent, having neither beginning of days, nor end of life; but made like unto the Son of God; abideth a priest continually." Where his meaning is to declare that, look what Melchisedec was *typice*, or *umbratiter*, in a shadow, that our Christ was really and substantially.

*Lastly*, Add to this that in Mic 5:2, "But thou, Bethlehem Ephratah, though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, yet out of thee shall he come forth unto me that is to be ruler in Israel; whose goings forth have been from of old, from everlasting; "where he evidently speaks of two births Christ had, under the metaphor of going forth: one as man at Bethlehem in the fulness of time, the other as Son of God from everlasting. As Son of God, his goings forth (that is, his birth) are from everlasting. And it is termed, "goings forth, "in the plural; because it is *actus continuus*, and hath been every moment continued from everlasting. As the sun begets light and beams every moment, so God doth his Son. So then we have *two everlastings* attributed to Christ's person; one to come, Heb 1:10, and another past, here in Mic 5:2. And so as of God himself it is said, Ps 90:2, "From everlasting to everlasting thou art God, "so also of Christ. *Condensed from T. Goodwin's Treatise on "The Knowledge of God the Father, and his Son Jesus Christ."*

**Verse 25.** *Earth. Heavens.* He names here the most stable parts of the world, and the most beautiful parts of the creation, those that are freest from corruptibility and change, to illustrate thereby the immutability of God, that though the heavens and earth have a prerogative of fixedness above other parts of the world, and the creatures that reside below, the heavens remain the same as they were created, and the centre of the earth retains its fixedness, and are as beautiful and fresh in their age as they were in their

youth many years ago, notwithstanding the change of the elements, fire and water being often turned into air, so that there may remain but little of that air which was first created, by reason of the continual transmutation; yet this firmness of the earth and heavens is not to be regarded in comparison of the unmoveableness and fixedness of the being of God. As their beauty comes short of the glory of his being, so doth their firmness come short of his stability. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 26.** *The shall perish.* The greater the cirruption, the vaster the destruction. Some think that the fiery deluge shall ascend no higher than did the watery. It may be the *earth* shall be burned, that is the worst guest at the table, the common sewer of all other creatures, but shall the heavens pass away? It may be the airy heaven; but shall the starry heaven where God hath printed such figures of his glory? Yes, *caelum, elementum, terra*, when *ignis ubique ferox ruptis regnabit habenis*. The former deluge is called the world's winter, the next the world's summer. The one was with a cold and moist element, the other shall be with an element hot and dry. But what then shall become of the saints? They shall be delivered out of all; walking like those three servants in the midst of that great furnace, the burning world, and not be scorched, because there is one among them to deliver them, "the Son of God," Da 3:25, their Redeemer. But shall all quite perish? No, there is rather a mutation than an abolition of their substance. *Thou shalt change them, and they shall be changed*, not abolished. The concupiscence shall pass, not the essence; the form, not the nature. In the altering of an old garment, we destroy it not, but trim it, refresh it, and make it seem new. They pass, they do not perish; the dross is purged, the metal stays. The corrupt quality shall be renewed, and all things restored to that original beauty wherein they were created. "The end of all things is at hand," 1Pe 4:7: an end of us, an end of our days, an end of our ways, and end of our thoughts. If a man could say as Job's messenger, I alone am escaped, it were somewhat; or might find an ark with Noah. But there is no ark to defend them from that heat, but only the bosom of Jesus Christ. *Thomas Adams.*

**Verse 26.** *Like a garment.* The whole creation is as a garment, wherein the Lord shows his power clothed unto men; whence in particular he is said to clothe himself with light as with a garment. And in it is the hiding of his power. Hid it is, as a man is hid with a garment; not that he should not be seen at all, but that he should not be seen perfectly and as he is. It shows the man, and he is known by it; but also it hides him, that he is not perfectly or fully seen. So are the works of creation unto God, he so far makes them his garment or clothing as in them to give out some instances of his power and



wisdom; but he is also hid in them, in that by them no creature can come to the full and perfect knowledge of him. Now, when this work shall cease, and God shall unclothe or unveil all his glory to his saints, and they shall know him perfectly, see him as he is, so far as a created nature is capable of that comprehension, then will he lay them aside and fold them up, at least as to that use, as easily as a man lays aside a garment that he will wear or use no more. This lies in the metaphor. *John Owen.*

**Verse 27.** *Thou art the same.* The essence of God, with all the perfections of his nature, are pronounced the same, without any variation from eternity to eternity. So that the text doth not only assert the eternal duration of God, but his immutability in that duration; his eternity is signified in that expression, "thou shalt endure; "his immutability in this, "thou art the same." To endure, argues indeed this immutability as well as eternity; for what endures is not changed, and what is changed doth not endure. "*But thou art the same,* "awx xta, doth more fully signify it. He could not be the same if he could be changed into any other thing than what he is. The Psalmist therefore puts, not thou *hast been* or *shall be*, but *thou art* the same, without any alteration; thou art the same, that is, the same God, the same in essence and nature, the same in will and purpose, thou dost change all other things as thou pleaseth; but thou art immutable in every respect, and receivest no shadow of change, thought never so light and small. The Psalmist here alludes to the name *Jehovah, I am*, and doth not only ascribe immutability to God, but exclude everything else from partaking in that perfection. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 28.** *The children of thy servants shall continue.* In what sense is "*children*" taken? Either the children of their flesh, or of their faith. Some say the children of the same faith with the godly teachers and servants of the Lord, begotten by them to God, as noting the perpetuity of the church, who shall in every age bring forth children to God. It is the comfort of God's people to see a young brood growing up to continue his remembrance in the world, that when they die religion shall not die with them, nor the succession of the church be interrupted. This sense is not altogether incongruous; but rather I think the children of their body are here intended; it being a blessing often promised: see Ps 103:17. "The mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him, and his righteousness unto children's children." "*Shall continue; ""shall be established.*" In what sense is it spoken? Some think only *pro more faederis*, according to the fashion of that covenant which the people of God were then under, when eternity was but more darkly revealed and shadowed out, either by long life, or the continuance of their name in their posterity, which was a kind of literal

immortality. Clearly such a kind of regard is had, as appeareth by that which you find in Ps 37:28. *"The LORD loveth judgment, and forsaketh not his saints; they are preserved for ever."* How? since they die as others do: mark the antithesis, and that will explain it. *"They are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off."* They are preserved in their posterity. Children are but the parents multiplied, and the parent continued, it is *nodosa aeternitas*; when the father's life is run out to the last, there is a knot tied, and the line is still continued by the child. I confess, temporal blessings, such as long life, and the promise of a happy posterity, are more visible in the eye of that dispensation of the covenant; but yet God still taketh care for the children of his people, and many promises run that way that belong to the gospel-administration, and still God's service is the surest way to establish a family, as sin is the ready way to root it out. And if it doth not always fall out accordingly, yet for the most part it doth; and we are no competent judges of God's dispensations in this kind, because we see Providence by pieces, and have not the skill to set them together; but at the day of judgment, when the whole contexture of God's dealings is laid before us we shall clearly understand how the children of his servants continue, and their seed is established. *Thomas Manton.*

**Verse 28.** O the folly of the world, that seeks to make perpetuities to their houses by devises in the law, which may perhaps reach to continue their estates, but can it reach to continue their seed? It may entail lands to their heirs, but can it entail heirs to their lands? No, God knows! This is a perpetuity of only God's making, a privilege of only God's servants: for *The children of his servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before him*; but that any others shall continue is no part of David's warrant. *Sir R. Baker.*

---

## HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

### TITLE.

1. Afflicted men may pray.
2. Afflicted men should pray even when overwhelmed.
3. Afflicted men can pray—for what is wanted is a pouring out of their complaint, not an oratorical display.
4. Afflicted men are accepted in prayer—for this prayer is placed on record.

**Verses 1-2.** Five steps to the mercy-seat. The Psalmist prays for,

1. Audience: "Hear my prayer."
2. Access: "Let my cry come before thee."
3. Unveiling: "Hide not thy face."
4. An intent ear: "Incline thine ear."
5. Answer. *C. Davis.*

**Verses 1, 17, 19-20.** An interesting discourse may be founded upon these passages.

1. The Lord entreated to hear—Ps 102:1.
2. The Promise given that he will hear—Ps 102:17.
3. The Record that the Lord has heard—Ps 102:19-20.

**Verse 2.**

1. Prayer in trouble is most needed.
2. Prayer in trouble is most heeded.
3. Prayer in trouble is most speeded: "Answer me speedily."

Or,

1. Prayer in trouble: "In the day, "etc.
2. The prayer of trouble: "Hide not thy face; "not remove the trial, but be with me in it. A fiery furnace is a paradise when God is with us there. *G. R.*

**Verse 2 (first clause).** He deprecates the loss of the divine countenance when under trouble.

1. That would intensify it a thousandfold.
2. That would deprive him of strength to bear the trouble.
3. That would prevent his acting so as to glorify God in the trouble.
4. That might injure the result of the trouble.

**Verse 2 (last clause).**

1. We often need to be answered speedily.
2. God can so answer.
3. God has so answered.
4. God has promised so to answer.

**Verses 3-11.**

1. The causes of grief. (a) The brevity of life. Ps 102:3. (b) Bodily pain. Ps 102:3. (c) Dejection of spirit. Ps 102:4- 5. (d) Solitariness. Ps 102:6-7. (e) Reproach. Ps 102:8. (f) Humiliation. Ps 102:9. (g) The hidings of God's countenance. Ps 102:10. (h) Wasting away. Ps 102:11.

2. The eloquence of grief. (a) The brevity of life is as vanishing "smoke." (b) Bodily pain is fire in the bones. (c) Dejection of spirit is "withered grass." Who can eat when the heart is sad? (d) Solitariness is like "The pelican in the wilderness, the owl in the desert, and the sparrow upon the housetop." (e) Reproach is being surrounded by madmen—"they that are mad." (f) Humiliation is "eating ashes like bread, "and "drinking tears." (g) The hidings of God's countenance is lifting up in order to be cast down. (h) Wasting away is a shadow declining and grass withering. *G. R.*

**Verse 4.** Unbelieving sorrow makes us forget to use proper means for our support.

1. We forget the promises.
2. Forget the past and its experiences.
3. Forget the Lord Jesus, our life.
4. Forget the everlasting love of God. This leads to weakness, faintness, etc., and is to be avoided.

**Verse 6.** This as a text, together with Ps 103:5, makes an interesting contrast, and gives scope for much experimental teaching.

**Verse 7.** The evils and benefits of solitude; when it may be sought, and when it becomes a folly. Or, the mournful watcher—alone, outside the pale of communion, insignificant, wishful for fellowship, set apart to watch.

**Verse 9.** The sorrows of the saints—their number, bitterness, sources, correctives, influences, and consolations.

**Verse 10.**

1. The trial of trials—*thine* indignation and *thy* wrath.
2. The aggravation of that trial—former favour, "thou hast lifted me up, "etc.

3. The best behaviour under it: see Ps 102:9, 12-13.

**Verse 10** (*last cause*). The prosperity of a church or an individual often followed by declension; worldly aggrandisement frequently succeeded by affliction; great joy in the Lord very generally succeeded by trial.

**Verses 11-12.** *I* and *Thou*, or the notable contrast.

1. *I*: my days are like a shadow, (a) Because it is unsubstantial; because it partakes of the nature of the darkness which is to absorb it; because the longer it becomes the briefer its continuance. (b) I am like grass cut down by the scythe; scorched by drought.

2. *Thou*. Lord. Ever enduring. Ever memorable. Ever the study of passing generations of men. *C. D.*

**Verse 13.**

1. Zion often needs restoration. It needs "mercy."

2. Its restoration is certain: "Thou shalt arise," etc.

3. The seasons of its restoration are determined. There is a "time" to favour her; a "set" time.

4. Intimations of those coming seasons are often given "The time, the set time, is come." *G. R.*

**Verses 13-14.**

1. Visitation expected.

2. Predestination relied upon.

3. Evidence observed.

4. Enquiry suggested—Do we take pleasure in her stones? etc.

**Verses 13-14.** The interest of the Lord's people in the concerns of Zion one of the surest signs of her returning prosperity.

**Verse 15.** The inward prosperity of the church essential to her power in the world.

**Verse 16.** God is Zion's purchaser, architect, builder, inhabitant, Lord.

1. Zion built up. Conversions frequent; confessions numerous; union firm; edification solid; missions extended.
2. God glorified. In its very foundation; by its ministry; by difficulties and enemies; by poor workers, and poor materials; and even by our failures.
3. Hope excited. Because we may expect the Lord to glorify himself.
4. Inquiry suggested. Am I concerned, as built, or building? not merely doctrinally, but experimentally?

**Verse 17.**

1. The destitute pray.
2. They pray most.
4. They pray best.
4. They pray most effectually. Or the surest way to succeed in prayer is to pray as the destitute; show the reason of this.

**Verse 18.**

1. A memorial.
2. A magnificat. *W. Durban.*

**Verses 18-21.**

1. Misery in extremis.
2. Divinity observant.
3. Deity actively assisting.
4. Glory consequently published.

**Verses 19-22.**

1. The notice which God takes of the world, Ps 102:19. (a) The place from which he beholds it: "from heaven," not from an earthly point of view. (b) The character in which he beholds it; "from the height of his sanctuary, "from the mercy-seat.

2. What attracts his notice most in the world. The groaning of the prisoner and of those appointed to death.
3. The purpose for which he notices them. "To loose, " etc.;" to declare," etc. (a) For human comfort. (b) For his own glory.
4. When his notice is thus fixed upon the earth. "When, " etc., Ps 102:22. *G. R.*

**Verse 23.** For the sick.

1. Submission—The Lord sent the trial—"He weakeneth," etc.
2. Service—exonerated from some work, he now requires of me patience, earnestness, etc.
3. Preparation—for going home.
4. Prayer—for others to occupy my place.
5. Expectation—I shall soon be in heaven, now that my days are shortened.

**Verse 24.**

1. *The prayer.* "Take me not away, "etc. (a) Not in the midst of life, is the prayer of some. (b) Not in the midst of worldly prosperity is the prayer of many, for the sake of those dependent upon them. (c) Not in the midst of spiritual growth, is the prayer of not a few: "Oh spare me, that I may recover strength, "etc. (d) Not in the midst of Christian work and usefulness, is the prayer of others.
2. *The plea.* "Thy years, "etc.; years are plentiful with thee, therefore to give me longer days will be an easy gift—and thine own are throughout all generations. *G. R.*

**Verse 25-27.**

1. The unchangeableness of God amidst past changes: "of old," etc. (a) He was the same before as after he had laid the foundations of the earth. (b) He was the same after as before.
2. The unchangeableness of God amidst future changes. "They shall perish," etc. (a) The same before they perish as after. (b) After as before.

3. The unchangeableness of God in the past and the future. "Thou art the same," etc. *G. R.*

**Verse 26-27.**

1. How far God may change—only in his garments, or outward manifestations of creation and providence.
2. Wherein he cannot change—his nature, attributes, covenant, love, etc.
3. The comfortable truths which may be safely inferred, or which gather support from this fact.

**Verse 26-27.**

1. The material universe of God. (a) No more to him than a garment to the wearer. (b) Ever waxing old, but he the same. (c) Soon to be changed and left to perish, but of his years no end.
2. Our relation to each (a) Let us never love the dress more than the wearer. (b) Nor trust more in the changeful than in the abiding. (c) Nor live for that which will die out.

**Verse 28.** The true apostolical succession.

1. There always will be saints.
2. They will frequently be the seed of the saints after the flesh.
3. They will always be the spiritual seed of the godly, for God converts one by means of another.
4. We should order our efforts with an eye to the church's future.

---

**WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED AND SECOND PSALM**

BISHOP FISHER'S *Treatise on the Penitential Psalms*. (See "Treasury of David," Vol. II., pg 114.) There is an edition in 12mo., printed in the year MDCCXIV., besides those referred to as above.

In "*Meditations on Twenty select Psalms*," by Sir SIR ANTHONY COPE, Chamberlain to Queen Katherine Parr. Reprinted from the edition of 1547; ...By WILLIAM H. COPE. M.A. 1848, "there is a Meditation on this Psalm.



*Meditations and Disquisitions upon the Seven Psalms of David, commonly called the Penitential Psalmes*, By Sir RICHARD BAKER, Knight. 1639. pg 139-180.

*Zion's Joy in her King Coming in his Glory*. Wherein the estate of the Poore distressed Church of the Gentiles (travailing in the Wildernesse towards the new Jerusalem of the Jewes) in her utmost extremities, and height of her Joyes, is lively delineated; In some Meditations upon that Prophetical Psalme 102, wherein the sense is opened, and many difficult places of Scripture inlightned by a harmony, and consent of the Scriptures. Delightfull and profitable to be read in these times of the Churches troubles, and much longed for restauration and deliverance. By FINIENS CANUS VOVE. Compiled in Exile, and lately now revised and somewhat augmented as the weight of the Subject and the revolution of the times required... 1643. 4to.

In "*Sermons on the Seven Penitential Psalms, Preached during Lent*, 1838," by the Rev. CHARLES OXENDON, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

## Psalm 103

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

---

**TITLE.** *A Psalm of David.*—Doubtless by David; it is in his own style when at its best, and we should attribute it to his later years when he had a higher sense of the preciousness of pardon, because a keener sense of sin, than in his younger days. His clear sense of the frailty of life indicates his weaker years, as also does the very faintness of his praiseful gratitude. As in the lofty Alps some peaks rise above all others so among even the inspired Psalms there are heights of song which overtop the rest. This one hundred and third Psalm has ever seemed to us to be the Monte Rosa of the divine chain of mountains of praise, glowing with a ruddier light than any of the rest. It is as the apple tree among the trees of the wood, and its golden fruit has a flavour such as no fruit ever bears unless it has been ripened in the full sunshine of mercy. It is man's reply to the benedictions of his God, his Song on the Mount answering to his Redeemer's Sermon on the Mount. Nebuchadnezzar adored his idol with flute, harp, sacbut, psaltery, dulcimer and all kinds of music; and David, in far nobler style awakens all the melodies of heaven and earth in honour of the one only living and true God. Our attempt at exposition is commenced under an impressive sense of the utter impossibility of doing justice to so sublime a composition; we call upon our soul and all that is within us to aid in the pleasurable task; but, alas, our soul is finite, and our all of mental faculty far too little for the enterprise. There is too much in the Psalm, for a thousand pens to write, it is one of those all-comprehending Scriptures which is a Bible in itself, and it might alone almost suffice for the hymn-book of the church.

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

---

### EXPOSITION

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

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

**Verse 2.** *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* He is in real earnest, and again calls upon himself to arise. Had he been very sleepy before? Or was he now doubly sensible of the importance, the imperative necessity of adoration? Certainly, he uses no vain repetitions, for the Holy Spirit guides his pen; and thus he shews us that we have need, again and again, to bestir ourselves when we are about to worship God, for it would be shameful to offer him anything less than the utmost our souls can render. These first verses are a tuning of the harp, a screwing up of the loosened strings that not a note may fail in the sacred harmony. And forget not all his benefits. Not so much as one of the divine dealings should be forgotten, they are all really beneficial to us, all worthy of himself, and all subjects for praise. Memory is very treacherous about the best things; by a strange perversity, engendered by the fall, it treasures up the refuse of the past and permits priceless treasures to lie neglected, it is tenacious of grievances and holds benefits all too loosely. It needs spurring to its duty, though that duty ought to be its delight. Observe that he calls all that is within him to remember all the Lord's benefits. For our task our energies should be suitably called out. God's all cannot be praised with less than our all. Reader, have we not cause enough at this time to bless him who blesses us? Come, let us read our diaries and see if there be not choice favours recorded there for which we have rendered no grateful return. Remember how the Persian king, when he could not sleep, read the chronicles of the empire, and discovered that one who had saved his life had never been rewarded. How quickly did he do him honour! The Lord has saved us with a great salvation, shall we render no recompense? The name of *ingrate* is one of the most shameful that a man can wear; surely we cannot be

content to run the risk of such a brand. Let us awake then, and with intense enthusiasm bless Jehovah.

**Verse 3.** *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.* Here David begins his list of blessings received, which he rehearses as themes and arguments for praise. He selects a few of the choicest pearls from the casket of divine love, threads them on the string of memory, and hangs them about the neck of gratitude. Pardoned sin is, in our experience, one of the choicest boons of grace, one of the earliest gifts of mercy,—in fact, the needful preparation for enjoying all that follows it. Till iniquity is forgiven, healing, redemption, and satisfaction are unknown blessings. Forgiveness is first in the order of our spiritual experience, and in some respects first in value. The pardon granted is a present one—*forgiveth*; it is continual, for he still *forgiveth*; it is divine, for God gives it; it is far reaching, for it removes all our sins; it takes in omissions as well as commissions, for both these are *in-equities*; and it is most effectual, for it is as real as the healing, and the rest of the mercies with which it is placed. Who healeth all thy diseases. When the cause is gone, namely, iniquity, the effect ceases. Sickesses of body and soul came into the world by sin, and as sin is eradicated, diseases bodily, mental, and spiritual will vanish, till "the inhabitant shall no more say, I am sick." Many-sided is the character of our heavenly Father, for, having forgiven as a judge, he then cures as a physician. He is all things to us, as our needs call for him, and our infirmities do but reveal him in new characters.

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

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

**Verse 4.** *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.* By purchase and by power the Lord redeems us from the spiritual death into which we had fallen, and from the eternal death which would have been its consequence. Had not the death penalty of sin been removed, our forgiveness and healing would have been incomplete portions of salvation, fragments only, and but of small value, but the removal of the guilt and power of sin is fitly attended by the reversal of the sentence of death which had been passed upon us. Glory be to our great Substitute, who delivered us from going down into the pit, by giving himself to be our ransom. Redemption will ever constitute one of the sweetest notes in the believer's grateful song. Who crowneth thee with loving kindness and tender mercies. Our Lord does nothing by halves, he will not stay his hand till he has gone to the uttermost with his people. Cleansing, healing, redemption, are not enough, he must needs make them kings and crown them, and the crown must be far more precious than if it were made of corruptible things, such as silver and gold; it is studded with gems of grace and lined with the velvet of lovingkindness; it is decked with the jewels of mercy, but made soft for the head to wear by a lining of tenderness. Who is like unto thee, O Lord! God himself crowns the princes of his family, for their best things come from him directly and distinctly; they do not earn the crown, for it is of *mercy* not of merit; they feel their own unworthiness of it, therefore he deals with *tenderness*; but he is resolved to bless them, and, therefore, he is ever *crowning* them, always surrounding their brows with coronets of mercy and compassion. He always crowns the edifice which he commences, and where he gives pardon he gives acceptance too. "Since thou wast precious in my sight thou hast been honourable, and I have loved thee." Our sin deprived us of all our honours, a bill of attainder was issued against us as traitors; but he who removed the sentence of death by redeeming us from destruction, restores to us more than all our former honours by crowning us anew. Shall God crown us and shall not we crown him? Up, my soul, and cast thy crown at his feet, and in lowliest reverence worship him, who has so greatly exalted thee, as to lift thee from the dunghill and set thee among princes.

**Verse 5.** *Who satisfieth thy mouth with good things,* or rather "filling with good thy soul." No man is ever filled to satisfaction but a believer, and only God himself can satisfy even him. Many a worldling is satiated, but not one is satisfied. God satisfies the very soul of man, his noblest part, his ornament and glory; and of consequence he satisfies his mouth, however hungry and craving it might otherwise be. Soul-satisfaction loudly calls for soul-praise, and when the mouth is filled with good it is bound to speak good of him who filled it. Our good Lord bestows really *good things*, not vain toys and idle

pleasures; and these he is always giving, so that from moment to moment he is *satisfying* our soul with good: shall we not be still praising him? If we never cease to bless him till he ceases to bless us, our employment will be eternal. So that thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. Renewal of strength, amounting to a grant of a new lease of life, was granted to the Psalmist; he was so restored to his former self that he grew young again, and looked as vigorous as an eagle, whose eye can gaze upon the sun, and whose wing can mount above the storm. Our version refers to the annual moulting of the eagle, after which it looks fresh and young; but the original does not appear to allude to any such fact of natural history, but simply to describe the diseased one as so healed and strengthened, that he became as full of energy as the bird which is strongest of the feathered race, most fearless, most majestic, and most soaring. He who sat moping with the owl in the last Psalm, here flies on high with the eagle: the Lord works marvellous changes in us, and we learn by such experiences to bless his holy name. To grow from a sparrow to an eagle, and leave the wilderness of the pelican to mount among the stars is enough to make any man cry, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." Thus, is the endless chain of grace complete. Sins forgiven, its power subdued, and its penalty averted, then we are honoured, supplied, and our very nature renovated, till we are as new-born children in the household of God. O Lord we must bless thee, and we will; as thou dost withhold nothing from us so we would not keep back from thy praise one solitary power of our nature, but with all our heart, and soul, and strength praise thy holy name.

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

out his portion to the proud and make the tyrant bite the dust,—yea, often he visits the haughty persecutor even in this life, so that "the Lord is known by the judgments which he executeth."

**Verse 7.** *He made known his ways unto Moses.* Moses was made to see the manner in which the Lord deals with men; he saw this at each of the three periods of his life, in the court, in retirement, and at the head of the tribes of Israel. To him the Lord gave specially clear manifestations of his dispensations and modes of ruling among mankind, granting to him to see more of God than had before been seen by mortal man, while he cornmaned with him upon the mount. His acts unto the children of Israel. They saw less than Moses, for they beheld the deeds of God without understanding his method therein, yet this was much, very much, and might have been more if they had not been so perverse; the stint was not in the revelation, but in the hardness of their hearts. It is a great act of sovereign grace and condescending love when the Lord reveals himself to any people, and they ought to appreciate the distinguished favour shown to them. We, as believers in Jesus, know the Lord's *ways* of covenant grace, and we have by experience been made to see his *acts* of mercy towards us; how heartily ought we to praise our divine teacher, the Holy Spirit, who has made these things known to us, for had it not been for him we should have continued in darkness unto this day, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us and not unto the world?" Why hast thou made us "of the election who have obtained it" while the rest are blinded? Observe how prominent is the personality of God in all this gracious teaching—"*He made known.*" He did not leave Moses to discover truth for himself, but became his instructor. What should we ever know if he did not make it known? God alone can reveal himself. If Moses needed the Lord to make him know, how much more do we who are so much inferior to the great law-giver?

**Verse 8.** *The Lord is merciful and gracious.* Those with whom he deals are sinners. However much he favours them they are guilty and need mercy at his hands, nor is he slow to compassionate their lost estate, or reluctant by his grace to lift them out of it. Mercy pardons sin, grace bestows favour: in both the Lord abounds. This is that way of his which he made known to Moses (Ex 34:6), and in that way he will abide as long as the age of grace shall last, and men are yet in this life. He who "executeth righteousness and judgment," yet delighteth in mercy. Slow to anger. He can be angry, and can deal out righteous indignation upon the guilty, but it is his strange work; he lingers long, with loving pauses, tarrying by the way to give space for repentance and opportunity for accepting his mercy. Thus deals he with the

greatest sinners, and with his own children much more so: towards them his anger is shortlived and never reaches into eternity, and when it is shown in fatherly chastisements he does not afflict willingly, and soon pities their sorrows. From this we should learn to be ourselves slow to anger; if the Lord is longsuffering under our great provocations how much more ought we to endure the errors of our brethren! And plenteous in mercy. Rich in it, quick in it, overflowing with it; and so had he need to be or we should soon be consumed. He is God, and not man, or our sins would soon drown his love; yet above the mountains of our sins the floods of his mercy rise.

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

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

**Verse 9.** *He will not always chide.* He will sometimes, for he cannot endure that his people should harbour sin in their hearts, but not for ever will he chasten them; as soon as they turn to him and forsake their evil ways he will end the quarrel. He might find constant cause for striving with us, for we have always something in us which is contrary to his holy mind, but he refrains himself lest our spirits should fail before him. It will be profitable for any one of us who may be at this time out of conscious fellowship with the Lord, to inquire at his hands the reason for his anger, saying, "Shew me wherefore thou contendest with me?" For he is easily entreated of, and soon ceaseth from his wrath. When his children turn from their sins he soon turns from his chidings. Neither will he keep his anger for ever. He bears no grudges. The Lord would not have his people harbour resentments, and in his own course of action he sets them a grand example. When the Lord has chastened his child he has done with his anger: he is not punishing as a judge, else might his wrath burn on, but he is acting as a father, and, therefore, after a few blows he ends the matter, and presses his beloved one to his bosom as if nothing had happened; or if the offence lies too deep in the offender's nature to be thus overcome, he continues to correct, but he never



ceases to love, and he does not suffer his anger with his people to pass into the next world, but receives his erring child into his glory.

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

**Verse 11.** *For as the heaven is high above the earth, so great is his mercy toward them that fear him.* Boundless in extent towards his chosen is the mercy of the Lord; it is no more to be measured than the height of heaven or the heaven of heavens. "*Like the height of the heavens*" is the original language, which implies other points of comparison besides extent, and suggests sublimity, grandeur, and glory. As the lofty heavens canopy the earth, water it with dews and rains, enlighten it with sun, moon, and stars, and look down upon it with unceasing watchfulness, even so the Lord's mercy from above covers all his chosen, enriches them, embraces them, and stands for ever as their dwellingplace. The idea of our version is a very noble one, for who shall tell how exceeding great is the height of heaven? Who can reach the first of the fixed stars, and who can measure the utmost bounds of the starry universe? Yet so great is his mercy! Oh, that great little word so! All this mercy is for "*them that fear him*"; there must be a humble, hearty reverence of his authority, or we cannot taste of his grace. Godly fear is one of the first products of the divine life in us, it is the beginning of wisdom, yet it fully ensures to its possessor all the benefits of divine mercy, and is, indeed, here and elsewhere, employed to set forth the whole of true religion. Many a true child of God is full of filial fear, and yet at the same time stands trembling as to his acceptance with God; this trembling is groundless, but it is infinitely to be preferred to that baseborn presumption, which incites men to boast of their adoption and consequent security, when all the while they are in the gall of bitterness. Those who are presuming upon the infinite extent of divine mercy, should here be led to consider that although it is wide as the horizon and high as the stars, yet it is only meant for them that fear the

Lord, and as for obstinate rebels, they shall have justice without mercy measured out to them.

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

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

**Verse 14.** *For he knoweth our frame.* He knows how we are made, for he made us. Our make and build, our constitution and temperament, our prevailing infirmity and most besetting temptation he well perceives, for he searches our inmost nature. He remembereth that we are dust. Made of dust, dust still, and ready to return to dust. We have sometimes heard of "the Iron Duke," and of iron constitutions, but the words are soon belied, for the Iron Duke is dissolved, and other men of like rigour are following to the grave, where "dust to dust" is an appropriate requiem. We too often forget that we are dust, and try our minds and bodies unduly by excessive mental and

bodily exertion, we are also too little mindful of the infirmities of others, and impose upon them burdens grievous to be borne; but our heavenly Father never overloads us, and never fails to give us strength equal to our day, because he always takes our frailty into account when he is apportioning to us our lot. Blessed be his holy name for this gentleness towards his frail creatures.

**Verse 15.** *As for man, his days are as grass.* He lives on the grass, and lives like the grass. Corn is but educated grass, and man, who feeds on it, partakes of its nature. The grass lives, grows, flowers, falls beneath the scythe, dries up, and is removed from the field: read this sentence over again, and you will find it the history of man. If he lives out his little day, he is cut down at last, and it is far more likely that he will wither before he comes to maturity, or be plucked away on a sudden, long before he has fulfilled his time. As a flower of the field, so he flourisheth. He has a beauty and a comeliness even as the meadows have when they are yellow with the king-cups, but, alas, how short-lived! No sooner come than gone, a flash of loveliness and no more! Man is not even like a flower in the conservatory or in the sheltered garden border, he grows best according to nature, as the field-flower does, and like the unprotected beautifier of the pasture, he runs a thousand risks of coming to a speedy end. A large congregation, in many-coloured attire, always reminds us of a meadow bright with many hues; and the comparison becomes sadly true when we reflect, that as the grass and its goodliness soon pass away, even so will those we gaze upon, and all their visible beauty. Thus, too, must it be with all that comes of the flesh, even its greatest excellencies and natural virtues, for "that which is born of the flesh is flesh, "and therefore is but as grass which withers if but a breath of wind assails it. Happy are they who, born from above, have in them an incorruptible seed which liveth and abideth for ever.

**Verse 16.** *For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone.* Only a little wind is needed, not even a scythe is demanded, a breath can do it, for the flower is so frail.

"If one sharp wind sweep over the field,  
It withers in an hour."

How small a portion of deleterious gas suffices to create a deadly fever, which no art of man can stay. No need of sword or bullet, a puff of foul air is deadlier far, and fails not to lay low the healthiest and most stalwart son of man. And the place thereof shall know it no more. The flower blooms no more. It may have a successor, but as for itself its leaves are scattered, and its

perfume will never again sweeten the evening air. Man also dies and is gone, gone from his old haunts, his dear home, and his daily labours, never to return. As far as this world is concerned, he is as though he never had been; the sun rises, the moon increases or wanes, summer and winter run their round, the rivers flow, and all things continue in their courses as though they missed him not, so little a figure does he make in the affairs of nature. Perhaps a friend will note that he is gone, and say,

"One morn. I missed him on the accustomed hill,  
 Along the heath, and near his favourite tree;  
 Another came, nor yet beside the rill,  
 Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he."

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

**Verse 17.** *But the mercy of the LORD is from everlasting to everlasting upon them that fear him.* Blessed *but!* How vast the contrast between the fading flower and the everlasting God! How wonderful that his mercy should link our frailty with his eternity, and make us everlasting too! From old eternity the Lord viewed his people as objects of mercy, and as such chose them to become partakers of his grace; the doctrine of eternal election is most delightful to those who have light to see it and love wherewith to accept it. It is a theme for deepest thought and highest joy. The "*to everlasting*" is equally precious. Jehovah changes not, he has mercy without end as well as without beginning. Never will those who fear him find that either their sins or their needs have exhausted the great deep of his grace. The main question is, "*Do we fear him?*" If we are lifting up to heaven the eye of filial fear, the gaze of paternal love is never removed from us, and it never will be, world without end. And his righteousness unto children's children. Mercy to those with whom the Lord makes a covenant is guaranteed by *righteousness*; it is because he is just that he never revokes a promise, or fails to fulfil it. Our believing sons and their seed for ever will find the word of the Lord the same: to them will he display his grace and bless them even as he has blessed us. Let us sing, then, for posterity. The past commands our praise and the future invites it. For our descendants let us sing as well as pray. If Abraham rejoiced concerning his seed, so also may the godly, for "*instead of the fathers shall be the children,*" and as the last Psalm told us in its

concluding verse, "the children of thy servants shall continue, and their seed shall be established before thee."

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

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

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

About his government there is no alarm, no disorder, no perturbation, no hurrying to and fro in expedients, no surprises to be met or unexpected catastrophes to be warded off;—all is prepared and fixed, and he himself has

prepared and fixed it. He is no delegated sovereign for whom a throne is set up by another; he is an autocrat, and his dominion arises from himself and is sustained by his own innate power. This matchless sovereignty is the pledge of our security, the pillar upon which our confidence may safely lean. And his kingdom ruleth over all. Over the whole universe he stretches his sceptre. He now reigns universally, he always has done so, and he always will. To us the world may seem rent with anarchy, but he brings order out of confusion. The warring elements are marching beneath his banner when they most wildly rush onward in furious tempest. Great and small, intelligent and material, willing and unwilling, fierce or gentle,—all, all are under his sway. His is the only universal monarchy, he is the blessed and only Potentate, King of kings and Lord of lords. A clear view of his ever active, and everywhere supreme providence, is one of the most delightful of spiritual gifts; he who has it cannot do otherwise than bless the Lord with all his soul. Thus has the sweet singer hymned the varied attributes of the Lord as seen in nature, grace, and providence, and now he gathers up all his energies for one final outburst of adoration, in which he would have all unite, since all are subjects of the Great King.

**Verse 20.** *Bess the Lord, ye his angels, that excel in strength.* Finding his work of praise growing upon his hands, he calls upon "the firstborn sons of light" to speak the praises of the Lord, as well they may, for as Milton says, they best can tell. Dwelling nearer to that prepared throne than we as yet have leave to climb, they see in nearer vision the glory which we would adore. To them is given an exceeding might of intellect, and voice, and force which they delight to use in sacred services for him; let them now turn all their strength into that solemn song which we would send up to the third heaven. To him who gave angelic strength let all angelic strength be given. They are his angels, and therefore they are not loath to ring out his praises. That do his commandments, hearkening unto the voice of his word. We are bidden to do these commandments, and alas we fail; let those unfallen spirits, whose bliss it is never to have transgressed, give to the Lord the glory of their holiness. They hearken for yet more commands, obeying as much by reverent listening as by energetic action, and in this they teach us how the heavenly will should evermore be done; yet even for this surpassing excellence let them take no praise, but render all to him who has made and kept them what they are. O that we could hear them chant the high praises of God, as did the shepherds on that greatest of all birth nights—

"When such music sweet  
Their hearts and ears did greet

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

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

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

**Verse 22.** *Bless the Lord, all his works in all places of his dominion.* Here is a trinity of blessing for the thrice blessed God, and each one of the three blessings is an enlargement upon that which went before. This is the most comprehensive of all, for what can be a wider call than to all in all places? See how finite man can awaken unbounded praise! Man is but little, yet, placing his hands upon the keys of the great organ of the universe, he wakes it to thunders of adoration! Redeemed man is the voice of nature, the priest in the temple of creation, the precentor in the worship of the universe. O that all the Lord's works on earth were delivered from the vanity to which they were made subject, and brought into the glorious liberty of the children of God: the time is hastening on and will most surely come; then will all the Lord's works bless him indeed. The immutable promise is ripening, the sure mercy is on its way. Hasten, ye winged hours! Bless the Lord, O my soul. He closes on his key-note. He cannot be content to call on others without taking his own part; nor because others sing more loudly and perfectly, will he be content to be set aside. O my soul, come home to thyself and to thy God, and let the little world within thee keep time and tune to the spheres which are ringing out Jehovah's praise. O infinitely blessed Lord, favour us with this

highest blessing of being for ever and ever wholly engrossed in blessing Thee.

---

### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**TITLE.** A Psalm of David, which he wrote when carried out of himself as far as heaven, saith Beza. *John Trapp*.

**Whole Psalm.** How often have saints in Scotland sung this Psalm in days when they celebrated the *Lord's Supper*! It is thereby specially known in our land. It is connected also with a remarkable case in the days of John Knox. Elizabeth Adamson, a woman who attended on his preaching, "because he more fully opened the fountain of God's mercies than others did, "was led to Christ and to rest, on hearing this Psalm, after enduring such agony of soul that she said, concerning racking pains of body, "A thousand years of this torment, and ten times more joined", are not to be compared to a quarter of an hour of my soul's trouble. She asked for this Psalm again before departing: "It was in receiving it that my troubled soul first tasted God's mercy, which is now sweeter to me than if all the kingdoms of the earth were given me to possess." *Andrew A. Bonar*.

**Whole Psalm.** The number of verses in this Psalm is that of the letters of the Hebrew alphabet; and the completeness of the whole is further testified by its return at the close to the words with which it started, "Bless the Lord, O my soul." *J. F. Thrupp*.

**Whole Psalm.** The Psalm, in regard to number, is an alphabetical one, harmonized in such a way as that the concluding turns back into the introductory verse, the whole being in this manner finished and rounded off. In like manner, the name Jehovah occurs eleven times. The Psalm is divided into two strophes, the first of ten and the second of twelve verses. The ten is divided by the five, and the twelve falls into three divisions, each of four verses. Jehovah occurs in the first strophe four, and in the second seven times. The Psalm bears the character of quiet tenderness. It is a still clear brook of the praise of God. In accordance with this, we find that the verses are of equal length as to structure, and consist regularly of two members. It is only at the conclusion, where the tone rises, that the verses become longer: the vessel is too small for the feeling. The testimony which the *title* bears on behalf of the composition of the Psalm by David, is confirmed by the fact that the Psalm in passages, the independence of which cannot be mistaken, bears a striking resemblance to the other Psalms of David, and by the



connection with Psalm 102 David here teaches his posterity to *render thanks*, as in the previous Psalm he had taught them to *pray*: the deliverance from deep distress which formed there the subject of prayer, forms here the subject of thanks. *E. W. Hengstenberg*.

**Whole Psalm.** It is observable that no petition occurs throughout the entire compass of these twenty-two verses. Not a single word of supplication is in the whole Psalm addressed to the Most High. Prayer, fervent, heartfelt prayer, had doubtless been previously offered on the part of the Psalmist, and answered by his God. Innumerable blessings had been showered down from above in acknowledgment of David's supplications; and, therefore, an overflowing gratitude now bursts forth from their joyful recipient. He touches every chord of his harp and of his heart together, and pours forth a spontaneous melody of sweetest sound and purest praise. *John Stevenson, in "Gratitude: an Exposition of the Hundred and Third Psalm, "1856.*

**Verse 1.** *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* O how well they are fitted! for what work so fit for my soul as this? Who so fit for this work as my soul? My body, God knows, is gross and heavy, and very unfit for so sublime a work. No, my soul, it is thou must do it; and indeed what hast thou else to do? it is the very work for which thou were made, and O that thou wert as fit to do the work as the work is fit for thee to do! But, alas, thou art become in a manner earthy, at least hast lost a great part of thy abilities, and will never be able to go through with this great work thyself alone. If to bless the Lord were no more but to say, Lord, Lord, like to them that cried, "The temple of the Lord, the temple of the Lord;" then my tongue alone would be sufficient for it, and I should not need to trouble any other about it; but to bless the Lord is an eminent work, and requires not only many but very able agents to perform it; and therefore, my soul, when thou goest about it, go not alone; but, take with thee "*all that is within thee*"; "all the forces in my whole magazine, whether it be my heart, or my spirits; whether my will, or my affections; whether my understanding, or my memory; take them all with thee, and bless the Lord. *Sir R. Baker.*

**Verse 1.** *All that is within me.* The literal translation of the form here used is *my insides* or *inner parts*, the strong and comprehensive meaning of the plural being further enhanced by the addition of all, as if to preclude exception and reserve, and comprehend within the scope of the address all the powers and affections. *J. A. Alexander.*

**Verse 1.** *All that is within me, etc.* Let your *conscience* "bless the Lord, "by unvarying fidelity. Let your *judgment* bless Him, by decisions in accordance

with his word. Let your *imagination* bless him, by pure and holy musings. Let your *affections* praise him, by loving whatsoever he loves. Let your *desires* bless him, by seeking only his glory. Let your *memory* bless him, by not forgetting any of his benefits. Let your *thoughts* bless him, by meditating on his excellencies. Let your *hope* praise him, by longing and looking for the glory that is to be revealed. Let your every *sense* bless him by its fealty, your every *word* by its truth, and your every *act* by its integrity. *John Stevenson.*

**Verse 1.** *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* You have often heard, that when God is said to bless men, and they on the other hand are excited to bless him, the word is taken in two very different senses. God is the only fountain of being and happiness, from which all good ever flows; and hence he is said to bless his creatures when he bestows mercies and favours upon them, gives them any endowments of body and mind, delivers them from evils, and is the source of their present comforts and future hopes. But in this sense, you will see there is no possibility of any creature's blessing God; for as his infinite and unblemished perfection renders him incapable of receiving any higher excellency, or improvement in happiness; so, could we put the supposition that this immense ocean of good might be increased, it is plain that we, who receive our very being and everything that we have or are from him, could in no case contribute thereto. To *bless* God, then, is, with an ardent affection humbly to acknowledge those divine excellencies, which render him the best and greatest of beings, the only object worthy of the highest adoration: it is to give him the praise of all those glorious attributes which adorn his nature, and are so conspicuously manifested in his works and ways. To bless God, is to embrace every proper opportunity of owning our veneration and esteem of his excellent greatness, and to declare to all about us, as loudly as we can, the goodness and grace of his conduct towards men, and our infinite obligations for all our enjoyments to him, *in whom we live, move, and have our being.* And a right *blessing of God* must take its rise from a heart that is full of esteem and gratitude, which puts life into the songs of praise. And then, of all others, the most lively and acceptable method of blessing God, is a holy conversation and earnest endeavor to be purified from all iniquity; for blessing of God consists, as I told you, in adoring his excellencies, and expressing our esteem and veneration of them: but what can be so effectual a way of doing this, as the influence that the views of them have upon our lives? That person best exalts the glory of the divine power, who fears God above all, and trembles at the apprehensions of his wrath; and of his justice, who flees from sin, which exposes him to the inexorable severity thereof; and of his love, who is softened thereby into grateful returns of obedience; and then we celebrate his holiness, when we endeavour to imitate it in our

lives, and abandon everything that is an abomination to the eyes of his purity. *William Dunlop, 1692-1720.*

**Verse 1.** *O my soul.* God's eye is chiefly upon the soul: bring a hundred dishes to table, he will carve of none but this; this is the savoury meat he loves. He who is best, will be served with the best; when we give him the soul in a duty, then we give him the flower and the cream; by a holy chemistry we still out the spirits. A soul inflamed in service is the cup of "spiced wine of the juice of the pomegranate" (So 8:2) which the spouse makes Christ to drink of. *Thomas Watson.*

**Verse 1.** *Bless his holy name.* The *name* of God frequently signifies his nature and attributes, in Scripture. Now, *holiness* is the glory of this name; the purity of God is that which beautifies all his perfections, and renders them worthy to be praised. His eternity, and knowledge, and power, without justice, and goodness, and truth, might indeed frighten and confound us; but could not inflame our love, or engage us to hearty blessing. But when infinite mightiness, and unerring wisdom, and eternal dominion, are mixed with unchangeable love, and inviolable veracity and goodness, which exalts itself above all his works; when thus it becomes a *holy name*, then the divine perfections are rendered truly amiable, and suitable objects of our hope and confidence and loudest songs; so that you see how elegantly the Psalmist upon this occasion mentions the purity of God: "*Bless his holy name.*" And besides this, there is indeed nothing that more exalts the glory of divine grace and of redeeming love towards a soul, than the consideration of *God's holiness*; for if your Maker were not *of purer eyes than man is*, yea, if his hatred to sin, and love to righteousness, were not greater than that of the noblest angel, his pardoning of sin, and patience towards transgressors would not be such a wonderful condescension; but is his name infinitely holy so that "*the heavens are not clean in his sight?*" Is the smallest iniquity the abhorrence of his soul, and what he hates with a perfect hatred? Surely, then, his grace and love must be incomparably greater than our thoughts. *William Dunlop.*

**Verses 1-2.** The well is seldom so full that water will at first pumping flow forth; neither is the heart commonly so spiritual, after our best care in our worldly converse (much less when we somewhat overdo therein) as to pour itself into God's bosom freely, without something to raise and elevate it; yea, often, the springs of grace lie so low, that pumping only will not fetch the heart up to a praying frame, but arguments must be poured into the soul before the affections rise. Hence are those soliloquies and discourses which we find holy men use with their own hearts to bring them into a gracious

temper, suitable for communion with God in ordinances. It seems *by these verses*] *David either found or feared his heart would not be in so good a frame as he desired; consequently he redoubles his charge: he found his heart somewhat drowsy, which made him thus rouse himself. William Gurual.*

**Verses 1-3.** The Psalmist's gratitude here has four attributes.

The first is *personal*. *Bless the Lord, my soul*. He has the self-same application in the close of the Psalm, after he has called on others to do this work. Our religion must be social as well as personal: but while it must not end at home, it must begin at home; and relative religion, without personal, will always be found wanting in excitement, in energy, in extent, in continuance, and very commonly in success.

Secondly, It is *fervent*. *And all that is within me, bless his holy name*—all my thoughts, my feelings, my understanding, my will, my memory, my conscience, my affections, my passions.

"If there be passions in my soul,  
(And passions, Lord, there be);  
Let them be all at thy control,  
My gracious Lord, for thee."

Thirdly, it is *rational*, and demanded by the facts of his past life. Therefore "forget not all his benefits." Nothing can properly affect or influence us when it is out of our recollection. "Out of sight out of mind; "and out of mind, out of motive. Whence arose the ingratitude of the Jews of old? Bad memories. "Of the rock that begat thee thou art unmindful, and hast forgotten the God that formed thee." "The ox knoweth his owner, and the ass his master's crib: but Israel doth not know, my people doth not consider." It should therefore be your concern, not only to recall your mercies, but to reckon them.

Lastly, it is *specific*: *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities; who healeth all thy diseases*. When all the words in a discourse are emphatic, nothing is emphatic, when we dwell on everything, we dwell on nothing effectively. We are more struck, in a landscape, with a selected point of vision for inspection, than by the general prospect. David was a poet, and understood poetry well; and poetry differs from philosophy. The one seeks to rise from particular facts and instances, to establish general principles and rules: the

other is always for descending from generalization to particularization; and much of its beauty and force arises from individualities. *William Jay*, 1849.

**Verse 2.** *Bless the Lord, O my soul.* David found some dulness and drowsiness; hence he so often puts the thorn to his breast; hence he so impetuously instigateth his soul, as one here phraseth it. *John Trapp*.

**Verse 2.** *Forget not.* This touches the secret spring of so much ingratitude—forgetfulness, the want of re-collection, or gathering together again of all the varied threads of mercy. Compare De 6:12; De 8:11, 14. "*Si oblivisceris, tacebis*" (If thou forgettest, thou wilt be silent). *J. J. S. Perowne*.

**Verse 2.** *Forget not all his benefits.* That is, forget not any of his benefits, as the form of speech in the original doth import. *David Dickson*.

**Verse 2.** *Benefits.* The word rendered "benefits"—*lwmg gemul*, means properly an act, work, doing, whether good or evil, Ps 137:8; and then, *desert*, or what a man deserves *for* his act; *recompense*. It is rendered *deserving* in Jud 9:16; *benefit*, as here, in 2Ch 32:25; *desert*, Ps 28:4; *reward*, Ps 94:2 Isa 3:11 Ob 1:15; *recompense*, Pr 12:14 Isa 35:4 59:18 66:6 Jer 51:6 La 3:64 Joe 3:4,7. The proper reference here is to the Divine *dealings*, to what God had *done*, as a reason for blessing his name. His *dealings* with the Psalmist had been such as to call for praise and gratitude. What those dealings particularly were he specifies in the following verses. *Albert Barnes*.

**Verse 3.** *Who forgiveth all thine iniquities.* Thine iniquities are more than can be numbered; and they are an intolerable burden, so that thy soul under them "can in no wise lift up herself." He forgiveth them *all*. He relieveth thee of *all*. He taketh the dreadful burden from thy back, the galling yoke from thy neck, and makes thee free... Thine iniquities are in-equities. There is nothing just or right in thee. Thy very nature is an inequity bringing forth nothing but in-equities. Inequities towards thy God, in-equities towards thy neighbour, and in-equities towards thyself, make up the whole of thy life. Thou art a bad tree, and a bad tree cannot bring forth good fruit. *John Pulsford*, in. "*Quiet Hours*," 1857.

**Verse 3.** *All thine iniquities.* In this lovely and well-known Psalm, we have great fulness of expression, in reference to the vital subject of redemption. Who forgiveth *all* thine iniquities. It is not "*some*" or "*many* of thine iniquities." This would never do. If so much as the very smallest iniquity, in thought, word, or act, were left unforgiven, we should be just as badly off,

just as far from God, just as unfit for heaven, just as exposed to hell, as though the whole weight of our sins were yet upon us. Let the reader ponder this deeply. It does not say, "Who forgiveth thine iniquities previous to conversion." There is no such notion as this in Scripture. When God forgives, he forgives like himself. The source, the channel, the power, and the standard of forgiveness are all divine. When God cancels a man's sins, he does so according to the measure in which Christ bore those sins. Now, Christ not only bore *some* or *many* of the believer's sins, he bore them "all, "and, therefore, God forgives "all." God's forgiveness stretches to the length of Christ's atonement; and Christ's atonement stretches to the length of every one of the believer's sins, past, present, and future. "The blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanseth us from *all* sin." 1Jo 1:9. "*Things New and Old*, "1858.

**Verse 3.** *Who healeth all thy diseases.* In one of the prisons of a certain country, was a man who had committed high treason: for this crime he was in due time tried, and, being found guilty, was condemned to die. But more than this; he was afflicted with an inward disease, which generally proves mortal. Now we may truly say, that this man is *doubly* dead; that his life is forfeited twice over: the laws of his country have pronounced him guilty of death, and therefore his life is forfeited *once* to the laws of his country, and, if he had not died in *this* way, he must die of his disease; he is, therefore, "twice dead." Now suppose that the sovereign of that country had made up his mind to wish to save that prisoner's life, *could* he save it? He could indeed take off the penalty of the law; he could give him a free pardon, and so restore the life, as sure as it is forfeited by the just sentence of the law; but, unless he could also send a physician, who could cure the man of his disease, he would die by *that*, and his pardon would only lengthen out for a few weeks or months a miserable existence. And if this disease were not only a mortal disease, but an *infectious* one, likely to spread itself by the *breath* of the patient, and a *contagious* one, likely to spread by the *touch* of the patient's body or clothes, then it would be dangerous to others to come near that man; and unless he were cured, and thoroughly and entirely cured, the man, though pardoned, would still be a fit inmate only for the pest-house, and could not be received into the houses of the healthy. You have *seen* such a case as this, brethren; you are at this very moment, perhaps, sitting close by a person in this case yes, and perhaps you are in this very case yourself! Perhaps, do I say? I should say, you *ARE* in this very case, unless you are really and truly a Christian, a believer in Christ Jesus. *W. Weldon Champneys*, 1842.

**Verse 3.** *All thy diseases.* The body experienceth the melancholy consequences of Adam's offence, and is subject to many infirmities; but the soul is subject to as many. What is pride, but lunacy; what is anger, but a fever; what is avarice, but a dropsy; what is lust, but a leprosy; what is sloth, but a dead palsy? Perhaps there are spiritual maladies similar to all corporeal ones. *George Horne.*

**Verse 3.** *All thy diseases.* O my soul, consider the multitude of infirmities, to which thou art subject; thou hast many suggestions of the flesh; and thou art apt to yield unto them, and strivest not against them by earnest prayer and holy meditations; this is an infirmity. In thy prayers to God, thy thoughts are often wandering, and thou thinkest of other matters, far unworthy of that great Majesty to whom thou prayest: or if not so, yet thou art quickly weary, thy spirits are drowsy in it, and thou hadst rather be doing of something else; this is an infirmity. And indeed thou hast infirmities in all thy senses. In thy seeing, thou canst see a mote in thy brother's eye, and canst not see a beam in thine own eye. In thy smelling, thou thinkest *suavis odor lucri ex re qualibet*, that the savour of gain is sweet, from whence soever it rise. In thy hearing, thou art gladder to hear the profane and idle discourses, than such as be serious and holy; these are thy infirmities: and, O my soul, if I should cut thee up into as many parts as an anatomist, and examine the infirmities of every part, should I not have cause, just cause, to cry out with Saint Paul, O wretch that I am, who shall deliver me from this body of sin? Who shall heal me of all these infirmities? for whether we call them sins, and then God forgives them; or call them infirmities, and then he heals them; they are to us, all one benefit; in God, all one kindness; that as either of them is well worth remembering; so for both of them, we have just cause to bless him and to praise his name. *Sir Richard Baker.*

**Verse 3.** *All thy diseases.* Our *understandings* are so bad that they understand not their own badness; our *wills*, which are the queens of our souls, become the vassals of sin; our *memory*, like jet, good only to draw straws and treasure up trifles of no moment; our *consciences*, through errors in our own understanding, sometimes accusing us when we are innocent, sometimes acquitting us when we are guilty; our *affections* all disaffected and out of order. Must not that needs be a monstrous face, wherein the blueness which should be in the veins is in the lips, the redness which should be in the cheeks, in the nose; the hair that should grow on the head, on the face? and must not our souls needs seem ugly in the sight of God, who have grief growing there where joy should, and joy where grief should? We love what we should hate and hate where we should love; we fear where no fear

is, and fear not where we ought to fear; and all our affections either mistake their object, or exceed their due measure. *Thomas Fuller.*

**Verse 4.** *Who redeemeth thy life from destruction.* From his earliest days the Psalmist was the child of Providence. Many were the hairbreadth escapes and the wonderful deliverances, which he experienced. Dangers of various kinds presented themselves as his years advanced. The jaw of the lion, and the paw of the bear, at various times threatened to terminate his existence, and at others the ruthless hand of man. The same God who delivered him from the sword of Goliath, rescued his life from the javelin of Saul. The Almighty Friend who had covered his head in the day of battle, delivered him, at one moment, from the lords of the Philistines, saved him at another out of the hands of the men of Keilah; and again preserved to him his life and throne from the unnatural rebellion of his own son. Well, therefore, might the Psalmist stir up his soul, and all that was within him, to bless the Lord with most fervent gratitude, who, by so many signal deliverances, had "*redeemed his life from destruction.*" *John Stevenson.*

**Verse 4.** *Who redeemeth.* Preservation from destruction, lawgh *haggoel*, properly, *redemption of life by the kinsman*; possibly looking forward, in the spirit of prophecy, to him who became partaker of our flesh and blood, that he might have the right to redeem our souls from death by dying in our stead. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 4.** *From the pit,* including death, the grave, Hades. The Targum renders "from Gehenna." *J. J. S. Perowne.*

**Verse 4.** *Tender mercies.* I do not know that I can do better than tell you a little incident that took place in my native town of Stirling. Workmen were blasting the castle rock, near where it abuts upon a walk that lies open to the street. The train was laid and lit, and an explosion was momentarily expected. Suddenly trotting round the great wall of the cliff, came a little child going straight to where the match burned. The men shouted—(it was *mercy*)—and by their very terror in shouting, alarmed and bewildered the poor little thing. By this time the mother also had come round: in a moment saw the danger; opened wide her arms, and cried from her very heart, "*Come to me, my darling,* "—(that was *tender mercy*)—and instantly, with eager pattering feet, and little arms opened to her arms, and tear-filled eyes answering to her eyes—the little thing ran back and away, and stopped not until she was clasped in her mother's bosom—wealth of sunny hair loosened on it, and lips coral red pressed to mother's pallid lip of fear—as the motherly heart gave way to tears, in the thought of so imperilled an escape:



for it was barely by a second, as the roar of the shattered rock told.  
*Alexander B. Grosart, in "The Pastor and Helper of Joy, "1865.*

**Verse 5.** *Who satisfieth thy mouth.* The word rendered "*mouth*," is *Kyre*, which is rendered *ornaments* in our version in all other passages—eleven in number—where it occurs, except here and in Ps 32:9, where it is rendered "*mouth*;" and even there it ought properly be translated *ornament*, and here the sense seems to be thy ornament, that which is thy glory, thy spirit, Ps 16:9 62:8. It is true that the soul *yvpg* is here addressed (Ps 103:1); but the spirit may be called the *ornament* or glory of the *soul*. *Christopher Wordsworth.*

**Verse 5.** *Satisfieth thy mouth.* Kimchi understands the phrase as expressing David's recovery from sickness. In sickness the soul abhorreth bread, and even dainty meat, Job 33:20. The physician, too, limits the diet of the patient, and prescribes things which are nauseous to the palate. The commentator, therefore, supposes that David here describes the blessing of health, by *his mouth being filled with good things*. *Editorial Note to Calvin in loc.*

**Verse 5.** *Satisfieth.* God can so satisfy the soul, that each chink and cranny therein shall be filled with spiritual joy. *Thomas Fuller.*

**Verse 5.** *With good things.* Mark, what does the Lord satisfy with? "*good things*." Not *rich* things, not *many* things, not *everything* I ask for, but "*good things*." All my *need* fully supplied, and everything "*good*." Goodness is God expressed. All his blessings partake of his own nature. They are holy blessings, holy mercies. Everything that *satisfies* must have the nature of God in it. Nothing else will ever "*satisfy*." The heart was made for God, and only God can meet it. *Frederick Whitfield, 1874.*

**Verse 5.** *Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.* It is an ancient fable that the eagle is able to renew his youth when very old, and poetical allusion is made to it in this Psalm; but this idea is doubtless founded in reality on the great longevity of the bird, and its power, in common with other birds, of moulting its plumage periodically, and so increasing its strength and activity. *Hugh Mac Millan. {1}*

{1} We might have filled much of our space with the fables from the rabbis and the fathers in reference to eagles; but they are too absurd, and ought never to be repeated. We hope, therefore, that the reader will excuse if not commend the omission.

**Verse 5.** *Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.*—The Scripture knows nothing of the idea that the eagle when old renews its youth. That there is nothing of this kind contained in Isa 40:31, which is commonly appealed to, but that it is rather the powerful flight of the eagle that is there referred to, "they mount up on wings like the eagle, they run and are not weary," is evident from the parallel, *fly, run, march.* *E.W. Hengstenberg.*

**Verse 5.** *Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's. Thy activity will renew itself like the eagle.* That is to say, From day to day he will receive and increase his strength and rigour, so that he may thrive and flourish like the eagle. The comparison with the eagle is not drawn in point of *renovation*, but in point of vigour and *activity* continually renewing itself; as Isa 40:31, says, "*They that wait upon the LORD shall renew their strength, they shall mount up with wings as eagles.*" *Venema.*

**Verse 5.** *Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.* This renovation of his youth may be understood three ways. First, as to his natural state, or bodily strength. Secondly, as to his civil state, or worldly successes, as to his honour and kingly-renown. Thirdly, as to his spiritual state, or the heightening of his gifts, graces, and comforts. It is probable David had found a declension in all these, and at last, through the goodness of God and his blessing upon him, the renewing of them all from that oldness to a youthfulness again, like that of eagles. *Joseph Garyl.*

**Verse 5.** *Thy youth is renewed like the eagle's.* However bold it may sound, we say not too much when we speak of an *eternal youth*, as the glorious privilege of the devout servant of the Lord, but of him alone. All that with reason charms and captivates in the appearance of youth, is seen in heightened measure where the spiritual life develops itself undisturbed in fellowship with God. Does the *innocence* of youth attract you? In the natural life it is but too frequently a misleading appearance; but in the life of the soul it returns to a certain extent when the heart is purified through the power of the Holy Ghost, and the life is renewed in conformity with that of Christ the Lord. Does the *enjoyment* of youth surpass in your estimation that of any other here below? Be it so; yet all too speedily it is driven away by the cares of later years, whilst enjoyment free from care even in the dark days may dwell in the heart whereon has descended the peace of God through faith. The *strength* of youth, seems it to you desirable? Ah! day by day stamps truth upon the words: "Youth shall faint and be weary;" but even when the natural strength has already long attained its zenith, the Christian often feels himself elevated through a power from on high, which lifts him above physical weakness; and what no strength of sinew or muscle could

accomplish is attained through the power of implicit faith. Yea, even the beautiful *developement* which the period of youth shows you, ye would not seek in vain in that man who, leaning on God's hand, forgetting the things that are behind, stretches forward from light to light, from strength to strength, from bliss to bliss. How, finally, can *hope*, that makes the youthful heart beat high with throbs of joy, be lacking to him? The fairest part of life the sensual man sees soon behind him, the spiritual man always in prospect; and like the eagle, this last can often from the low atmosphere round him soar to the pure, clear ether, whence already from afar the image, nay, the ineffable reality, shows him a more than earthly joy.

Eternal youth: it may, yet much more than for David, now be the portion of every Christian, but for these alone. Without faith and hope in the heart, even the bravest determination to remain young always, or at least as long as possible, must give away before the first great storm of life. Yet even when faith and hope are not strangers to us, whence is it that in our spiritual life there is frequently so little of the "*eagle*" spoken of here, and so much of the "*sparrow alone upon the housetop*," referred to in Ps 102:7 Can it be that we allow ourselves too little to be satisfied with the good things of which David had spoken immediately before; that is to say, that we live so little on the best things which God has to bestow,—his word, his Spirit, his grace? Only through these do we attain that lasting second birth, of which the eagle is the emblem, and an unfading youth of heart the inestimable fruit. Ye who are young in years, seek this undying youth above all the joys of early life! Recover it, ye middle-aged, in living fellowship with him who maketh all things new within! Preserve it, old friends of God and of his Christ, as your fairest crown here on earth, and the earnest of your bliss in heaven. And thou, Christian, who sittest down disconsolate, bethink thyself; the eagle lets his wings hang down, only thereafter to soar with stronger flight! *J.J. Van Oosterzee*, in "*The Year of Salvation*," 1874.

**Verse 6.** *The LORD executeth righteousness, &c.* Rising from personal blessings to general, the comprehensive fact, evermore to the glory of God, is his sympathy with the suffering and oppressed, and his ready and effective interposition in their ease. Who will not praise him that he careth so kindly and so gloriously for those who suffer cruel wrongs from wicked oppressors? *Henry Cowles*.

**Verse 7.** *He made known his ways unto Moses.* When Moses went up to Mount Sinai and tarried there with God the space of forty days, we may well think that God in that time, revealed many secrets to him; and particularly "*made known his ways*;" (Ex 33:19); not only his ways in which he would

have us to walk, but his ways in which he walks himself, and the course he holds in the government of worldly affairs; why he suffers the wicked to prosper, and why the godly to be oppressed. These "*ways*" of his he made known to Moses; to the children of Israel, only "*his acts*." He showed them his wonderful favours to themselves in the wilderness, and that was his righteousness; but he showed them not his ways, and the course he held in them: they saw only the events of things, they saw not the reasons of them, as Moses did. *Sir Richard Baker*.

**Verse 8.** *Merciful and gracious, slow to stagger and plenteous in mercy.* O my soul, here are four properties spoken of to be in God, and are all so necessary, that we could not miss one of them. If he were not "*merciful*" we could hope for no pardon; and if he were no more but merciful we could hope for no more but pardon; but when besides his being merciful he is also "*gracious*," this gives us a further hope, a hope of a donative; and then it will not be what we are worthy to receive, but what it is fit for him to give. If he were not "*slow to anger*" we could expect no patience; but when besides his slowness to anger he is also "*full of compassion*;" this makes us expect he will be the good Samaritan, and not only bind up our wounds, but take care also for our further curing. What though he chide and be angry for a time; it is but our being patient a while with him, as he a long time hath been patient with us. *Sir R. Baker*.

**Verse 8.** *Slow to anger.* In Scripture we find that slowness to anger, and hastiness to be angry, are expressed by the different frame of the nostrils; as, namely, when the Lord is said to be "*slow to anger*," the Hebrew is, *long of nostrils*. *Joseph Caryl*.

**Verse 8.** *Plenteous in mercy.* dmxykw, "great mighty in mercy," placing his chief glory in this attribute, and hereby teaching us how to estimate true greatness. *George Horne*.

**Verse 8.** *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 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 of opportunity whereby to recompense the services of those that do wait and attend upon them... And upon the same ground it is 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 86:5 130:7; Isa 55:7, "Let the wicked forsake his way, "etc.; "Let him return unto the Lord and he will have mercy upon him; and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon." The commodity which we stand in need of is mercy and the pardon of our sins, because 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 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 as bountifully disposed as the poor man can be. *John Goodwin, on, "Being filled with the Spirit."*

**Verse 9.** *He will not always chide.* Certainly it is as displeasing to God to chide, as it is to us to be chidden; and so little he likes of anger, that he rids his hands of it as fast as th can: he is not so slow in coming to it, but he is as quick in getting from it; for chiding is a bar to mercy, and anger an impediment to compassion; nothing is so distasteful to God as that any block should lie in the way of his mercy, or that the liberty of his compassion should have any cause of restraint: and then we may be sure he will not himself lay a block in the way with chiding, nor be a cause to restrain his compassion by keeping his anger. *Sir R. Baker.*

**Verse 9.** *(Second Clause).* *To keep anger for ever*, corresponds with the French phrase, *Je lui garde, Il me la garde*, ("I am watching him, as he has watched to do a bad turn to me") which we use when the man, who cannot forgive the injuries he has received, cherishes secret revenge in his heart, and waits for an opportunity of retaliation. Now David denies that God, after the manner of men, keeps anger on account of injuries done to him, since he condescends to be reconciled. *Calvin.*

**Verse 10.** *He hath not dealt with us after our sins.* Might we not have expected, with such conduct, that God would have withdrawn from us the blessing of his providence, withheld from us the communication of his Spirit, permitted us to find the means of grace profitless, left our temptations to multiply, and suffered us to sink into a state of fixed backsliding?—and then, with our hearts at last sinking into too natural depression, might we not have seemed to hear him saying to us this day, "Thine own wickedness shall correct thee, and thy backslidings shall reprove thee; know, therefore, and see that it is an evil thing and bitter, that thou hast forsaken the Lord thy God, and that my fear is not in thee, saith the Lord God of Hosts." *Baptist W. Noel, 1798-1873.*

**Verse 10.** *He hath not dealt with us after our sins.* Why is it that God hath not dealt with us after our sins? Is it not because he hath dealt with another after our sins? Another who look our sins upon him; of whom it is said, that "God chastened him in his fierce wrath"? and why did he chasten him, but for our sins? O gracious God, thou art too just to take revenge twice for the same faults; and therefore, having turned thy fierce wrath upon him, thou wilt not turn it upon us too; but having rewarded him according to our iniquities, thou wilt now reward us according to his merits. *Sir R. Baker.*

**Verse 10.** Work out the terrible supposition, show the reasons why it has not yet been actually so; then suggest that it may yet become a terrible fact, and exhort the guilty to seek mercy.

**Verse 11.** Our mind cannot find a comparison too large for expressing the superabundant mercy of the Lord toward his people. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 12.** *As far as the east is from the west.* The expression taken from the distance of the *east from west* is pitched upon, saith Kimchi, because those two quarters of the world are of greatest extent, being all known and inhabited. From whence it is that geographies reckon that way their longitudes, as from north to south their latitudes. *Henry Hammond.*

**Verse 12.** When sin is pardoned, it is never charged again; the guilt of it can no more return than east can become west, or west become east. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 13.** *Like as a father pitieth his children,* etc. A chaplain to seamen, at an American port, visited a sailor who appeared to be near death. He spoke kindly to the man upon the state of his soul, and directed him to cast himself on Jesus. With an oath, the sick man bade him begone. The chaplain then told him that he must be faithful to him, for if he died impenitent he would be lost for ever. The man was sullen and silent, and pretented to fall asleep. The visit was repeated more than once, with similar ill success. At length the chaplain, suspecting that the sailor was a Scotchman, repeated a verse of the old version of the Psalms:

"Such pity as a father hath  
Unto his children dear.  
Like pity shows the Lord to such  
As worship him in fear."

Tears started into the sailor's eyes as he listened to these words. The chaplain asked him if he had not had a pious mother. The man broke into tears. Yes, his mother had, in years gone by, taught him these words, and had also prayed to God for him. Since then he had been a wanderer by sea and land; but the memory of her faith and love moved his heart. The appeals made to him were blessed by the Spirit of God. His life was spared, and proved the reality of his conversion.

**Verse 13.** *Like as a father.* It is to be observed in this verse, what kind of mercy the prophet attributes to God. He says not, As man pities man, as the rich the poor man, as the strong the feeble, as the freeman the captive, but he makes mention of that pity which a father shows to his son, which is the greatest of all. The word *Mxr* itself supports this view, as it properly signifies *viscarum commotis*. An example of this we have in 1Ki 3:23-27 in the case of the woman who could not bear the slaughter of her child... And afterwards in the case of the father of the prodigal. Lu 15:11-32. *Musculus*.

**Verse 13.** *As a father pitieth his children.* The father pitieth his children that are weak in knowledge, and instructs them; pities them when they are froward, and bears with them; pities them when they are sick, and comforts them; when they are fallen, and helps them up again; when they have offended, and upon their submission, forgives them; when they are wronged, and rights them. Thus "the Lord pitieth them that fear him." *Matthew Henry*.

**Verse 13.** *So the Lord pitieth, &c.* So and ten thousand times more than so. For he is the "Father of all mercies, "and the Father of all the fatherhoods in heaven and earth. Eph 3:15. *John Trapp*.

**Verse 13.** *The Lord pitieth.* Though it be commonly said, "It is better to be envied, than pitied; "yet here it is not so: but it is a far happier thing to be pitied of God, than to be envied of men. *Sir R. Baker*.

**Verse 13.** *Them that fear him.* The fear of God is that deference to God which leads you to subordinate your will to his; makes you intent on pleasing him; penitent in view of past wilfulness; happy in his present smile; transported by his love; hopeful of his glory. *George Bowen*.

**Verse 13.** *Them that fear him.* It may be understood of those who have not yet "received the spirit of adoption, "but are yet "trembling at his word, "those he "pities." *Matthew Henry*.

**Verses 13-14.** The good father doth not turn off the child for being weak and sickly; but is so much the more indulgent as his necessity requires succour. If his stomach refuse meat, or cannot answer it with digestion, will he put him out of doors? No; when the Shunamite's son complains of his head, she lays him in her bosom. A mother is good to all the fruit of her womb, most kind to the sick infant: when it lies with its eyes fixed on her, not able to declare its grief, or to call for what it desires, this doubles her compassion: "So the Lord doth pity us, remembering our frame, considering that we are but dust"; that our soul works by a lame instrument; and therefore he requires not that of an elemental composition, which he doth of angelical spirits. The son is commanded to write out such a copy fairly; he doth his best, far short of the original; yet the father doth not chide, but encourage him. Or he gives him a bow and arrows, bids him shoot to such a mark; he draws his utmost strength, lets go cheerfully: the arrow drops far short, yet the son is praised, the father pleased. Temptation assaults us, lust buffets us, secular business diverts us, manifold is our weakness, but not beyond our Father's forgiveness: "He will spare us, as a man spareth his own son that serveth him," Mal 3:17. *Thomas Adams.*

**Verse 14.** *He knoweth our frame.* "Our formation; "the *manner* in which we are constructed, and the *materials* of which we are made. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 14.** *He knoweth our frame; he remembereth that we are dust.* Not like some unskilled empiric, who hath but one receipt for all, strong or weak, young or old; but as a wise physician considers his patient, and then writes his bill. Men and devils are but God's apothecaries, they make not our physic, but give what God prescribes. Balaam loved Balak's fee well enough, but could not go a hair's breadth beyond God's commission. *William Gumall.*

**Verse 14.** *He remembereth that we are dust.* As if the very matter out of which man was first made, though without sin, were a disadvantage to him, in the resisting of sin. It was a disadvantage before man had any sin in him, how much more is it now when most men have nothing at all in them but sin, and the best have very much. "*That which is born of the flesh,* "saith Christ, "*is flesh.*" Corrupt nature can produce none but corrupt acts. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 14.** *We are dust.*

O how in this Thy quire of souls I stand,  
—Propt by Thy hand—  
A heap of sand!  
Which busie thoughts—like winds—would scatter quite,



And put to flight,  
 But for Thy might;  
 Thy hand alone doth tame  
 Those blasts, and knit my frame. *Henry Vaughan.*

**Verses 14, 16.** We are dust. I never see one of those spiral pillars of dust which, like a mimic simoon, rush along the road upon a windy day, without thinking, "There is an image of life." Dust and a breath! Observe how the apparent "pillar" is but a condition, an active condition, of the particles of dust, and those particles continually changing. The form depends upon the incessant movement. The heavy sand floats on the impalpable air while it partakes its motion; let that cease and it fails, So the dull clods of the field, smitten by force, take wings and soar in life, partake for a time its rapid course, and then, the force exhausted, fall back into their former state. A whirl, a flux, maintained by forces without, and ceasing when they are withdrawn; that is our life. *James Hinton, in "Thoughts on, Health and some of its Conditions," 1871.*

**Verse 15.** *As for man.* The insignificance of man is especially brought out by the use of ENOSH here. *Robert Baker Girdlestone.*

**Verse 15.** Man comes forth, says Job, like a *flower*, and is cut down; he is sent into the world the fairest and noblest part of God's works, fashioned after the image of his Creator, with respect to reason and the great faculties of the mind; he cometh forth glorious as the flower of the field; as it surpasses the vegetable world in beauty, so does he the animal world in the glory and excellence of his nature. The one, if no untimely accident oppress it, soon arrives at the full period of its perfection,—is suffered to triumph for a few moments, and is plucked up by the roots in the very pride and gayest stage of its being;—or if it happens to escape the hands of violence, in a few days it necessarily sickens of itself and dies away. Man likewise, though his progress is slower, and his duration somewhat longer, yet the periods of his growth and declension are nearly the same, both in the nature and manner of them. If he escapes the dangers which threaten his tenderer years, he is soon got into the full maturity and strength of life; and if he is so fortunate as not to be hurried out of it then by accidents, by his own folly and intemperance—if he escapes these, he naturally decays of himself,—a period comes fast upon him, beyond which he was not made to last. Like flowers or fruits which may be plucked up by force before the time of their maturity, yet cannot be made to outgrow the period when they are to fade and drop of themselves; when that comes, the hand of nature then plucks them both off, and no art of the botanist can uphold the one, or skill of the physician

preserve the other, beyond the periods to which their original frames and constitutions were made to extend. As God has appointed and determined the several growths and decays of the vegetable race, so he seems as evidently to have prescribed the same laws to man, as well as all living creatures, in the first rudiments of which there are contained the specific powers of their growth, duration and extinction; and when the evolutions of those animal powers are exhausted and run down, the creature expires and dies of itself, as ripe fruit falls from the tree, or a flower preserved beyond its bloom, drops and perishes upon the stalk. *Lawrence Sterne*, 1713-1768.

**Verse 15.** The Psalmist saith of man, *as a flower of the field, so he flourisheth*. It is not a flower of the *garden*, but of the "*field*." This latter is more subject to decay than the former, because it lies more open to the nipping air and violent winds, and to the browsing mouth of the beast, and is more liable to be trampled upon: by all these ways it decayeth as well as by the scorching sun, and its own fading temper. *John Edwards*, in "*Theologia Reformata*."

**Verse 15.** *As flower of the field.*

What is life! like a flower, with the bane in its bosom,  
 Today full of promise—tomorrow it dies!—  
 And health—like the dew-drop that hangs in its blossom,  
 Survives but a night, and exhales to the skies!  
 How oft beneath the bud that is brightest and fairest,  
 The seeds of the canker in embryo lurk!  
 How oft at the root of the flower that is rarest—  
 Secure in its ambush the worm is at work?  
 —*James Beattie*, 1735-1803.

**Verse 16.** *The wind passeth over it, and it is gone*, etc. A breath of air, a gentle wind (xwr) passes over him and he is gone. It would not be so strange if a tempest, a whirlwind, passing over should sweep him away. The Psalmist means much more than this. The gentlest touch, the whispering breeze, bears him off. He soon becomes a stranger, no more known in the little space he once filled, going out and coming in. *Henry Cowles*.

**Verse 16.** *The wind passeth over it, and it is gone*. It is well known that a hot wind in the east destroys at once every green thing. Nor is this to be wondered at, if, as Dr. Russell says, the winds sometimes "bring with them a degree and kind of heat, which one would imagine came out of an oven, and which, when it blows hard, will affect metals within the houses, such as

locks of room doors, nearly as much as if they had been exposed to the rays of the sun." The blasting effect which seems to be here alluded to, of certain pestilential winds upon the animal frame, is by no means exaggerated by the comparison to the sudden fading of a flower. Maillet describes hundreds of persons in a caravan as stifled on the spot by the fire and dust, of which the deadly wind, that sometimes prevails in the eastern deserts, seems to be composed. And Sir John Chardin describes this wind "as making a great hissing noise, "and says that "it appears red and fiery, and kills those whom it strikes by a kind of stifling them, especially when it happens in the day time." *Richard Mant.*

**Verse 16.** *The place thereof shall know him no more, &c.* Man, once turned to dust, is blown about by every wind, from place to place; and what knows the place, when dust falls upon it; whether it be the dust of a prince, or of a peasant; whether of a man, or of a beast? And must not man then needs be very miserable, when time and place, the two best helps of life, do both forsake him? for what help can he have of time, when his days are but as grass? What help of place, when his place denies him, and will not know him? *Sir R. Baker.*

**Verse 17.** *But the mercy of the Lord is from everlasting to everlasting.* No human benevolence is perpetually the same; but by expelfence we see that those who are kind today, may be changed into tyrants tomorrow. Examples of this we have in the life of Nero, and many other rulers. Therefore lest we should suspect the goodness of God to bear any similar character, it is said with inconceivable consolation, that it shall never cease, but is prepared for ever for all those who fear and serve God. *Musculus.*

**Verse 17.** *From everlasting to everlasting.* From everlasting, by predestination; to everlasting, by glorification: the one without beginning, the other without end. *Bernard.*

**Verse 18.** *To do them.* Commands are to be remembered in order to practice; a vain speculation is not the intent of the publication of them. *Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 19.** *The Lord hath prepared his Throne.* The word signifies *established* as well as prepared, and might be so rendered. Due preparation is the natural way to the establishment of a thing; hasty resolves break and moulder. This notes,

1. The peculiarity of his authority. He prepares it, and none else for him. It is a dominion that originally resides in his nature, not derived from any by birth or commission; he alone prepared it. He is the sole cause of his own kingdom; his authority therefore is unbounded, as infinite as his nature. None can set laws to him, because none but himself prepared his throne for him. As he will not impair his own happiness, so he will not abridge himself of his own authority.

2. Readiness to exercise it upon due occasions. He hath prepared his throne, he is not at a loss, he needs not stay for a commission or instructions from any how to act. He hath all things ready for the assistance of his people, he hath rewards and punishments; his treasures trod axes, the great mark of authority lying by him, the one for the good, the other for the wicked. His mercy he keeps by him for thousands, Ex 34:7; his arrows he hath prepared by him for rebels, Ps 7:13.

3. Wise management of it. It is prepared: preparations imply prudence; the government of God is not a rash and heady authority. A prince upon his throne, a judge upon the bench, manages things with the greatest discretion, or should be supposed so to do.

4. Successfulness and duration of it. He hath prepared or established it. It is fixed, not tottering; it is an unmovable dominion; all the strugglings of men and devils cannot overturn it, nor so much as shake it. It is established above the reach of obstinate rebels; he cannot be deposed from it, he cannot be mated in it. His dominion, as himself abides for ever. And as his counsel, so his authority, shall stand; and "he will do all his pleasure, " Isa 46:10.

*Stephen Charnock.*

**Verse 19.** *His throne in the heavens*, denotes:

1. The glory of his dominion. The heavens are the most stately and comely pieces of the creation; his majesty is there most visible, his glory most splendid, Ps 19:1. In heaven his dominion is more acknowledged by the angels: his dominion is not disputed there by the angels that attend him, as it is on earth by the rebels that arm themselves against him.

2. The supremacy of his empire. The heavens are the loftiest part of the creation, and the only fit palace for him.

3. Peculiarity of this dominion. He rules in the heavens alone. His authority is not delegated to any creature, he rules the blessed spirits by himself; but

he rules men that are on his footstool by others of the same kind, men of their own nature.

4. The vastness of his empire. The earth is but a spot to the heavens. What is England in a map to the whole earth, but a spot you may cover with your finger; much less must the whole earth be to the extended heavens. You cannot conceive the many millions of little particles that are in the earth; and if all put together be but one point: to that place where the throne of God is seated, how vast must his empire be! He rules there over the angels, which excel in strength, those hosts of his which do his pleasure, in comparison of whom all the men in the world, and the power of the greatest potentates, is no more than the strength of an ant or fly. And since his throne is in the heavens, it will follow that all things under the heaven are part of his dominion; the inferior things of earth cannot but be subject to him; and it necessarily includes his influence on all things below, because the heavens are the cause of all the motion in the world. See Ho 2:21-22.

5. The easiness of managing this government. His throne being placed on high, he cannot but behold all things that are done below; the height of a place gives advantage to a clear eye to behold things below it. *"The LORD looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand,"* Ps 14:2. He looks not down from heaven as if his presence were confined there, but he looks down majestically, and by way of authority.

6. Duration of it. The heavens are incorruptible, his throne is placed there in an incorruptible state. The throne of God outlives the dissolution of the world. *Condensed from Charnock.*

**Verse 19.** *His kingdom ruleth over all.* His Lordship is universal.

First, over all *time*: other lords die, but he is eternal. Eternity is properly the duration of an uncreated Ens. It is improperly taken, either for things that have both beginning and end, as everlasting mountains; divers such phrases in Scripture; or for things that have a beginning but shall have no end; so are angels and men's souls eternal; so, eternal life, eternal fire. But God calls himself, "I AM," Ex 3:14: I am what I have been, I have been what I am, what I am and have been I shall be. This attribute is incommunicable: all other things had a *non esse* preceding their *esse*; and they have a mutation tending to nothing. "They that war against thee shall be as nothing," Isa 41:12: all come to nothing unless they be upheld by the manutency of God: but "Thou art the same, and thy years shall have no end," Ps 102:27. Thou

turnest man to destruction, and again sayest, Return: "even from everlasting to everlasting thou art God, "Ps 90:2; the sole umpire and measurer of beginning and ending.

Secondly, over all *places*, heaven, earth, hell, Ps 135:6. Kings are limited, and cannot do many things they desire: they cannot command the sun to stand still, nor the wind to blow which way they would: in the lofty air, in the depths of the sea no king reigns. They fondly flatter the pope with his long arms that they reach to purgatory; (but indeed both power and place are alike imaginary;) it is Christ alone that hath the keys of all places.

Thirdly, over all *creatures*; binding the influences of Pleiades, and loosing the bands of Orion, Job 38:31; commanding the fire against the nature of it, to descend, 2Ki 1:12; creating and ruling the stars, Am 5:8; overruling the lions, Da 6:22, sending the meteors, Ps 148:8, hedging in the sea, lapping it up like a child in swaddling-clothes, Job 38:8, dividing, diverting, filling it. In both fire and water, those two raging elements that have no mercy, he shows mercy; delivers us from both in both. He calls the fowls, and they come; the beasts, and they hear: the trees, and they spring to obey him. He hath a raven for Elijah, a gourd for Jonah, a dog for Lazarus. Makes the leviathan, the hugest living creature, preserve his prophet. That a terrible lion should be killed, as was by Samson; or not kill, as they forbore Daniel; or kill and not eat, as that prophet, 1Ki 13:1-29: here was the Lord. Over metals; he makes iron to swim, stones to cleave asunder. Over the devils; they must obey him though unwillingly. But they continually rebel against him, and break his will? They do indeed against his complacency, not against his permission. There is then no time, not the hour of death; no place, not the sorest torment; no creature, not the devil; but the Lord can deliver us from them. Therefore at all times, in all places, and against all creatures, let us trust in him for deliverance. *Thomas Adams.*

**Verse 19.** *His kingdom ruleth over all.* When Melancthon was extremely solicitous about the affairs of the church in his days, Luther would have him admonished in these terms, *Monendus est Philippus ut desinat esse rector mundi*: Let not Philip make himself any longer governor of the world. *David Clarkson.*

**Verse 20.** *Bless the Lord, ye his angels,* etc. The weight of offering praise unto God is too heavy for men to lift; and as for angels, it will take up all their strength and their best abilities to go about it. *David Dickson.*

**Verse 20.** *Angels, that excel it, strength, that do his commandments.* The chief excellence of the angels, the main cause of their strength and power, and of their immense superiority to mankind, is that which is set forth in the following words of the text. After the Psalmist has described the angels as excelling in strength, he adds that they *do God's commandments, hearkening to the voice of his word*. For this is the only living source of lasting strength and power. They who do the will of God faithfully and obediently, have God for them; and then what can be against them? Then work itself strengthens them, and is like a tide bearing them onward; because it is *his* work. They on the other hand who run counter to the will of God, have God against them; and then what can be for them? Can a man push back the sea? can he lay hold on the sun, and drag him out of his course? Then may he hope to be strong, when he is fighting against the will of God. . . . Hence we see the falsehood of that maxim, so common on the lips of those who plume themselves upon their mastery in the wisdom of this world—that Might is Right,—a maxim which exactly inverts the truth, and whereby the Prince of darkness is ever setting himself up against the Lord of heaven. The true principle, which is inverted and perverted in this falsehood,—the principle which ought to be written up in the councilchambers of princes and on the walls of senate-houses,—the principle which explains the secret of the strength of the angels, and indeed of all true strength, that is in accordance with the will of God,—may be stated in the selfsame words, if we only invert their order, Right is Might. *Julius Charles Hare*, 1849.

**Verse 20.** *His angels that do his commandments*, etc. They hearken to the voice of his word, they look upon God as the great General, and if he give out the word, they give out their strength, and go about the work willingly. They are very attentive to his commands; if he says, Go smite Herod for his pride, Balaam for his covetousness, David for his vainglory, Sennacherib for his blasphemy, and Sodom for its uncleanness, presently they go. *William Greenhill*.

**Verse 20.** *Commandments.* *Davar* (rkd), to speak, is rendered, "*command*" twenty times... direct personal communion between the Lord and his messengers seems to be implied. *R. B. Girdlestone*.

**Verse 20.** *Hearkenling into the voice of his word.* Not only, mightily executing the word when heard; but, ever intently listening, *ready to catch the intimation of his will*. *William Kay*.

**Verse 20.** *Hearkening unto the voice of his word.* Angels are vigilant creatures, and wait for opportunities, and when they come they will not lose

them. They neither slumber nor sleep, but hearken constantly what the Lord will say, what opportunity there will be for action; so, in Eze 1:11, they are described with their wings stretched upward, manifesting their watchfulness and readiness for service. When Christ was born, a multitude of them appeared and celebrated his nativity, Lu 2:13: when Christ was taken by Judas and his train, Peter drew his sword in his Master's defence; but what saith Christ? "Put up thy sword, it is not a time now to fight, but to suffer: thinkest thou that I cannot now pray to my Father, and he shall presently give me more than twelve legions of angels? It is not a time now to pray for help, I must die, and the Scripture must be fulfilled; but if I would, my Father would bid the angels to aid me, and they presently would come, whole legions of them, yea, all the angels in heaven." Let us learn of angels to watch for opportunities, and take them. There are nicks of time wherein to do the work of Christ. *William Greenhill.*

**Verse 21.** *Bless ye the LORD, all ye his hosts... that do his pleasure.* The sun, moon, stars, and planets do "*his pleasure*" (Ps 19:1) unconsciously; the "angels" consciously and with instinctive love, "hearken unto the voice of his word" (Ps 103:20). Both together constitute the Lord's hosts. *A. R. Fausset.*

**Verse 22.** *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* That is to say, "Let thy vocation be that of the seraphim, O my soul, and enter on the life of heaven!" Why should I praise him? Can my praise be of any advantage to him? No; nor that of all the heavenly hosts. It is infinite condescension in him to bearken unto the praises of his most exalted creatures. Let me bless the Lord, because no function will be more rich in blessings to my soul than this. The admiring contemplation of his excellence is in reality the appropriation thereof: the heart cannot delight in God, without becoming like God. Let me do it, because it is the peculiar privilege of man on this earth to bless the Lord. When he would find any to join him in this, he has to ascend the skies. Let me do it, because the earth is fully furnished with the materials of praise. The sands, the seas, the flowers, the insects; animals, birds, fields, mountains, rivers, trees, clouds, sun, moon, stars,—all wait for me to translate their attributes and distinctions into praise. But, above all, the new creation. Let me do it, because of him, through him, and to him, are all the things that pertain to my existence, health, comfort, knowledge, dignity, safety, progress, power, and usefulness. A thousand of his ministers in earth, sea, and sky, are concerned in the production and preparation of every mouthful that I eat. The breath that I am commanded and enabled to modulate in praise, neither comes nor goes without a most surprising



exhibition of the condescension, kindness, wisdom, power, and presence of him whom I am to praise. Is it not dastardly to be receiving benefits, without even mentioning the name, or describing the goodness of the giver? Let candidates for heaven bless the Lord. There is no place there for such as have not learned this art. How shall I praise him? Not with fine words. No poetic talent is here necessary: Any language that expresses heart-felt admiration will be accepted. Praise him so far as you know him; and he will make known to you more of his glory. *George Bowen, 1873.*

**Verse 22.** The last specification is completely comprehensive; *all his works in all places of his wide dominions*—all that he has made, whether intelligent or not intelligent; *"in all places"*—above, beneath, around: in heaven, earth, or hell: let them all fall into this universal chorus of praise and blessing, extolling Jehovah, the One supremely great, supremely good! Nor will he exempt himself; for his personal responsibilities as to his own heart, are his highest. Therefore he closes as he began, *"Bless the LORD, O my soul."* *Henry Cowles.*

**Verse 22.** *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* Inasmuch as the poet thus comes back to his own soul, his Psalm also turns back into itself and assumes the form of a converging circle. *Franz Delitzsch.*

**Verse 22.** *Bless the LORD, all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the LORD, O my soul.* We are very much struck by this sudden transition from "all God's works, in all places of his dominion," to himself, a solitary individual. Of course he had already included himself; himself had been summoned when he summoned all God's works in all places of his dominion; but it seems as if a sudden fear had seized the Psalmist, the fear of by any possibility omitting himself; or, if not a fear, yet a consciousness that his very activity in summoning others to praise, might make him forgetful that he was bound to praise God himself, or sluggish in the duty, or ready to take for granted that he could not himself be neglecting what he was so strenuous in pressing on all orders of being. We have a great subject of discourse here. Solomon has said, "They made me keeper of the vineyards, but mine own vineyard have I not kept." Alas! how possible, how easy, to take pains for others, and to be neglectful of one's self: nay, to make the pains we take for others the reason by which we persuade ourselves that we cannot be neglecting ourselves. How important, then, that, if with the Psalmist we call on all God's works in all places of his dominions to bless the Lord; how important, I say, that we add, like persons bent on self-examination, and fearful of self-deceit, *"Bless the LORD, O my soul."* *Henry Melvill.*

**Verses 1-2, 22.** *Bless the Lord, O my soul... Bless the Lord, O my soul, with the Bless the Lord all his works in all places of his dominion: bless the Lord, O my soul, Ps 103:22; these two form the thrice-repeated blessing from the Lord to the soul in the Mosaic formula, Nu 6:24-26. A. R. Fausset.*

---

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** "The Saints blessing the Lord." See "Spurgeon's Sermons, " No. 1,078.

**Verse 1.**

1. We should bless the Most High himself. It is possible to fail to bless *him*, while we praise his gifts, his word, his works, his ways.
2. We should bless him individually: "*My soul*." Not merely the family through the father, nor the people through the pastor; nor the congregation through the choir; but personally.
3. We should bless him spiritually: "*soul*." Not only with organ, voice, offering, works, &c.
4. We should bless him unreservedly: "*All that is within me*."
5. We should bless him resolutely. David preached self-communion, self-encouragement, and self-command. *W. Jackson*.

**Verse 1.** Here is,

1. Self-converse: "*Oh my soul*." Many talk freely enough to others, but never talk to themselves. They are strangers to themselves—not on speaking terms with themselves—take no interest in their own souls—are dull and melancholy when alone.
2. Self-exhortation: "*Bless the Lord, O my soul*." Thy Creator, thy Benefactor, thy Redeemer.
3. Self-encouragement: "*All that is within me*"—every faculty of my mental, moral and spiritual being: with ten strings—every chord in motion. No need for one faculty of the soul to say to another, "*know the Lord, for all shall know him from the least even unto the greatest*." *G. R.*

**Verse 1** (*First clause*, and Ps 103:22, *last clause*). Personal worship the Alpha and Omega of religion. *C. Davis*.

**Verse 2.** Inquire into the causes of our frequent forgetfulness of the Lord's mercies, show the evil of it, and advise remedies.

**Verse 3.**

1. Forgiveness is *in* God: "There is forgiveness with thee." It is his nature to forgive as well as to punish sin.
2. It is *from* God. None can forgive sin but God. None can reveal forgiveness but God.
3. It is like God, full, free, and everlasting—"all thine iniquities." *G. R.*

**Verse 3.** *Who healeth all thy diseases.*

1. Why is sin called a disease? (a) As it destroys the moral beauty of the creature. (b) As it excites pain. (c) As it disables from duty. (d) As it leads to death.
2. The variety of sinful diseases to which we are subject. Mr 7:21-23; Gal 5:19, &c.
3. The remedy by which God heals these diseases. (a) His pardoning mercy through the redemption of Christ. (b) The sanctifying influences of grace. (c) The means of grace. (d) The resurrection of the body. *From "The Study," 1873.*

**Verse 3** (*last clause*).—Our diseases by nature, our great Physician, the perfect soundness which he works in us, results of that soundness.

**Verses 3-5.** Mercy's Hexapla.

1. Three curses removed. (a) Guilt put away. (b) Corruption cured. (c) Destruction averted.
2. Three blessings, bestowed. (a) Favours that can gratify. (b) Pleasures that can satisfy. (c) Life that can never die.

Or

1. Pardon. (Ps 103:3)
2. Purification. (Ps 103:4)
3. Redemption.
4. Coronation. (Ps 103:5)
5. Plenty bestowed.
6. Power renewed. *W. Durban.*

**Verse 4.** (*first clause*). The Redemption of David's life from destruction.

1. His shepherd life.
2. His military life.
3. His persecuted life.
4. His regal life.
5. His spiritual life. *W. J.*

**Verse 4.** What is redeemed, and from what? Who are redeemed, and by whom?

**Verse 5.**

1. A singular condition—satisfaction.
2. A singular provision—good things.
3. A singular result—youth renewed.

**Verse 5.**—"Rejuvenescence." See Macmillan's "Ministry of Nature, " pp. 321-347.

**Verse 7.**

1. God would have men know him.
2. He is his own revealer.
3. There are degrees in the revelation.
4. We may pray for increased knowledge of him.

**Verse 8.**

1. Mercy specified: "Merciful and gracious."
2. Mercy qualified: "Slow to anger." Mercy itself may be angered, and then how terrible is the anger.

3. Mercy amplified: "Plenteous in mercy." "He will abundantly pardon; "and he only knows what abundant pardon means. *G. R.*

**Verse 9.**

1. What God will do to his people. He will sometimes chide—contend with them. (a) Providentially, by outward trials. (b) Experimentally, by inward conflicts.

2. What he will not do to them. (a) Not chide continually in this life. (b) Not chide in the least hereafter. (c) "The days of their mourning shall be ended." *G. R.*

**Verses 11-13.** The height, length and depth of divine love.

**Verse 12.** "Plenary Absolution." See "Spurgeon's Sermons, " No. 1,108.

**Verse 12.**

1. The union implied. Between man and his transgressions.

- (a) Legally.
- (b) Actually.
- (c) Experimentally.
- (d) Eternally, in themselves considered.

2. The separation effected.

(a) By whom? "He hath, "etc.

(b) How? By his own Son coming between the sinner and his sins.

3. The Re-union prevented. "As far, "etc. When east and west meet, then, and not till then, will the reunion take place. As the two extremities of a straight line can never meet, and cannot be lengthened without receding further from each other, so it will ever be with a pardoned sinner and his sins. *G. R.*

**Verses 13-14.** "The Tender Pity of the Lord." See "Spurgeon's Sermons, "No. 941.

**Verses 13-14.**

1. Whom God pities; "them that fear him."
2. How he pities "as a father pitieth his children."
3. Why he pities; "for he knoweth our frame." He hath reason to know our frame, for he framed us, and having himself made man of the dust, "he remembers that we are dust." *Matthew Henry*.

**Verse 14.**

1. Man's Constitution.
2. God's Consideration. *W. D.*

**Verse 15.** Man's earthly career. His rise, progress, glory, fall, and oblivion.

**Verses 15-18.**

1. What man is when left to himself. "As for man, "etc. (a) What here? His days are as grass, his glory as the flower of grass. (b) What hereafter? swept away by a blighting wind, by a blast of divine anger—known no more on the earth, known only in perdition.
2. What the mercy of God does for him. (a) Makes a covenant of grace on his behalf for everlasting. (b) Makes a covenant of peace with him in this life. (c) Makes a covenant of promise to him for an eternity to come.
3. Who are the objects of this mercy? (a) Those who fear God. (b) Who walk in the footsteps of pious ancestors. (c) Who rely upon covenant mercy. (d) Who are faithful to their covenant engagements. *G. R.*

**Verse 18.** The covenant, in what respects we can keep it, in what frame of mind it must be kept, and what is the practical proof of so doing.

**Verse 19.** "A Discourse upon God's Dominion." See Charnock's Works *Nicol's Edition, Vol. II., pp. 400-499.*

**Verse 19.**

1. The nature of the throne.
2. The extent of the dominion.
3. The character of the monarch.
4. The consequent joy of the subjects: "Bless the Lord."

**Verse 20.** The angels' service instructive to us.

1. Their personal strength is excellent. As servants of God we also should see to our own spiritual health and rigour.
2. They are practical in their obedience, not theorists.
3. They are attentive while at work, ready to learn more, and holding fellowship with God, who speaks personally to them.
4. They do all in the spirit of joyful praise, blessing the Lord.

**Verses 20-21.**

1. The centre of praise: "Bless the Lord." All praise centres in him.
2. The concert of praise. (a) Angels. (b) The hosts of the redeemed. (c) Ministers in particular. (d) The surrounding creation.
3. The climax of praise: "Bless the Lord, O my soul." This has the highest claim upon me for gratitude and praise. Vast as the chorus may be, it will not be perfect without my note of praise. This is the culminating note: "Bless the Lord, O my soul." *G.R.*

**Verse 21.** Who are God's ministers? What is their business? To do his pleasure. What is their delight? To bless the Lord.

**Verses 21-22.** Henry Melvill has a notable sermon upon "The Peril of the Spiritual Guide." The drift of it may be gathered from the extract which we have placed as a note upon the passage.

**Verse 22.**

1. The Chorus.
2. The Echo. *W.D.*

---

## WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED AND THIRD PSALM

*Meditations and Disquisitions, upon Seven Consolatorie Psalmes of David . . .* by Sir RICHARD BAKER, Knight, 1640. *pg 143-172.*

*Gratitude: an Exposition of the Hundred and Third Psalm.* By the Rev. JOHN STEVENSON, Vicar of Patixbourne-with-Bridge, Canterbury. 1856.

# Psalm 104

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

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

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

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

## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** *Bless the LORD, O my soul.* This psalm begins and ends like the Hundred and Third, and it could not do better: when the model is perfect it deserves to exist in duplicate. True praise begins at home. It is idle to stir up others to praise if we are ungratefully silent ourselves. We should call upon our inmost hearts to awake and bestir themselves, for we are apt to be sluggish, and if we are so when called upon to bless God, we shall have great



cause to be ashamed. When we magnify the Lord, let us do it heartily: our best is far beneath his worthiness, let us not dishonour him by rendering to him half hearted worship. O LORD my God, thou art very great. This ascription has in it a remarkable blending of the boldness of faith, and the awe of holy fear: for the psalmist calls the infinite Jehovah "my God," and at the same time, prostrate in amazement at the divine greatness, he cries out in utter astonishment, "*Thou art very great.*" God was great on Sinai, yet the opening words of his law were, "I am the Lord thy God;" his greatness is no reason why faith should not put in her claim, and call him all her own. The declaration of Jehovah's greatness here given would have been very much in place at the end of the psalm, for it is a natural inference and deduction from a survey of the universe: its position at the very commencement of the poem is an indication that the whole psalm was well considered and digested in the mind before it was actually put into words; only on this supposition can we account for the emotion preceding the contemplation. Observe also, that the wonder expressed does not refer to the creation and its greatness, but to Jehovah himself. It is not "the universe is very great!" but "*THOU art very great.*" Many stay at the creature, and so become idolatrous in spirit; to pass onward to the Creator himself is true wisdom.

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

**Verse 2.** *Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment:* wrapping the light about him as a monarch puts on his robe. The conception is sublime: but it makes us feel how altogether inconceivable the personal glory of the Lord must be; if light itself is but his garment and veil, what must be the

blazing splendour of his own essential being! We are lost in astonishment, and dare not pry into the mystery lest we be blinded by its insufferable glory. Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain—within which he might dwell. Light was created on the first day and the firmament upon the second, so that they fitly follow each other in this verse. Oriental princes put on their glorious apparel and then sit in state within curtains, and the Lord is spoken of under that image: but how far above all comprehension the figure must be lifted, since the robe is essential light, to which suns and moons owe their brightness, and the curtain is the azure sky studded with stars for gems. This is a substantial argument for the truth with which the psalmist commenced his song, "O Lord my God, thou art very great."

**Verse 3.** *Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the water's.* His lofty halls are framed with the waters which are above the firmament. The upper rooms of God's great house, the secret stories far above our ken, the palatial chambers wherein he resides, are based upon the floods which form the upper ocean. To the unsubstantial he lends stability; he needs no joists and rafters, for his palace is sustained by his own power. We are not to interpret literally where the language is poetical, it would be simple absurdity to do so. Who maketh the clouds his chariot. When he comes forth from his secret pavilion it is thus he makes his royal progress. "It is chariot of wrath deep thunder clouds form, "and his chariot of mercy drops plenty as it traverses the celestial road. Who walketh *or rather goes* upon the wings of the wind. With the clouds for a car, and the winds for winged steeds, the Great King hastens on his movements whether for mercy or for judgment. Thus we have the idea of a king still further elaborated—his lofty palace, his chariot, and his coursers are before us; but what a palace must we imagine, whose beams are of crystal, and whose base is consolidated vapour! What a stately car is that which is fashioned out of the flying clouds, whose gorgeous colours Solomon in all his glory could not rival; and what a Godlike progress is that in which spirit wings and breath of winds bear up the moving throne. "O Lord, my God, thou art very great!"

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

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

**Verse 5.** *Who laid the foundations of the earth.* Thus the commencement of creation is described, in almost the very words employed by the Lord himself in Job 38:4. "Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth? Whereupon are the foundations thereof fastened, and who laid the corner stone thereof?" And the words are found in the same connection too, for the Lord proceeds to say, "When the morning stars sang together and all the sons of God shouted for joy." That it should not be removed forever. The language is, of course, poetical, but the fact is none the less wonderful: the earth is so placed in space that it remains as stable as if it were a fixture. The several motions of our planet are carried on so noiselessly and evenly that, as far as we are concerned, all things are as permanent and peaceful as if the old notion of its resting upon pillars were literally true. With what delicacy has the great Artificer poised our globe! What power must there be in that hand which has caused so vast a body to know its orbit, and to move so smoothly in it! What engineer can save every part of his machinery from an occasional jar, jerk, or friction? yet to our great world in its complicated motions no such thing has ever occurred. "O Lord, my God, thou art very great."

**Verse 6.** *Thou coveredst it with the deep as with a garment.* The new born earth was wrapped in aqueous swaddling bands. In the first ages, ere man appeared, the proud waters ruled the whole earth. The waters stood above the mountains, no dry land was visible, vapour as from a steaming cauldron covered all. Geologists inform us of this as a discovery, but the Holy Spirit had revealed the fact long before. The passage before us shows us the Creator commencing his work, and laying the foundation for future order and beauty: to think of this reverently will fill us with adoration; to conceive of it grossly and carnally would be highly blasphemous.

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

**Verse 8.** The vanquished waters are henceforth obedient. *They go up by the mountains*, climbing in the form of clouds even to the summits of the Alps. They go down by the valleys unto the place which thou hast founded *for them*: they are as willing to descend in rain, and brooks, and torrents as they were eager to ascend in mists. The loyalty of the mighty waters to the laws of their God is most notable; the fierce flood, the boisterous rapid; the tremendous torrent, are only forms of that gentle dew which trembles on the tiny blade of grass, and in those ruder shapes they are equally obedient to the laws which their Maker has impressed upon them. Not so much as a solitary particle of spray ever breaks rank, or violates the command of the Lord of sea and land, neither do the awful cataracts and terrific floods revolt from his sway. It is very beautiful among the mountains to see the divine system of water supply—the rising of the fleecy vapours, the distillation of the pure fluid, the glee with which the newborn element leaps down the crags to reach the rivers, and the strong eagerness with which the rivers seek the ocean, their appointed place.

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

the ocean, and though our sins might well arouse it, yet are its bands made strong by covenant mercy, so that it cannot break loose again upon the guilty sons of men.

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

**Verse 11.** *They give drink to every beast of the field.* Who else would water them if the Lord did not? They are *his* cattle, and therefore he leads them forth to watering. Not one of them is forgotten of him. The wild asses quench their thirst. The good Lord gives them enough and to spare. They know their Master's crib. Though bit or bridle of man they will not brook, and man denounces them as unteachable, they learn of the Lord, and know better far than man where flows the cooling crystal of which they must drink or die. They are only asses, and wild, yet our heavenly Father careth for them. Will he not also care for us? We see here, also, that nothing is made in vain; though no human lip is moistened by the brooklet in the lone valley, yet are there other creatures which need refreshment, and these slake their thirst at the stream. Is this nothing? Must everything exist for man, or else be wasted? What but our pride and selfishness could have suggested such a notion? It is not true that flowers which blush unseen by human eye are wasting their sweetness, for the bee finds them out, and other winged wanderers live on their luscious juices. Man is but one creature of the many whom the heavenly Father feedeth and watereth.

**Verse 12.** *By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation, which sing among the branches.* How refreshing are these words! What happy memories they arouse of splashing waterfalls and entangled boughs, where the merry din of the falling and rushing water forms a sort of solid background of music, and the sweet tuneful notes of the birds are the brighter and more flashing lights in the harmony. Pretty birdies, sing on! What better can ye do, and who can do it better? When we too drink of the river of God, and eat of the fruit of the tree of life, it well becomes us to "sing among the branches." Where ye dwell ye sing; and shall not we rejoice

in the Lord, who has been our dwelling place in all generations. As ye fly from bough to bough, ye warble forth your notes, and so will we as we flit through time into eternity. It is not meet that birds of Paradise should be outdone by birds of earth.

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

**Verse 14.** *He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle, and herb for the service of man.* Grass grows as well as herbs, for cattle must be fed as well as men. God appoints to the lowliest creature its portion and takes care that it has it: Divine power is as truly and as worthily put forth in the feeding of beasts as in the nurturing of man; watch but a blade of grass with a devout eye and you may see God at work within it. The herb is for man, and he must till the soil, or it will not be produced, yet it is God that causeth it to grow in the garden, even the same God who made the grass to grow in the unenclosed pastures of the wilderness. Man forgets this and talks of his produce, but in very truth without God he would plough and sow in vain. The Lord causeth each green blade to spring and each ear to ripen; do but watch with opened eye and you shall see the Lord walking through the cornfields. That he may bring forth food out of the earth. Both grass for cattle and corn for man are food brought forth out of the earth and they are signs that it was God's design that the very dust beneath our feet, which seems better adapted to bury us than to sustain us, should actually be transformed into the staff of life. The more we think of this the more wonderful it will appear. How great is that God who from among the sepulchres finds the support of life, and out of the ground which was cursed brings forth the blessings of corn and wine and oil.

**Verse 15.** *And wine that maketh glad the heart of man.* By the aid of genial showers the earth produces not merely necessities but luxuries, that which

furnishes a feast as well as that which makes a meal. O that man were wise enough to know how to use this gladdening product of the vine; but, alas, he full often turns it to ill account, and debases himself therewith. Of this he must himself bear the blame; he deserves to be miserable who turns even blessings into curses. And oil to make his face to shine. The easterns use oil more than we do, and probably are wiser in this respect than we are: they delight in anointing with perfumed oils, and regard the shining of the face as a choice emblem of joy. God is to be praised for all the products of the soil, not one of which could come to us were it not that he causeth it to grow. And bread which strengtheneth man's heart. Men have more courage after they are fed: many a depressed spirit has been comforted by a good substantial meal. We ought to bless God for strength of heart as well as force of limb, since if we possess them they are both the bounties of his kindness.

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

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

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

**Verse 17.** *Where the birds make their nests: as for the stork, the fir trees are her house.* So far from being in need, these trees of God afford shelter to others, birds small and great make their nests in the branches. Thus what

they receive from the great Lord they endeavour to return to his weaker creatures. How one thing fits into another in this fair creation, each link drawing on its fellow: the rains water the fir trees, and the fir trees become the happy home of birds; thus do the thunder clouds build the sparrow's house, and the descending rain sustains the basis of the stork's nest. Observe, also, how everything has its use—the boughs furnish a home for the birds; and every living thing has its accommodation—the stork finds a house in the pines. Her nest is called a house, because this bird exhibits domestic virtues and maternal love which make her young to be comparable to a family. No doubt this ancient writer had seen storks' nests in fir trees; they appear usually to build on houses and ruins, but there is also evidence that where there are forests they are content with pine trees. Has the reader ever walked through a forest of great trees and felt the awe which strikes the heart in nature's sublime cathedral? Then he will remember to have felt that each bird was holy, since it dwelt amid such sacred solitude. Those who cannot see or hear of God except in Gothic edifices, amid the swell of organs, and the voices of a surpliced choir, will not be able to enter into the feeling which makes the simple, unsophisticated soul hear "the voice of the Lord God walking among the trees."

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

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

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

**Verse 19.** The appointed rule of the great lights is now the theme for praise. The moon is mentioned first, because in the Jewish day the night leads the way. He appointed the moon for seasons. By the waxing and waning of the moon the year is divided into months, and weeks, and by this means the



exact dates of the holy days were arranged. Thus the lamp of night is made to be of service to man, and in fixing the period of religious assemblies (as it did among the Jews) it enters into connection with his noblest being. Never let us regard the moon's motions as the inevitable result of inanimate impersonal law, but as the appointment of our God. The sun knoweth his going down. In finely poetic imagery the sun is represented as knowing when to retire from sight, and sink below the horizon. He never loiters on his way, or pauses as if undecided when to descend; his appointed hour for going down, although it is constantly varying, he always keeps to a second. We need to be aroused in the morning, but he arises punctually, and though some require to watch the clock to know the hour of rest, he, without a timepiece to consult, hides himself in the western sky the instant the set time has come. For all this man should praise the Lord of the sun and moon, who has made these great lights to be our chronometers, and thus keeps our world in order, and suffers no confusion to distract us.

**Verse 20.** *Thou, makest darkness, and it is night.* Drawing down the blinds for us, he prepares our bedchamber that we may sleep. Were there no darkness we should sigh for it, since we should find repose so much more difficult, if the weary day were never calmed into night. Let us see God's hand in the veiling of the sun, and never fear either natural or providential darkness, since both are of the Lord's own making. Wherein all the beasts of the forest do creep forth. Then is the lion's day, his time to hunt his food. Why should not the wild beast have his hour as well as man? He has a service to perform, should he not also have his food? Darkness is fitter for beasts than man; and those men are most brutish who love darkness rather than light. When the darkness of ignorance broods over a nation, then all sorts of superstitions, cruelties, and vices abound; the gospel, like the sunrising, soon clears the world of the open ravages of these monsters, and they seek more congenial abodes. We see here the value of true light, for we may depend upon it where there is night there will also be wild beasts to kill and to devour.

**Verse 21.** *The young lions roar after their prey, and seek their meat from God.* This is the poetic interpretation of a roar. To whom do the lions roar? Certainly not to their prey, for the terrible sound tends to alarm their victims, and drive them away. They after their own fashion express their desires for food, and the expression of desire is a kind of prayer. Out of this fact comes the devout thought of the wild beast's appealing to its Maker for food. But neither with lions nor men will the seeking of prayer suffice, there must be practical seeking too, and the lions are well aware of it. What they have in

their own language asked for they go forth to seek; being in this thing far wiser than many men who offer formal prayers not half so earnest as those of the young lions, and then neglect the means in the use of which the object of their petitions might be gained. The lions roar and seek; too many are liars before God, and roar but never seek. How comforting is the thought that the Spirit translates the voice of a lion, and finds it to be a seeking of meat from God! May we not hope that our poor broken cries and groans, which in our sorrow we have called "the voice of our roaring" Ps 12:10, will be understood by him, and interpreted in our favour. Evidently he considers the meaning rather than the music of the utterance and puts the best construction upon it.

**Verse 22.** *The sun ariseth.* Every evening has its morning to make the day. Were it not that we have seen the sun rise so often we should think it the greatest of miracles, and the most amazing of blessings. They gather themselves together, and lay them down in their dens. Thus they are out of man's way, and he seldom encounters them unless he desires to do so. The forest's warriors retire to their quarters when the morning's drum is heard, finding in the recesses of their dens a darkness suitable for their slumbers; there they lay them down and digest their food, for God has allotted even to them their portion of rest and enjoyment. There was one who in this respect was poorer than lions and foxes, for he had not where to lay his head: all were provided for except their incarnate Provider. Blessed Lord, thou hast stooped beneath the conditions of the brutes to lift up worse than brutish men!

It is very striking how the Lord controls the fiercest of animals far more readily than the shepherd manages his sheep. At nightfall they separate and go forth each one upon the merciful errand of ending the miseries of the sickly and decrepit among grass eating animals. The younger of these animals being swift of foot easily escape them and are benefited by the exercise, and for the most part only those are overtaken and killed to whom life would have been protracted agony. So far lions are messengers of mercy, and are as much sent of God as the sporting dog is sent by man on his errands. But these mighty hunters must not always be abroad, they must be sent back to their lairs when man comes upon the scene. Who shall gather these ferocious creatures and shut them in? Who shall chain them down and make them harmless? The sun suffices to do it. He is the true lion tamer. They gather themselves together as though they were so many sheep, and in their own retreats they keep themselves prisoners till returning darkness gives them another leave to range. By simply majestic means the divine

purposes are accomplished. In like manner even the devils are subject unto our Lord Jesus, and by the simple spread of the light of the gospel these roaring demons are chased out of the world. No need for miracles or displays of physical power, the Sun of Righteousness arises, and the devil and the false gods, and superstitions and errors of men, all seek their hiding places in the dark places of the earth among the moles and the bats.

**Verse 23.** *Man goeth forth.* It is his turn now, and the sunrise has made things ready for him. His warm couch he forsakes and the comforts of home, to find his daily food; this work is good for him, both keeping him out of mischief, and exercising his faculties. Unto his work and to his labour until the evening. He goes not forth to sport but to work, not to loiter but to labour; at least, this is the lot of the best part of mankind. We are made for work and ought to work, and should never grumble that so it is appointed. The hours of labour, however, ought not to be too long. If labour lasts out the average daylight it is certainly all that any man ought to expect of another, and yet there are poor creatures so badly paid that in twelve hours they cannot earn bread enough to keep them from hunger. Shame on those who dare so impose upon helpless women and children. Night work should also be avoided as much as possible. There are twelve hours in which a man ought to work: the night is meant for rest and sleep.

Night, then as well as day has its voice of praise. It is more soft and hushed, but it is none the less true. The moon lights up a solemn silence of worship among the fir trees, through which the night wind softly breathes its "songs without words." Every now and then a sound is heard, which, however simple by day, sounds among the shadows startling and weird like, as if the presence of the unknown had filled the heart with trembling, and made the influence of the Infinite to be realized. Imagination awakens herself; unbelief finds the silence and the solemnity uncongenial, faith looks up to the skies above her and sees heavenly things all the more clearly in the absence of the sunlight, and adoration bows itself before the Great Invisible! There are spirits that keep the night watches, and the spell of their presence has been felt by many a wanderer in the solitudes of nature: God also himself is abroad all night long, and the glory which concealeth is often felt to be even greater than that which reveals. Bless the Lord, O my soul.

**Verse 24.** *O Lord, how manifold are thy works.* They are not only many for number but manifold for variety. Mineral, vegetable, animal—what: a range of works is suggested by these three names! No two even of the same class are exactly alike, and the classes are more numerous than science can number. Works in the heavens above and in the earth beneath, and in the

waters under the earth, works which abide the ages, works which come to perfection and pass away in a year, works which with all their beauty do not outlive a day, works within works, and works within these—who can number one of a thousand? God is the great worker, and ordainer of variety. It is ours to study his works, for they are great, and sought out of all them that have pleasure therein. The kingdom of grace contains as manifold and as great works as that of nature, but the chosen of the Lord alone discern them. In wisdom hast thou made them all, or *wrought* them all. They are all his works, wrought by his own power, and they all display his wisdom. It was wise to make their—none could be spared; every link is essential to the chain of nature—wild beasts as much as men, poisons as truly as odoriferous herbs. They are wisely made—each one fits its place, fills it, and is happy in so doing. As a whole, the "all" of creation is a wise achievement, and however it may be chequered with mysteries, and clouded with terrors, it all works together for good, and as one complete harmonious piece of workmanship it answers the great Worker's end. The earth is full of thy riches. It is not a poor house, but a palace; not a hungry ruin, but a well filled store house. The Creator has not set his creatures down in a dwelling place where the table is bare, and the buttery empty, he has filled the earth with food; and not with bare necessities only, but with riches—dainties, luxuries, beauties, treasures. In the bowels of the earth are hidden mines of wealth, and on her surface are teeming harvests of plenty. All these riches are the Lord's; we ought to call them not "the wealth of nations," but "thy riches" O Lord! Not in one clime alone are these riches of God to be found, but in all lands—even the Arctic ocean has its precious things which men endure much hardness to win, and the burning sun of the equator ripens a produce which flavours the food of all mankind. If his house below is so full of riches what must his house above be, where

"The very streets are paved with gold  
Exceeding clear and fine"?

**Verse 25.** *So is this great and wide sea.* He gives an instance of the immense number and variety of Jehovah's works by pointing to the sea. "Look," saith he, "at yonder ocean, stretching itself on both hands and embracing so many lands, it too swarms with animal life, and in its deeps lie treasures beyond all counting. The heathen made the sea a different province from the land, and gave the command thereof to Neptune, but we know of a surety that Jehovah rules the waves." Wherein, are things creeping innumerable, both small and great *beasts*; read moving things and animals small and great, and you have the true sense. The number of minute forms of animal life is indeed beyond

all reckoning: when a single phosphorescent wave may bear millions of infusoria, and around a fragment of rock armies of microscopic beings may gather, we renounce all idea of applying arithmetic to such a case. The sea in many regions appears to be all alive, as if every drop were a world. Nor are these tiny creatures the only tenants of the sea, for it contains gigantic mammals which exceed in bulk those which range the land, and a vast host of huge fishes which wander among the waves, and hide in the caverns of the sea as the tiger lurks in the jungle, or the lion roams the plain. Truly, O Lord, thou makest the sea to be as rich in the works of thy hands as the land itself.

**Verse 26.** *There go the ships.* So that ocean is not altogether deserted of mankind. It is the highway of nations, and unites, rather than divides, distant lands. There is that leviathan, whom thou hast made to play therein. Them huge whale turns the sea into his recreation ground, and disports himself as God designed that he should do. The thought of this amazing creature caused the psalmist to adore the mighty Creator who created him, formed him for his place and made him happy in it. Our ancient maps generally depict a ship and whale upon the sea, and so show that it is most natural, as well as poetical, to connect them both with the mention of the ocean.

**Verse 27.** *These wait all upon thee.* They come around thee as fowls around the farmer's door at the time for feeding, and look up with expectation. Men or marmots, eagles or emmets, whales or minnows, they alike rely upon thy care. That thou mayest give them meat in due season; that is to say, when they need it and when it is ready for them. God has a time for all things, and does not feed his creatures by fits and starts; he gives them daily bread, and a quantity proportioned to their needs. This is all that any of us should expect; if even the brute creatures are content with a sufficiency we ought not to be more greedy than they.

**Verse 28.** *That thou givest them they gather.* God gives it, but they must gather it, and they are glad that he does so, for otherwise their gathering would be in vain. We often forget that animals and birds in their free life have to work to obtain food even as we do; and yet it is true with them as with us that our heavenly Father feeds all. When we see the chickens picking up the corn which the housewife scatters from her lap we have an apt illustration of the manner in which the Lord supplies the needs of all living things—he gives and they gather. Thou openest thine hand, they are filled with good. Here is divine liberality with its open hand filling needy creatures till they want no more: and here is divine omnipotence feeding a world by simply opening its hand. What should we do if that hand were closed? There

would be no need to strike a blow, the mere closing of it would produce death by famine. Let us praise the open handed Lord, whose providence and grace satisfy our mouths with good things.

**Verse 29.** *Thou hidest thy face, they are troubled.* So dependent are all living things upon God's smile, that a frown fills them with terror, as though convulsed with anguish. This is so in the natural world, and certainly not less so in the spiritual: saints when the Lord hides his face are in terrible perplexity. Thou takest away their breath, they die, and return to their *dust*. The breath appears to be a trifling matter, and the air an impalpable substance of but small importance, yet, once withdrawn, the body loses all vitality, and crumbles back to the earth from which it was originally taken. All animals come under this law, and even the dwellers in the sea are not exempt from it. Thus dependent is all nature upon the will of the Eternal. Note here that death is caused by the act of God, "*thou takest away their breath*"; we are immortal till he bids us die, and so are even the little sparrows, who fall not to the ground without our Father.

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

**Verse 31.** *The glory of the LORD shall endure forever.* His works may pass away, but not his glory. Were it only for what he has already done, the Lord deserves to be praised without ceasing. His personal being and character ensure that he would be glorious even were all the creatures dead. The LORD shall rejoice in his works. He did so at the first, when he rested on the seventh day, and saw that everything was very good; he does so still in a measure where beauty and purity in nature still survive the Fall, and he will do so yet more fully when the earth is renovated, and the trail of the serpent is cleansed from the globe. This verse is written in the most glowing manner. The poet finds his heart gladdened by beholding the works of the Lord, and

he feels that the Creator himself must have felt unspeakable delight in exercising so much wisdom, goodness, and power.

**Verse 32.** *He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth.* The Lord who has graciously displayed his power in acts and works of goodness might, if he had seen fit, have overwhelmed us with the terrors of destruction, for even at a glance of his eye the solid earth rocks with fear. He toucheth the hills, and they smoke. Sinai was altogether on a smoke when the Lord descended upon it. It was but a touch, but it sufficed to make the mountain dissolve in flame. Even our God is a consuming fire. Woe unto those who shall provoke him to frown upon them, they shall perish at the touch of his hand. If sinners were not altogether insensible a glance of the Lord's eye would make them tremble, and the touches of his hand in affliction would set their hearts on fire with repentance. "Of reason all things show some sign, " except man's unfeeling heart.

**Verse 33.** *I will sing unto the LORD as long as I live, or, literally, in my lives.* Here and hereafter the psalmist would continue to praise the Lord, for the theme is an endless one, and remains for ever fresh and new. The birds sang God's praises before men were created, but redeemed men will sing his glories when the birds are no more. Jehovah, who ever lives and makes us to live shall be for ever exalted, and extolled in the songs of redeemed men. I will sing praise to my God while I have my being. A resolve both happy for himself and glorifying to the Lord. Note the sweet title—my God. We never sing so well as when we know that we have an interest in the good things of which we sing, and a relationship to the God whom we praise.

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

**Verse 35.** *Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more.* They are the only blot upon creation.

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

In holy indignation the psalmist would fain rid the world of beings so base as not to love their gracious Creator, so blind as to rebel against their Benefactor. He does but ask for that which just men look forward to as the end of history: for the day is eminently to be desired when in all God's kingdom there shall not remain a single traitor or rebel. The Christian way of putting it will be to ask that grace may turn sinners into saints, and win the wicked to the ways of truth. Bless thou the LORD, O my soul. Here is the end of the matter—whatever sinners may do, do thou, my soul, stand to thy colours, and be true to thy calling. Their silence must not silence thee, but rather provoke thee to redoubled praise to make up for their failures. Nor canst thou alone accomplish the work; others must come to thy help. O ye saints, Praise ye the LORD. Let your hearts cry HALLELUJAH,—for that is the word in the Hebrew. Heavenly word! Let it close the Psalm: for what more remains to be said or written? HALLELUJAH. *Praise ye the Lord.*

---

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

**Whole Psalm.** This psalm is an inspired "Oratorio of Creation."—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

**Whole Psalm.** The Psalm is delightful, sweet, and instructive as teaching us the soundest views of nature (*la mas sans fisica*), and the best method of pursuing the study of it, viz., by admiring with one eye the works of God, and with the other God himself, their Creator and Preserver. *Sanchez*, quoted by Perowne.

**Whole Psalm.** It might almost be said that this one psalm represents the image of the whole Cosmos. We are astonished to find in a lyrical poem of such a limited compass, the whole universe—the heavens and the earth—sketched with a few bold touches. The calm and toilsome labour of man, from the rising of the sun to the setting of the same, when his daily work is done, is here contrasted with the moving life of the elements of nature. This contrast and generalisation in the conception of the mutual action of natural phenomena, and this retrospection of an omnipresent invisible power, which



can renew the earth or crumble it to dust, constitute a solemn rather than a glowing and gentle form of poetic creation. *A. Vonl Humboldt's Cosmos.*

**Whole Psalm.** Its touches are indeed few, rapid—but how comprehensive and sublime! Is it God?—"He is clothed with light as with a garment, "and when he walks abroad, it is on the "wings of the wind." The winds or lightnings?—They are his messengers or angels: "Stop us not, "they seem to say; "the King's business requireth haste." The waters?—The poet shows them in flood, covering the face of the earth, and then as they now lie, enclosed within their embankments, to break forth no more for ever. The springs? He traces them, by one inspired glance, as they run among the hills, as they give drink to the wild and lonely creatures of the wilderness, as they nourish the boughs, on which sing the birds, the grass, on which feed the cattle, the herb, the corn, the olive tree, the vine, which fill man's mouth, cheer his heart, and make his face to shine. Then he skims with bold wing all lofty objects—the trees of the Lord on Lebanon, "full of sap, "—the fir trees, and the storks which are upon them—the high hills, with their wild goats—and the rocks with their conies. Then he soars up to the heavenly bodies—the sun and the moon. Then he spreads abroad his wings in the darkness of the night, which "hideth not from Him, "and hears the beasts of the forest creeping abroad to seek their prey, and the roar of the lions to God for meat, coming up upon the wings of midnight. Then as he sees the shades and the wild beasts fleeing together, in emulous haste, from the presence of the morning sun, and man, strong and calm in its light as in the smile of God, hieing to his labour, he exclaims, "O Lord, how manifold are thy works! in wisdom hast thou made them all!" He casts, next, one look at the ocean—a look glancing at the ships which go there, at the leviathan which plays there; and then piercing down to the innumerable creatures, small and great, which are found below its unlifted veil of waters. He sees, then, all the beings, peopling alike earth and sea, waiting for life and food around the table of their Divine Master—nor waiting in vain—till, lo! he hides his face, and they are troubled, die, and disappear in chaos and night. A gleam, next, of the great resurrection of nature and of man comes across his eye. "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, they are created, and thou renewest the face of the earth." But a greater truth still succeeds, and forms the climax of the psalm—(a truth Humboldt, with all his admiration of it, notices not, and which gives a Christian tone to the whole)—"*The Lord shall rejoice in his works.*" He contemplates a yet more perfect Cosmos. He is "to consume Sinners" and sin "out of" this fair universe: and then, when man is wholly worthy of his dwelling, shall God say of both it and him, with a yet deeper emphasis than when he said it at first, and smiling at the same time a yet warmer and softer

smile, "It is very good." And with an ascription of blessing to the Lord does the poet close this almost angelic descant upon the works of nature, the glory of God, and the prospects of man. It is not merely the unity of the Cosmos that he had displayed in it, but its progression, as connected with the parallel progress of man—its thorough dependence on one Infinite Mind—the "increasing purpose" which runs along it—and its final purification, when it shall blossom into "the bright consummate flower" of the new heavens and the new earth, "wherein dwelleth righteousness; "—this is the real burden and the peculiar glory of the 104th Psalm. *George Gilfillan*, in *"The Bards of the Bible"*.

**Whole Psalm.** It is a singular circumstance in the composition of this psalm, that each of the parts of the First Semichorus, after the first, begins with a participle. And these participles are accusatives, agreeing with hwhy, the object of the verb ygdb, at the beginning of the whole psalm. Bless the Jehovah—putting on—extending—laying—constituting—travelling—making—setting—sending—watering—making—making. Thus, this transitive verb, in the opening of the psalm, extending its government through the successive parts of the same semichorus, except the last, unites them all in one long period. *Samuel Horsley*.

**Whole Psalm.** As to the details,—the sections intervening between verses 2 and 31,—they may be read as a meditation upon creation and the first "ordering of the world, "as itself the counterpart and foreshadowing of the new and restored order in the great Sabbath or Millenary period, or, it may be, they are actually descriptive of this—beginning with the coming of the Lord in the clouds of heaven (verse 3 with Ps 18:9-11), attended with "the angels of his power" (verse 4 with 2Th 1:7 Gr.): followed by the "establishing" of the earth, no more to be "moved" or "agitated" by the convulsions and disturbances which sin has caused: after which Nature is exhibited in the perfection of her beauty—all things answering the end of their creation: all the orders of the animal world in harmony with each other, and all at peace with man; all provided for by the varied produce of the earth, no longer cursed, but blessed, and again made fruitful by God, "on whom all wait...who openeth his hand and fills them with good"; and all his goodness meeting with its due acknowledgment from his creatures, who join in chorus to praise him, and say—"O Lord, how manifold are thy works! In wisdom hast thou made them all: the earth is full of thy riches. Hallelujah."—*William De Burgh*.

**Verse 1.** "Bless the Lord, O my soul." A good man's work lieth most within doors, he is more taken up with his own soul, than with all the world besides;

neither can he ever be alone so long as he hath God and his own heart to converse with. *John Trapp*.

**Verse 1.** With what reverence and holy awe doth the psalmist begin his meditation with that acknowledgment! "*O Lord, my God, thou art very great*"; "and it is the joy of the saints that he who is their God is a great God: the grandeur of the prince is the pride and pleasure of all his good subjects. *Matthew Henry*.

**Verse 1.** *Thou art clothed with honour and majesty.* That is, as Jerome says, Thou art arrayed and adorned with magnificence and splendour; Thou art acknowledged to be glorious and illustrious by thy works, as a man by his garment. Whence it is clear that the greatness celebrated here is not the intrinsic but the exterior or revealed greatness of God. *Lorinus*.

**Verse 1.** Each created, redeemed, regenerated soul is bound to praise the Lord, the Creator, Redeemer, Sanctifier; for that God the Son, who in the beginning made the worlds, and whose grace is ever carrying on his work to its perfect end by the operation of the Holy Ghost, has been revealed before us in his exceeding glory. He, as the eternal High priest, hath put on the Urim and Thummim of majesty and honour, and hath clothed himself with light, as a priest clothes himself with his holy vestments: his brightness on the mount of transfiguration was but a passing glimpse of what he is now, ever hath been, and ever shall be. He is the true Light, therefore his angels are the angels of light, his children the children of light, this doctrine the doctrine of light. The universe is his tabernacle; the heavens visible and invisible are the curtains which shroud his holy place. He hath laid the beams and foundations of his holy of holies very high, even above the waters which are above the firmament. The clouds and the winds of the lower heaven are his chariot, upon which he stood when he ascended from Olivet, upon which he will sit when he cometh again. "*Plain Commentary*".

**Verse 2.** *Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment.* In comparing *the light* with which he represents God as *arrayed to a garment*, he intimates, that although God is invisible, yet his glory is conspicuous enough. In respect of his essence, God undoubtedly dwells in light that is inaccessible; but as he irradiates the whole world by his splendour, this is the garment in which he, who is hidden in himself, appears in a manner visible to us. The knowledge of this truth is of the greatest importance. If men attempt to reach the infinite height to which God is exalted, although they fly above the clouds, they must fail in the midst of their course. Those who seek to see him in his naked majesty are certainly very foolish. That we may enjoy the sight

of him, he must come forth to view with his clothing; that is to say, we must cast our eyes upon the very beautiful fabric of the world in which he wishes to be seen by us, and not be too curious and rash in searching into his secret essence. Now, since God presents himself to us clothed with light, those who are seeking pretexts for their living without the knowledge of him, cannot allege in excuse of their slothfulness, that he is hidden in profound darkness. When it is said that the heavens are a curtain, it is not meant that under them God hides himself, but that by them his majesty and glory are displayed, being, as it were, his royal pavilion. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 2.** *With light.* The first creation of God in the works of the days was the light of sense; the last was the light of reason; and his Sabbath work ever since is the illumination of the spirit. *Francis Bacon.*

**Verse 2.** *Who stretchest out the heavens like a curtain.* It is usual in the East, in the summer season, and upon all occasions when a large company is to be received, to have the court of the house sheltered from the heat of the weather by all umbrella or veil, which being expanded upon ropes from one side of the parapet wall to another may be folded or unfolded at pleasure. The Psalmist seems to allude to some covering of this kind in that beautiful expression of stretching out the heavens like a curtain. *Kitto's Pictorial Bible.*

**Verse 2.** *Like a curtain.* With the same case, by his mere word, with which a man spreads out a tent curtain, Ps 104:2 Isa 40:22 is parallel, "that stretcheth out the heavens as a curtain, and spreadeth them out as a tent to dwell in." Ver. 3 continues the description of the work of the second day. There lie at bottom, in the first clause, the words of Ge 1:7 "God made the vaulted sky and divided between the waters which are under the vault and the waters which are above the vault." The waters above are the materials with which, or out of which, the structure is reared. To construct out of the movable waters a firm palace, the cloudy heaven, "firm as a molten glass" (Job 37:18), is a magnificent work of divine omnipotence. *E.V. Hengstenberg.*

**Verse 2.** *Like a curtain.* Because the Hebrews conceived of heaven as a temple and palace of God, that sacred azure was at once the floor of his, the roof of our, abode. Yet I think the dwellers in tents ever loved best the figure of the heavenly tent. They represent God as daily spreading it out, and fastening it at the extremity of the horizon to the pillars of heaven, the mountains: it is to them a tent of safety, of rest, of a fatherly hospitality in which God lives with his creatures. *Herder*, quoted by Perowne.

**Verse 3.** The metaphorical representation of God, as laying the beams of his chambers in the waters, seems somewhat difficult to understand; but it was the design of the prophet, from a thing incomprehensible to us, to ravish us with the greater admiration. Unless beams be substantial and strong, they will not be able to sustain even the weight of an ordinary house. When, therefore, God makes the waters the foundation of his heavenly palace, who can fail to be astonished at a miracle so wonderful? When we take into account our slowness of apprehension, such hyperbolical expressions are by no means superfluous; for it is with difficulty that they awaken and enable us to attain even a slight knowledge of God. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 3.** *Who layeth the beams of his chambers in the waters;* or, "who layeth his upper chambers above the waters." His upper chamber (people in the East used to retire to the upper chamber when they wished for solitude) is reared up in bright ether on the slender foundation of rainy clouds. *A.F. Tholuck.*

**Verse 3.** *Who layeth the beams,* etc. "He floodeth his chambers with waters, "i.e., the clouds make the flooring of his heavens. *Zachary Mudge.*

**Verse 3.** *Who walketh upon the wings of the wind;* see Ps 18:10; which is expressive of his swiftness in coming to help assist his people in time of need; who helps, and that right early; and may very well be applied both to the first and second coming of Christ, who came leaping Upon the mountains, and skipping upon the hills, when he first came; and, when he comes a second time will be as a roe or a young hart upon the mountains of spices, So 2:8 8:14 The Targum is, "upon the swift clouds, like the wings of an eagle"; hence, perhaps, it is the heathens have a notion that Jupiter is being carried in a chariot through the air when it thunders and lightens. *John Gill.*

**Verse 3.** *Who walketh upon the wings of the wind.* In these words there is an unequalled elegance; not, he *fleeth*—he *runneth*, but—he *walketh*; and that *on the very wings of the wind*; on the most impetuous element raised into the utmost rage, and sweeping along with incredible rapidity. We cannot have a more sublime idea of the deity; serenely walking on an element of inconceivable swiftness, and, as it seems to us, uncontrollable impetuosity!—*James Hervey, 1713-14—1758.*

**Verse 4.** *Who maketh his angels spirits.* Some render it, *Who maketh his angels as the winds*, to which they may be compared for their invisibility, they being not to be seen, no more than the wind, unless when they assume

an external form; and for their penetration through bodies in a very surprising manner; see Ac 7:6-10; and for their great force and power, being mighty angels, and said to excel in strength, Ps 103:20; and for their swiftness in obeying the divine commands; so the Targum, "He maketh his messengers, or angels, swift as the wind."—*John Gill*.

**Verse 4.** *Who maketh his angels spirits.* The words, "*creating his angels spirits*," may either mean "creating them spiritual beings, not material beings," or "creating them winds"—i.e. like the winds, invisible, rapid in their movements, and capable of producing great effects. The last mode of interpretation seems pointed out by the parallelism—"and his ministers"—or, "servants"—who are plainly the same as his angels,—"*a flame of fire*," i.e., like the lightning. The statement here made about the angels seems to be this: "They are created beings, who in their qualities bear a resemblance to the winds and the lightning." The argument deduced by Paul, in Heb 2:7, from this statement for the inferiority of the angels is direct and powerful:—He is the Son; they are the creatures of God. "Only begotten" is the description of his mode of existence; made is the description of theirs. All their powers are communicated power; and however high they may stand in the scale of creation, it is in that scale they stand, which places them infinitely below him, who is so the Son of God as to be "God over all, blessed for ever."—*John Brown*, in "*An Exposition of the Epistle to the Hebrews*."

**Verse 4.** *A flaming fire.* Fire is expressive of irresistible power, immaculate holiness, and ardent emotion. It is remarkable that the seraphim, one class at least of these ministers, have their name from a root signifying to burn; and the altar, from which one of them took the live coal, Isa 6:6, is the symbol of the highest form of holy love. *James G. Murphy*, in "*A Commentary on the Book of Psalms*," 1875.

**Verse 5.** *Not be removed for ever.* The stability of the earth is of God, as much as the being and existence of it. There have been many earthquakes or movings of the earth in several parts of it, but the whole body of the earth was never removed so much as one hair's breadth out of its place, since the foundations thereof were laid. Archimedes, the great mathematician, said, "If you will give me a place to set my engine on, I will remove the earth." It was a great brag; but the Lord hath laid it too fast for man's removing. Himself can make it quake and shake, he can move it when he pleaseth; but he never hath nor will remove it. He hath laid the foundations of the earth that it shall not be removed, nor can it be at all moved, but at his pleasure; and when it

moves at any time, it is to mind the sons of men that they by their sins have moved him to displeasure. *Joseph Caryl*.

**Verse 5.** The philosophical mode of stating this truth may be seen in *Amédée Guillemin's* work entitled "THE HEAVENS." "How is it that though we are carried along with a vast rapidity by the motion of the earth, we do not ourselves perceive our movement? It is because the entire bulk of the earth, atmosphere, and clouds, participate in the movement. This constant velocity, with which all bodies situated on the surface of the earth are animated, would be the cause of the most terrible and general catastrophe that could be imagined, if, by any possibility, the rotation of the earth were abruptly to cease. Such an event would be the precursor of a most sweeping destruction of all organized beings. But the constancy of the laws of nature permits us to contemplate such a catastrophe without fear. It is demonstrated that the position of the poles of rotation on the surface of the earth is invariable. It has also been asked whether the velocity of the earth's rotation has changed, or, which comes to the same thing, if the length of the sidereal day and that of the solar day deduced from it have varied within the historical period? Laplace has replied to this question, and his demonstration shows that it has not varied the one hundredth of a second during the last two thousand years."

**Verse 5.**

God of the earth and sea, Thou hast laid earth's foundations:  
Because thy hand sustains,  
It ever firm remaineth.  
Once didst thou open its deep, hidden fountains,  
And soon the rising waters stood above the mountains.  
At thy rebuke they fled at the voice of thy thunder,  
The flood thy mandate heeded,  
And hastily receded:  
The waters keep the place Thou has assigned them,  
And in the hills and vales a channel Thou dost find them.  
A limit Thou hast set, which they may not pass over;  
The deep within bound inclosing,  
Strong barriers interposing,  
That its proud waves no more bring desolation,  
And sweep away from earth each human habitation.

—John Barton, in "The Book of Psalms in English Verse: a New *Testament Paraphrase*, "1871.

**Verse 6.** "Stood, ""fled, ""hasted away." The words of the psalm put the original wondrous process graphically before the eye. The change of tense, too, from past to present, in verses 6, 7, 8, is expressive, and paints the scene in its progress. In ver. 6 "*stood*" should be STAND: in ver. 7 "*fled*" should be FLEE: and "*hasted away*" should be HASTE AWAY, as in the P.B.V. "*The Speaker's Commentary.*"

**Verse 7.** *At thy rebuke they fled.* The famous description of Virgil comes to mind, who introduces Neptune as sternly rebuking the winds for daring without his consent to embroil earth and heaven, and raise such huge mountain-waves: then swifter than the word is spoken, he calms the swollen seas, scatters the gathered clouds, and brings back the sun. *Lorinus.*

**Verse 7.** *At the voice of thy that rider they hasted away,* ran off with great precipitance: just as a servant, when his master puts on a stern countenance, and speaks to him in a thundering, menacing manner, hastens away from him to do his will and work. This is an instance of the mighty power of Christ; and by the same power he removed the waters of the deluge, when they covered the earth, and the tops of the highest hills; and rebuked the Red Sea, and it became dry land; and drove back the waters of Jordan for the Israelites to pass through; and who also rebuked the Sea of Galilee when his disciples were in distress; and with equal ease can be and does he remove the depth of sin and darkness from his people at conversion; rebukes Satan, and delivers out of his temptations, when he comes in like a flood; and commands off the waters of affliction when they threaten to overwhelm; who are his servants, and come when he bids them come, and go when he bids them go. *John Gill.*

**Verse 7.** *At the voice of thy thunder.* It is very likely God employed the electric fluid as an agent in this separation. *Ingram Cobbin.*

**Verse 7.** *They hasted away.*

God said,  
Be gathered now, ye waters under heaven  
Into one place and let dry land appear.  
Immediately the mountains huge appear  
Emergent, and their broad bare backs upheave  
Into the clouds; their tops ascend the sky:  
So high as heaved the tumid hills, so low  
Down sunk a hollow bottom broad and deep,  
Capacious bed of waters: Thither they



Hasted with glad precipitance, uprolled  
 As drops on dust conglobing from the dry:  
 Part rise in crystal wall, or ridge direct,  
 For haste: such flight the great command impressed  
 On the swift floods: As armies at the call  
 Of trumpet (for of armies thou hast heard)  
 Troop to their standard; so the watery throng,  
 Wave rolling after wave, where way they found,  
 If steep, with torrent rapture, if through plain,  
 Soft ebbing; nor withstood them rock or hill;  
 But they, or under ground, or circuit wide  
 With serpent error wandering, found their way,  
 And on the washy ooze deep channels wore;  
 Easy, ere God had bid the ground be dry,  
 All but within those banks, where rivers now  
 Stream, and perpetual draw their tumid train,  
 The dry land, Earth; and the great receptacle  
 Of congregated waters, he called Seas:  
 And saw that it was good. *John Milton.*

**Verse 8.** *They go up by the mountains*, etc. The Targum is, "They ascend out of the deep to the mountains"; that is, the waters, when they went off the earth at the divine orders, steered their course up the mountains, and then went down by the valleys to the place appointed for them; they went over hills and dales, nothing could stop them or retard their course till they came to their proper place; which is another instance of the almighty power of the Son of God. *John Gill.*

**Verse 9.** *Thou hast set a bound*, etc. The Baltic Sea, in our own time, inundated large tracts of land, and did great damage to the Flemish people and other neighbouring nations. By an instance of this kind we are warned what would be the consequence, were the restraint imposed upon the sea, by the hand of God, removed. How is it that we have not thereby been swallowed up together, but because God has held in that outrageous element by his word? In short, although the natural tendency of the waters is to cover the earth, yet this will not happen, because God has established, by his word, a counteracting law, and as his truth is eternal, this law must remain steadfast. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 9.** *Thou hast set a bound*, etc. In these words the psalmist gives us three things clearly concerning the waters. First, that once (he means it not of the deluge, but of the chaos), the waters did cover the whole earth, till God

by a word of command sent them into their proper channels, that the dry land might appear. Secondly, that the waters have a natural propensity to return back and cover the earth again. Thirdly, that the only reason why they do not return back and cover the whole earth is, because God hath "*set a bound, that they cannot pass.*" They would be boundless and know no limits, did not God bound and limit them. Wisdom giveth us the like eulogium of the power of God in this, Pr 8:29 "He gave to the sea his decree, that the waters should not pass his commandment." What cannot he command, who sendeth his commandment to the sea and is obeyed? Some great princes, heated with rage and drunken with pride, have cast shackles into the sea, as threatening it with imprisonment and bondage if it would not be quiet; but the sea would not be bound by them; they have also awarded so many strokes to be given the sea as a punishment of its contumacy and rebellion against either their commands or their designs. How ridiculously ambitious have they been, who would needs pretend to such a dominion! Many princes have had great power at and upon the sea, but there was never any prince had any power over the sea; that's a flower belonging to no crown but the crown of heaven. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 9.** *Thou hast set a bound, etc.* A few feet of increase in the ocean wave that pursues its tidal circuit round the globe, would desolate cities and provinces innumerable... But with what immutable and safe control God has marked its limits! You shall observe a shrub or a flower on a bank of verdure that covers a sea cliff, or hangs down in some hollow; nay, you shall mark a pebble on the beach, you shall lay a shred of gossamer upon it; and this vast, ungovernable, unwieldy, tempestuous element shall know how to draw a line of moisture by its beating spray at the very edge, or on the very point of your demarcation, and then draw off its forces, not having passed one inch or hand's breadth across the appointed margin. And all this exact restraint and measurement in the motion of the sea, by that mysterious power shot beyond unfathomable depths of space, from orbs rolling in ether! a power itself how prodigious, how irresistible, yet how invisible, how gentle, how with minutest exactness measured and exerted. *George B. Cheever, in "Voices of Nature to her Foster Child, the soul of Man, "1852.*

**Verse 9.** *A bound that they may not pass over.* Now stretch your eye off shore, over waters made To cleanse the air, and bear the world's great trade, To rise and wet the mountains near the sun, Then back into themselves in rivers run, Fulfilling mighty uses, far and wide, Through earth, in air, or here, as ocean tide. Ho! how the giant heaves himself, and strains And flings to break his strong and viewless chains; Foams in his wrath; and at his prison

doors, Hark! hear him! how he beats, and tugs, and roars, As if he would break forth again, and sweep Each living thing within his lowest deep.—  
*Richard Henry Dana* (1787).

**Verse 10.** *He sendeth the springs into the valleys*, etc. Having spoken of the salt waters, he treats afterwards of the sweet and potable, commending the wisdom and providence of God, that from the lower places of the earth and the hidden veins of the mountains, he should cause the fountains of water to gush forth. *Lorinus*.

**Verse 10.** *He sendeth the springs into the valleys*. The more of humility the more of grace; if in valleys some hollows are deeper than others the waters collect in them. *Martin Luther*.

**Verse 10.** *He sendeth the springs into the valleys*. Men cut places for rivers to run in, but none but God can cut a channel to bring spiritual streams into the soul. The psalmist speaks of the sending forth of springs as one great act of the providence of God. It is a secret mystery which those that have searched deepest into nature cannot resolve us in, how those springs are fed, how they are maintained and nourished, so as to run without ceasing in such great streams as many of them make. Philosophy cannot show the reason of it. The Psalmist doth it well: *God sends them into the valleys*, his providence and power keeps them continually running: he that would have his soul watered must go to God in prayer. *Ralph Robinson*.

**Verse 10.** *Which run among the hills*. That is, the streams or springs run. In many a part of the world can be found a Sault, a *dancing water*, and a Minne-ha-ha, a *laughing water*. The mountain streams *walk*, and *run*, and *leap*, and praise the Lord. *William S. Plumer*.

**Verse 10.** "HE." "HE." "HE."

All things are here of *Him*; from the black pines,  
Which are his shade on high, and the loud roar  
Of torrents, where he listens, to the vines  
Which slope his green path downward to the shore,  
Where the bowed waters meet him, and adore,  
Kissing his feet with murmurs. *Byron*.

**Verse 11.** *The wild asses quench their thirst*. It is particularly remarked of the asses, that though they are dull and stupid creatures, yet by Providence they are taught the way to the waters, in the dry and sandy deserts, and that

there is no better guide for the thirsty travellers to follow, than to observe the herds of them descending to the streams. *Thomas Fenton.*

**Verse 11.** *The wild asses quench their thirst.* As evening approached we saw congregated, near a small stream, what appeared to be a large company of dismounted Arabs, their horses standing by them. As we were already near them, and could not have escaped the watchful eye of the Bedouins, we prepared for an encounter. We approached cautiously, and were surprised to see that the horses still remained without their riders; we drew still nearer, when they galloped off towards the desert. They were *wild asses*. *Henry Austin Layard.*

**Verse 12.** *By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation.* Never shall I forget my first ride from Riha to Ain Sultan; our way lay right across the oasis evoked by the waters. It may be that the contrast with the arid desert of the previous day heightened the feelings of present enjoyment, but certainly they echoed the words of Josephus,—a "Divine region". At one time I was reminded of Epping Forest, and then of a neglected orchard with an undergrowth of luxuriant vegetation. Large thorn bushes and forest shrubs dotted the plain on every side. In some places the ground was carpeted with flowers, and every bush seemed vocal with the cheerful twittering of birds. I use the word "twittering", because I do not think that I ever heard a decided warble during the whole time I was in Syria. Coleridge speaks of the "merry nightingale,"

"That crowds, and hurries, and precipitates  
With fast, quick warble, his delicious notes."

The song of my little Syrian friends seemed to consist of a series of, cheerful chirps. Other travellers have been more fortunate. Bonar speaks of the note of the cuckoo; Dr. Robinson of the nightingale. Lord Lindsay tells us of the delight of an evening spent by the Jordan, "the river murmuring along, and the nightingale singing from the trees." Canon Tristram, describing the scenery near Tell-el-Kady, says that "the bulbul and nightingale vied in rival scrag in the branches above, audible over the noise of the torrent below." In the face of these statements it seems to me remarkable, considering the innumerable references to nature in the Bible, that the singing of birds is only mentioned three times. In the well known passage which so exquisitely depicts a Syrian spring, we read "the time of the singing of birds is come" (So 2:12). The Psalmist in speaking of the mighty power and wondrous Providence of God, mentions the springs in "the valleys, which run among the hills. They give drink to every beast of the field; the wild asses quench

their thirst. By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation which sing among the branches." Canon Tristram commenting on this passage, says, that it may refer especially to the "bulbul and the nightingale, both of which throng the trees that fringe the Jordan and abound in all the wooded valleys, filling the air in early spring with the rich cadence of their notes."—*James Wareing Bardsley*, in *"Illustrative Texts,"* 1876.

**Verse 12.** *By them shall the fowls of the heaven have their habitation*, etc. To such birds may saints be compared; being, like them, weak, defenceless, and timorous; liable to be taken in snares, and sometimes wonderfully delivered; as well as given to wanderings and straying; and to fowls of the heaven, being heaven born souls, and partakers of the heavenly calling. These have their habitation by the fountain of Jacob, by the river of divine love, beside the still waters of the sanctuary, where they sing the songs of Zion, the songs of electing, redeeming, and calling grace. *John Gill*.

**Verse 12.** *The fowls...which sing among the branches.* The music of birds was the first song of thanksgiving which was offered from the earth, before man was formed. *John Wesley*.

**Verse 12.** *The fowls of the heaven which sing among the branches.* How do the blackbird and thrasher *thrush*, with their melodious voices, bid welcome to the cheerful spring, and in their fixed months warble forth such ditties as no art or instrument can reach to? ... But the nightingale, another of my airy creatures, breathes such sweet loud music out of her little instrumental throat, that it makes mankind to think miracles are not ceased. He that at midnight, when the very labourer sleeps securely, should hear, as I have very often, the clear airs, the sweet descants, the natural rising and falling, the doubling and redoubling of her voice, might well be lifted above earth, and say, "Lord, what music hast thou provided for the saints in heaven, when you afford bad men such music on earth?"—*Izaak Walton*.

**Verse 12.**

While over their heads the hazels hing,  
The little birdies blithely sing,  
Or lightly flit on wanton wing  
In the birks of Aberfeldy.  
The braes ascend like lofty wa's,  
The foaming stream deep roaring fa's,  
Overhung with fragrant spreading shaws,  
The birks of Aberfeldy. *Robert Burns*, 1759-1796.

**Verse 13.** *The earth is satisfied with the fruit of thy works;* that is, with the rain, which is thy work, causing it to be showered down when you please upon the earth; or, with the rain, which proceeds from the clouds; or, with the fruits, which thou causeth the earth by this means to bring forth. *Arthur Jackson.*

**Verse 14.** *He causeth the grass to grow.* Surely it should humble men to know that all human power united cannot make anything, not even the grass to grow. *William S. Plumer.*

**Verse 14.** *For the cattle, etc.* To make us thankful, let us consider, 1. That God not only provides for us, but for our servants; the cattle that are of use to man, are particularly taken care of; grass is made to grow in great abundance for them, when "the young lions, "that are not for the service of man, often "lack, and suffer hunger." 2. That our food is nigh us, and ready to us: having our habitation on the earth, there we have our storehouse, and depend not on "the merchant ships that bring food from afar, "Pr 31:14. 3. That we have even from the products of the earth, not only for necessity, but for ornament and delight, so good a master do we serve. Doth nature call for something to support it, and repair its daily decays? Here is "*bread which strengtheneth man's heart*, "and is therefore called the staff of life; let none that have that complain of want. Doth nature go further, and covet something pleasant? Here is "*wine that maketh glad the heart*", refresheth the spirits, and exhilarates them, when it is soberly and moderately used; that we may not only go through our business, but go through it cheerfully; it is a pity that that should be abused to overcharge the heart, and disfit men for their duty, which was given to revive their heart, and quicken them in their duty. Is nature yet more humoursome, and doth it crave something for ornament too? Here is that also out of the earth: "*oil to make the face to shine*", that the countenance may not only be cheerful, but beautiful, and we may be the more acceptable to one another. *Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 14.** *For the service of man.* The common version of these words can only mean for his benefit or use, a sense not belonging to the Hebrew word, which, as well as its verbal root, is applied to man's servitude or bondage as a tiller of the ground (Ge 3:17-19), and has here the sense of husbandry or cultivation, as in Ex 1:14, Le 25:39, it has that of compulsory or servile labour, the infinitive in the last clause indicates the object for which labour is imposed on man. *J.A. Alexander.*

**Verse 14.** *That he may bring forth food out of the earth.* The Israelites at the feast of the Passover and before the breaking of bread, were accustomed to

say, "Praise be to the Lord our God, thou King of the world, who hath brought forth our bread from the earth": and at each returning harvest we ought to be filled with gratitude, as often as we again receive the valuable gift of bread. It is the most indispensable and necessary means of nourishment, of which we never tire, whilst other food, the sweeter it is, the more easily it surfeits: everybody, the child and the old man, the beggar and the king, like bread. We remember the unfortunate man, who was cast on the desert isle, famishing with hunger, and who cried at the sight of a handful of gold, "Ah, it is only gold!" He would willingly have exchanged for a handful of bread, this to him, useless material, which in the mind of most men is above all price. O let us never sin against God, by lightly esteeming bread! Let us gratefully accept the sheaves we gather, and thankfully visit the barns which preserve them; that we may break bread to the hungry, and give to the thirsty from the supplies God has given us. Let us never sit down to table without asking God to bless the gifts we receive from his gracious hand, and never eat bread without thinking of Christ our Lord, who calls himself the living bread, who came down from heaven to give life unto the world. And above all, may we never go to the table of the Lord without enjoying, through the symbols of bread and wine, his body and blood, whereby we receive strength to nourish our spiritual life! Yes, Lord, thou satisfiest both body and soul, with bread from earth and bread from heaven. Praise be to thy holy name, our hearts and mouths shall be full of thy praises for time and eternity!—*Frederick Arndt in "Lights of the Morning", 1861.*

**Verse 15.** When thou wert taken out of the womb, what a stately palace did he bring thee into, the world, which thou foundest prepared and ready furnished with all things for thy maintenance, as Canaan was to the children of Israel; a stately house thou buildest not, trees thou plantedst not, a rich canopy spangled, spread as a curtain over thy head; he sets up a taper for thee to work by, the sun, till thou art weary (Ps 104:23), and then it goes down without thy bidding, for it "*knows its going down*" (Ps 104:19); then he draws a curtain over half the world, that men may go to rest: "*Thou causest darkness, and it is night*" (Ps 104:20). As an house this world is, so curiously contrived that to every room of it, even to every poor village, springs do come as pipes to find thee water (Ps 104:11). The pavement of which house you tread on and it brings forth thy food (Ps 104:14), "*Bread for strength, wine to cheer thy heart, oil to make thy face to shine*" (Ps 104:15). Which three are there synecdochically put for all things needful to strength, ornament, and delight. *Thomas Goodwin.*

**Verse 15.** *Wine that maketh glad the heart of man.* The wine mentioned had the quality of fermented liquors; it gladdened the heart. Thus, if taken to excess, it would have led to intoxication. The Hebrew term is "yayin", answering to the Greek *oinos*, and including every form which the juice of the grape might be made to assume as a beverage. It was this of which Noah partook when he became drunken (Ge 9:21,24). Melchizedek brought it forth to Abraham (Ge 14:18). Lot's daughters gave it to their father and made him drunk (Ge 14:35). From this the Nazarite was to separate himself (Nu 6:3-20). This is the highly intoxicating drink so often mentioned by Isaiah (Isa 5:11-22 12:13 28:1-7); but just because of this, it might become to man one of those mercies in connection with the use of which he was to exercise constant self control. Taken to excess it was a curse; enjoyed as from God, it was something for which man was called to be thankful. *John Duns.*

**Verse 15.** *And oil to make his face to shine.* Observe, after the mention of wine, he speaks of oil or ointment, because at the banquets among the Jews and other Eastern people, as afterwards among the Greeks and Romans, there was a frequent use of ointments. The reasons why ointment was poured upon the head were: To avoid intoxication: To improve the health: To contribute to pleasure and delight. Homer often refers to this custom, and there is an allusion to it by Solomon, Ec 9:8, "*Let thy garments be always white; and let thy head lack no ointment*". See also Ps 23:5. *Le Blanc.*

**Verse 15.** The ancients made much use of oil to beautify their persons. We read of "*oil to make man's face to shine*". Ruth anointed herself for decoration (Ru 3:3), and the woman of Tekoah and the prophet Daniel omitted the use of oil for the contrary reason (2Sa 14:3 Da 10:3). The custom is also mentioned in Mt 6:17 Lu 7:46. *Ambrose Serle* in "*Horae Solitariae*," 1815.

**Verse 15.** *Bread which strengtheneth man's heart.* In hunger not only the *strength* is prostrated, but the *natural courage* is also abated. *Hunger* has no enterprise, emulation, nor courage. But when in such circumstances, a little bread is received into the stomach, even before concoction can have time to prepare it for nutriment, the *strength* is restored, and the *spirits* revived. This is a surprising effect, and it has not yet been satisfactorily accounted for. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 15.** *Bread which strengtheneth man's heart.* In Homer's *Odyssey* we meet with the expression "Bread, the marrow of men."



**Verse 15.** *Man's heart.* It is not without reason that instead of the word *Mdah*, of Adam, which was used in Ps 104:14, there is here employed the word *vwba*, an infirm and feeble man, because he mentions those nourishments of which there was no need before the fall, and which are specially suitable to nourish and exhilarate feeble man. *Venema*.

**Verse 15.** If the transitory earth is so full of the good things of God, what will we have when we come to the land of the living?—*Starke*, in *Lange's Commentary*.

**Verse 16.** *The trees of the Lord.* The transition which the prophet makes from men to trees is as if he had said, It is not to be wondered at, if God so bountifully nourishes men who are created after his own image, since he does not grudge to extend his care even to trees. By "*the trees of the Lord*", is meant those which are high and of surpassing beauty; for God's blessing is more conspicuous in them. It seems scarcely possible for any juice of the earth to reach so great a height, and yet they renew their foliage every year. *John Calving*.

**Verse 16.** *The trees of the Lord* may be so named from their size and stature—this name being used as a superlative in the Hebrew, or to denote aught which is great and extraordinary. *Thomas Chalmers*.

**Verse 16.** *The trees of the Lord*, etc. The cedars are indeed the trees of the Lord. They are especially his planting. There is a sense in which, above all other trees, they belong to him, and shadow forth in a higher degree his glory. The peculiar expression of the text, however, must not be limited to one particular species of cedar... Encouraged by this Scripture usage, I shall use the word in a somewhat wider sense than the conventional one, to denote three remarkable examples which may be selected from the *coniferae* to show the power and wisdom of God as displayed in the trees of the forest. These are, the cedar of Lebanon, the cedar of the Himalayas, and the cedar of the Sierra Nevada. The epithet which the psalmist applies to one, may most appropriately be applied to all of them; and there are various reasons why the Lord may be said to have a special interest and property in each of them, to a few of which our attention may now be profitably directed.

1. They are "trees of the Lord" on account of the *peculiarities of their structure*. In common with all the pine tribe, they are exceptional in their organization. They reveal a new idea of the creative mind.

2. The cedars are "the trees of the Lord" on account of the antiquity of their type it was of this class of trees that the pre Adamite forests were principally composed.

3. The cedars are the "trees of the Lord, "on account of the majesty of their appearance. It is the tree, par excellence, of the Bible—the type of all forest vegetation.

—Condensed from *Hugh Macmillan's "Bible Teachings in Nature,"* 1868.

**Verse 16.** *Full of sap.* The cedar has a store of resin. It flows from wounds made in the bark, and from the scales of the cones, and is abundant in the seeds. Both the resin and the wood were much valued by the ancients. The Romans believed that the gum which exuded from the cedar had the power of rendering whatever was steeped in it incorruptible; and we are told that the books of Numa, the early king of Rome, which were found uninjured in his tomb, five hundred years after his death, had been steeped in oil of cedar. The Egyptians also used the oil in embalming their dead. *Mary and Elizabeth Kirby*, in *"Chapters on Trees,"* 1873.

**Verse 17.** *Birds.* The word rendered "*birds*" here is the word which in Ps 84:3 is translated sparrow, and which is commonly used to denote small birds. Comp. Le 14:4 (margin), and Le 14:5-7 14:49-53. It is used, however, to denote birds of any kind. See Ge 7:14 Ps 8:8 6:1 148:10. *Albert Barnes*.

**Verse 17.** *The stork* is instanced as one of the largest of nest building birds, as the cedars of Lebanon were introduced in Ps 104:16 as being the largest of uncultivated trees. *A.C. Jennings* and *W.H. Zowe*, in *"The Psalms, with Introductions and Critical Notes,"* 1875.

**Verse 17.** *The stork, the fir trees are her hoarse.* In many cases the stork breeds among old ruins, and under such circumstances it is fond of building its nest on the tops of pillars or towers, the summits of arches, and similar localities. When it takes up its abode among mankind, it generally selects the breeding places which have been built for it by those who know its taste, but it frequently chooses the top of a chimney, or some such locality. When it is obliged to build in spots where it can find neither rocks nor buildings, it builds on trees, and, like the heron, is sociable in its nesting, a whole community residing in a clump of trees. It is not very particular about the kind of tree, provided that it be tolerably tall, and strong enough to bear the weight of its enormous nest; and the reader will at once see that the fir trees are peculiarly fitted to be the houses for the stork. The particular species of

fir tree to which the Psalmist alludes is probably the Aleppo pine (*Pinus halepensis*), which comes next to the great cedars of Lebanon in point of size. It was this tree that furnished the timber and planks for Solomon's temple and palace, a timber which was evidently held in the greatest estimation. This tree fulfils all the conditions which a stork would require in nest building. It is lofty, and its boughs are sufficiently horizontal to form a platform for the nest, and strong enough to sustain it. On account of its value and the reckless manner in which it has been cut down without new plantations being formed, the Aleppo pine has vanished from many parts of Palestine wherein it was formerly common, and would afford a dwelling place for the stork. There are, however, several other species of fir which are common in various parts of the country, each species flourishing in the soil best suited to it, so that the stork would never be at a loss to find a nesting place in a country which furnished so many trees suitable to its purposes. *J.G. Wood, in "Bible Animals."*

**Verse 17.** *The stork, the fir trees are her house.* Well wooded districts are for the most part the favourite resorts of the storks, as they constantly select trees both for breeding purposes and as resting places for the night; some few species, however, prove exceptions to this rule, and make their nests on roofs, chimneys, or other elevated situations in the immediate vicinity of men. From *"Cassell's Book of Birds."* From the Text of *Dr. Brehm.* By *T.R. Jones, F.R.S.*

**Verse 17.** *The fir trees.* The doors of the temple were made of the fir tree; even of that tree which was a type of the humanity of Jesus Christ. Consider Heb 2:14. The fir tree is also the house of the stork, that unclean bird, even as Christ is a harbour and shelter for sinners. *"As for the stork"*, saith the text, "the fir trees are her house; "and Christ saith to the sinners that see their want of shelter, "Come unto me, and I will give you rest." He is a refuge for the oppressed, a refuge in time of trouble. He is, as the doors of fir of the temple, the inlet of God's house, to God's presence, and to a partaking of his glory. Thus God did of old, by similitudes teach his people his way. *John Bunyan, in "Solomon's Temple Spiritualized."*

**Verse 17.**

The eagle and the stork  
On cliffs and cedar-tops their eyries build. *John Milton.*

**Verse 18.** *The high hills are a refuge for the wild goats.* There is scarcely any doubt that the Azel of the Old Testament is the *Arabian Ibex* or *Beden*

(*Capra Nubiana*). This animal is very closely allied to the well known Ibex of the Alps, or Steinbock, but may be distinguished from it by one or two slight differences, such as the black beard and the slighter make of the horns, which moreover have three angles instead of four, as is the case with the Alpine Ibex ...The colour of its coat resembles so nearly that of the rocks, that an inexperienced eye would see nothing but bare stones and sticks where a practised hunter would see numbers of *Beden*, conspicuous by their beautifully curved horns. The agility of the *Beden* is extraordinary. Living in the highest and most craggy parts of the mountain ridge, it flings itself from spot to spot with a recklessness that startles one who has not been accustomed to the animal, and the wonderful certainty of its foot. It will, for example, dash at the face of a perpendicular precipice that looks as smooth as a brick wall, for the purpose of reaching a tiny ledge which is hardly perceptible, and which is some fifteen feet or so above the spot whence the animal sprang. Its eye, however, has marked certain little cracks and projections on the face of the rock, and as the animal makes its leap, it takes these little points of vantage in rapid succession, just touching them as it passes upwards, and by the slight stroke of its foot keeping up the original impulse of its leap. Similarly the Ibex comes sliding and leaping down precipitous sides of the mountains, sometimes halting with all the four feet drawn together, on a little projection scarcely larger than a penny, and sometimes springing boldly over a wild crevasse, and alighting with exact precision upon a projecting piece of rock, that seems scarcely large enough to sustain a rat comfortably. *J.G. Wood.*

**Verse 18.** *Conies.* When we were exploring the rocks in the neighbourhood of the convent, I was delighted to point attention to a family or two of the *Wubar*, engaged in their gambols on the heights above us. Mr. Smith and I watched them narrowly, and were much amused with the liveliness of their motions, and the quickness of their retreat within the clefts of the rock when they apprehended danger. We were, we believe, the first European travellers who actually noticed this animal, now universally admitted to be the shaphan, or coney of Scripture, within the proper bounds of the Holy Land; and we were not a little gratified by its discovery... The preparer of the skin mistook it for a rabbit, though it is of a stronger build, and of a duskier colour, being of a dark brown. It is destitute of a tail, and has some bristles at its mouth, over its head, and down its back, along the course of which there are traces of light and dark shade. In its short ears, small, black, and naked feet, and pointed snout, it resembles the hedgehog. It does not, however, belong to the insectivora, but, though somewhat anomalous, it is allied to the

paehydermata, among which it is now classed by naturalists. *John Wilson*, in *"The Lands of the Bible,"* 1847.

**Verse 18.** *Conies.* People used to think the conies of Solomon the same as our rabbits, which are indeed "a feeble folk, "but which do not "make their houses in the rock." Now that the *coney* is ascertained to be the Damon or Hyrax,—a shy defenceless creature, which lurks among the cliffs of the mountains, and darts into its den at the least approach of danger, the words of Agar acquire their full significance. *James Hamilton.*

**Verse 19.** *He appointed the moon for seasons.* When it is said, that the moon was appointed to distinguish seasons, interpreters agree that this is to be understood of the ordinary and appointed feasts. The Hebrews having been accustomed to compute their months by the moon, this served for regulating their festival days and assemblies both sacred and political. The prophet, I have no doubt, by the figure synecdoche, puts a part for the whole, intimating that the moon not only distinguishes the days from the nights, but likewise marks out the festival days, measures years and months, and, in line, answers many useful purposes, in as much as the distinction of times is taken from her course. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 19.** *He appointed the moon for seasons.* "He made the moon to serve in her season, for a declaration oftentimes, and a sign to the world. From the moon is the sign of feasts, a light that decreases in her perfection. The month is called after her name, increasing wonderfully in her changing, being an instrument of the armies above, shining in the firmament of heaven; the beauty of heaven, the glory of the stars, an ornament giving light in the highest places of the Lord."—Ec 10:7

**Verse 19.** *The sun knoweth his going down.* The second clause is not to be rendered in the common way, "*The sun knoweth his going down,*" but according to the usual idiom, *He*, i.e., God *knoweth the going down of the sun*. Not to mention the unwanted and harsh form of the phrase, by which the *knowledge* of his setting is attributed to the sun, there appears no reason why it should be here used, since it is destitute of force, {1} or why he should turn from God as a cause, to the moving sun, when both before and afterwards he speaks of God, saying, "*He appointed the moon,*" "*Thou makest darkness*". Far more fitly, therefore, is he to be understood as speaking of God, as before and after, so in the middle, of the directing cause of the appearances of the moon, the setting of the sun, and the spread of darkness. God also is said more correctly to know the going down of the sun,

than the sun himself, since to know has in effect the force of to *cared for*, as is often the case in other passages. *Venema*.

{1} This excellent expounder cannot see the beauty of the poetic expression, and so prosed in this fashion.

**Verse 20.** *Thou makest darkness.* Some observe with Augustine that in Genesis it is said that *light was made*, but not that *darkness was made*, because darkness is nothing, it is mere non existence. But in this passage it is also said that night was made, and the Lord calls himself the *Maker of light and the Creator of darkness*. *Lorinus*.

**Verse 20.** *Thou makest darkness, etc.* It would be interesting to consider the wonderful adaptation of the length of the day to the health of man, and to the rigour and perhaps existence of the animal and vegetable tribes. The rejoicing of life depends so much upon the grateful alternation of day and night. For a full consideration of this subject I must refer the reader to Dr. Whewell's *Bridgewater Treatise*. The subjoined extracts may, however, aid reflection. The terrestrial day, and consequently, the length of the cycle of light and darkness, being what it is, we find various parts of the constitution both of animals and vegetables, which have a periodical character in their functions, corresponding to the diurnal succession of external conditions; and we find that the length of the period, as it exists in their constitution, coincides with the length of the natural day. The alternation of processes which takes place in plants by day and by night is less obvious, and less obviously essential to their well being, than the annum series of changes. But there are abundance of facts which serve to show that such an alternation is part of the vegetable economy. . . . "Animals also have a period in their functions and habits; as in the habits of waking, sleeping, etc., and their well being appears to depend on the coincidence of this period with the length of the natural day. We see that in the day, as it now is, all animals find seasons for taking food and repose, which agree perfectly with their health and comfort. Some animals feed during the day, as nearly all the ruminating animals and land birds; others feed only in the twilight, as bats and owls, and are called crepuscular; while many beasts of prey, aquatic birds, and others, take their food during the night. These animals, which are nocturnal feeders, are diurnal sleepers, while those which are crepuscular sleep partly in the night and partly in the day; but in all, the complete period of these functions is twenty-four hours. Man in like manner, in all nations and ages, takes his principal rest once in twenty-four hours; and the regularity of this practice seems most suitable to his health, though the duration of time allotted to repose is extremely different in different cases. So far as we can judge, this

period is of a length beneficial to the human frame, independently of the effect of external agents. In the voyages recently made into high northern latitudes, where the sun did not rise for three months, the crews of the ships were made to adhere, with the utmost punctuality, to the habit of retiring to rest at nine, and rising a quarter before six; and they enjoyed, under circumstances apparently the most trying, a state of salubrity quite remarkable. This shows, that according to the common constitution of such men, the cycle of twenty-four hours is very commodious, though not imposed on them by external circumstances."—*William Whewell* (1795-1866).

**Verse 21.** *The young lions...seek their meat from God.* God feeds not only sheep and lambs, but wolves and lions. It is a strange expression that young lions when they roar after their prey, should be said to seek their meat of God; implying that neither their own strength nor craft could feed them without help from God. The strongest creatures left to themselves cannot help themselves. As they who fear God are fed by a special providence of God, so all creatures are fed and nourished by a general providence. The lion, though he be strong and subtle, yet cannot get his own prey; we think a lion might shift for himself; no, it is the lord that provides for him; the young lions seek their meat of God. Surely, then, the mightiest of men cannot live upon themselves; as it is of God that we receive life and breath, so all things needful for the maintenance of this life. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 21.** *The young lions roar.* The roar of a lion, according to Burchell, sometimes resembles the sound which is heard at the moment of an earthquake; and is produced by his laying his head on the ground, and uttering a half stifled growl, by which means the noise is conveyed along the earth. The instant it is heard by the animals reposing in the plains, they start up in alarm, fly in all directions, and even rush into the danger which they seek to avoid. *From Cassell's Popular Natural History.*

**Verse 21.** The roaring of the young lions, like the crying of the ravens, is interpreted, asking their meat of God. Both God put this construction upon the language of mere nature, even in venomous creatures, and shall he not much more interpret favourably the language of grace in his own people, though it be weak and broken groanings which cannot be uttered?—*Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 22.** *The sun ariseth...they lay them down in their dens.* As wild beasts since the fall of man may seem to be born to do us hurt, and to rend and tear in pieces all whom they meet with, this savage cruelty must be kept under

check by the providence of God. And in order to keep them shut up within their dens, the only means which he employs is to inspire them with terror, simply by the light of the sun. This instance of divine goodness, the prophet commends the more on account of its necessity; for were it otherwise, men would have no liberty to go forth to engage in the labours and business of life. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 23.** *Man goeth forth unto his work, etc.* Man alone, among all creatures, in distinction from the involuntary instruments of the Almighty, has a real daily work. He has a definite part to play in life; and can recognize it. *Carl Bernhard Moll, in Lange's Commentary.*

**Verse 23.** When the light of truth and righteousness shineth, error and iniquity fly away before it, and the "roaring lion" himself departeth for a time. Then the Christian goeth forth to the work of his salvation, and to his labour of love, until the evening of old age warns him to prepare for his last repose, in faith of a joyful resurrection. *George Horne.*

**Verse 24.** *O Lord, how manifold are thy works! etc.* If the number of the creatures be so exceeding great, how great, nay, immense, must needs be the power and wisdom of him who formed them all! For (that I may borrow the words of a noble and excellent author) as it argues and manifests more skill by far in an artificer, to be able to frame both clocks and watches, and pumps and mills, and granadoes and rockets, than he could display in making but one of those sorts of engines; so the Almighty discovers more of his wisdom in forming such a vast multitude of different sorts of creatures, and all with admirable and irreprovable art, than if he had created but a few; for this declares the greatness and unbounded capacity of his understanding. Again, the same superiority of knowledge would be displayed by contriving engines of the same kind, or for the same purposes, after different fashions, as the moving of clocks by springs instead of weights: so the infinitely wise Creator hath shown in many instances that he is not confined to one only instrument for the working one effect, but can perform the same thing by divers means. So, though feathers seem necessary for flying, yet hath he enabled several creatures to fly without them, as two sorts of fishes, one sort of lizard, and the bat, not to mention the numerous tribes of flying insects. In like manner, though the air bladder in fishes seems necessary for swimming, yet some are so formed as to swim without it, viz., First, the cartilaginous kind, which by what artifice they poise themselves, ascend and descend at pleasure, and continue in what depth of water they list, is as yet unknown to us. Secondly, the cetaceous kind, or sea beasts, differing in nothing almost but the want of feet. The air which in respiration these receive into their



lungs, may serve to render their bodies equiponderant to the water; and the construction or dilatation of it, by the help of the diaphragm and muscles of respiration, may probably assist them to ascend or descend in the water, by a light impulse thereof with their fins. . . . Again, the great use and convenience, the beauty and variety of so many springs and fountains, so many brooks and rivers, so many lakes and standing pools of water, and these so scattered and dispersed all the earth over, that no great part of it is destitute of them, without which it must, without a supply other ways, be desolate and void of inhabitants, afford abundant arguments of wisdom and counsel: that springs should break forth on the sides of mountains most remote from the sea: that there should way be made for rivers through straits and rocks, and subterraneous vaults, so that one would think that nature had cut a way on purpose to derive the water, which else would overflow and drown whole countries. *John Ray* (1678-1705), in *"The Wisdom, of God manifested in the Works of the Creation."*

**Verse 24.** *How manifold are thy works!* When we contemplate the wonderful works of Nature, and walking about at leisure, gaze upon this ample theatre of the world, considering the stately beauty, constant order, and sumptuous furniture thereof; the glorious splendour and uniform motion of the heavens; the pleasant fertility of the earth; the curious figure and fragrant sweetness of plants; the exquisite frame of animals; and all other amazing miracles of nature, wherein the glorious attributes of God, especially his transcendent goodness, are more conspicuously displayed: so that by them, not only large acknowledgments, but even gratulatory hymns, as it were, of praise have been extorted from the mouths of Aristotle, Pliny, Galen, and such like men, never suspected guilty of an excessive devotion; then should our hearts be affected with thankful sense, and our lips break forth in praise. *William Barrow*, 1754-1836.

**Verse 24.** He does not undertake to answer his own question, *"How manifold?"* for he confesses God's works to be greater than his own power of expression; whether these *"works"* belong to the creation of nature or to that of grace. And observe how the concurrent operation of the Blessed Trinity is set forth: "O Lord, *how manifold are thy works*, "teaches of the Father, the Source of all things: "*in wisdom hast thou made them all*, "tells of the Son, the Eternal Word, "Christ the power of God and the Wisdom of God, by whom were all things made, and without him was not anything made that was made, "(1Co 1:24 Joh 1:3); "*the earth is full of thy riches*, "is spoken of the Holy Ghost, who filleth the world. *Augustine, Hugo, and Uassiodorus*, in *Neale and Littledale*.

**Verse 24.** *In wisdom hast thou made them all.* Not only one thing, as the heavens, Ps 136:5; but everything is wisely contrived and made; there is a most glorious display of the wisdom of God in the most minute things his hands have made; he has made everything beautiful in its season. A skilful artificer, when he has finished his work and looks it over again, often finds some fault or another in it: but when the Lord had finished his works of creation, and looked over them, he saw that all was good; infinite wisdom itself could find no blemish in them: what weak, foolish, stupid creatures must they be that pretend to charge any of the works of God with folly, or want of wisdom?—*John Gill.*

**Verse 24.** *The earth is full of thy riches,* literally, thy possessions; these thou keepest not to thyself, but blessest thy creatures with. *A.R. Fausset.*

**Verse 25.** *Things innumerable.* The waters teem with more life than the land. Beneath a surface less varied than that of the continents, the sea enfolds in its bosom an exuberance of life, of which no other region of the globe can afford the faintest idea. Its life extends from the poles to the equator, from east to west. Everywhere the sea is peopled; everywhere, down to its unfathomable depths, live and sport creatures suited to the locality. In every spot of its vast expanse the naturalist finds instruction, and the philosopher meditation, while the very varieties of life tend to impress upon our souls a feeling of gratitude to the Creator of the universe. Yes, the shores of the ocean and its depths, its plains and its mountains, its valleys and its precipices, even its debris, are enlivened and beautified by thousands of living beings. There are the solitary or sociable plants, upright or pendant, stretching in prairies, grouped in oases, or growing in immense forests. These plants give a cover to and feed millions of animals which creep, run, swim, fly, burrow in the soil, attach themselves to roots, lodge in the crevices, or build for themselves shelters, which seek or fly from one another, which pursue or fight each other, which caress each other with affection or devour each other without pity. Charles Darwin truly says that the terrestrial forests do not contain anything like the number of animals as those of the sea. The ocean, which is for man the element of death, is for myriads of animals a home of life and health. There is joy in its waves, there is happiness upon its shores, and heavenly blue everywhere. *Moquin Tandon*, in *"The World of the Sea"*, Translated and enlarged by *H. Martin Hart*, 1869.

**Verse 25.** *Both small and great beasts.*

The sounds and seas, each creek and bay,  
 With fry innumerable swarm, and shoals  
 Of fish that with their fins and shining scales  
 Glide under the green wave, in shoals that oft  
 Bank the mid sea; part single, or with mate,  
 Graze the seaweed their pasture, and through groves  
 Of coral stray; or sporting with quick glance,  
 Show to the sun their waved coats drop it with gold;  
 Or, in their pearly shells at ease, attend  
 Moist nutriment; or under rocks their food  
 In jointed armour watch: on smooth the seal  
 And bended dolphins play: part huge of bulk  
 Wallowing unwieldy, enormous in their gait,  
 Tempest the ocean: there leviathan,  
 Hugest of living creatures, on the deep  
 Stretched like a promontory sleeps or swims,  
 And seems a moving land; and at his gills  
 Draws in, and at his trunk spouts out, a sea.  
 —*John Milton.*

**Verse 26.** *Ships.* The original of ships was doubtless Noah's ark, so that they owe their first draught to God himself. *John Gill.*

**Verse 26.** *There go the ships.* Far from separating from each other the nations of the earth (as the ancients, still inexperienced in navigation, supposed), the sea is the great highway of the human race, and unites all its various tribes into one common family by the beneficial bonds of commerce. Countless fleets are constantly furrowing its bosom, to enrich, by perpetual exchanges, all the countries of the globe with the products of every zone, to convey the fruits of the tropical world to the children of the chilly north, or to transport the manufactures of colder climes to the inhabitants of the equatorial regions. With the growth of commerce civilization also spreads athwart the wide cause way of the ocean from shore to shore; it first dawned on the borders of the sea, and its chief seats are still to be found along its confines. *G. Hartwig*, in "*The Harmonies of Nature*," 1866.

**Verse 26.** *Leviathan.* There is ground for thinking (though this is denied by some) that in several passages the term leviathan is used generically, much as we employ dragon; and that it denotes a great sea monster. *E.P. Barrows*, in "*Biblical Geography and Antiquities.*"

**Verse 26.** *To play therein.* Dreadful and tempestuous as the sea may appear, and uncontrollable in its billows and surges, it is only the field of sport, the playground, the bowling green, to those huge marine monsters. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 26.** *Leviathan... made to play therein.* With such wonderful strength is the tail of the whale endowed, that the largest of these animals, measuring some eighty feet in length, are able by its aid to leap clear out of the water, as if they were little fish leaping after flies. This movement is technically termed "breaching," and the sound which is produced by the huge carcass as it falls upon the water is so powerful as to be heard for a distance of several miles. *J.G. Wood*, in "The Illustrated Natural History," 1861.

**Verse 26.** *Leviathan...made to play therein.* Though these immense mammiferous fish have no legs, they swim with great swiftness, and they gambol in the mountains of water lashed up by the storms. *Moquin Tandon.*

**Verse 26.** *Leviathan...made to play.* He is made to "play in the sea"; he hath nothing to do as man hath, that "goes forth to his work"; he hath nothing to fear as the beasts have, that lie down in their dens; and therefore he plays with the waters: it is pity any of the children of men, that have nobler powers, and were made for nobler purposes, should live as if they were sent into the world like the leviathan into the waters, to play therein, spending all their time in pastime. *Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 26.** *Therein.* Fish, great and small, sport and play in the element, but as soon as they are brought out of it, they languish and die. Mark, O soul! what thy element is, if thou wouldest live joyful and blessed. *Starke*, in *Lange's Commentary*.

**Verse 27.** There are five things to be observed in God's sustaining all animals. His power, which alone suffices for all: "These wait all upon thee." Wisdom, which selects a fitting time: "That thou mayest give them their meat in due season." His majesty rising above all: "That thou givest them they gather," like the crumbs falling from the table of their supreme Lord. His liberality, which retains nothing in his open hand that it does not give: "Thou openest thine hand." His original goodness that flows down to all: "They are filled with good," that is, with the good things that spring from thy goodness. *Le Blanc.*

**Verse 27.** *That thou mayest give them their meat in due season;* or, in his time; every one in its own time which is natural to them, and they have been

used to, at which time the Lord gives it to them, and they take it; it would be well if men would do so likewise, eat and drink in proper and due time, Ec 10:17. Christ speaks a word in season to weary souls; his ministers give to every one his portion of meat in due season; and a word spoken in due season, how good and sweet is it? Isa 7:4 Lu 7:12 Pr 15:23. *John Gill.*

### Verse 27.

These, Lord, all wait on thee, that thou their food may it give them;  
 Thou to their wants attendest;  
 They gather what thou sendest;  
 Thine hand thou openest, all their need supplying,  
 Over lookest not the least, the greatest satisfying.  
 When thou dost hide thy face a sudden change comes over them  
 Their breath in myriads taken,  
 They die no more to awaken;  
 But myriads more thy Spirit soon createth,  
 And the whole face of nature quickly renovateth.  
 The glory of the Lord, changeless, endures for ever;  
 In all his works delighting,  
 Nor even the smallest slighting;  
 Yet, if he frown, earth shrinks with fear before him,  
 And, at his touch, the hills with kindling flames adore him.  
 —*John Burton.*

**Verse 28.** *That thou givest them they gather.* This sentence describes The Commissariat of Creation. The problem is the feeding of "the creeping things innumerable, both small and great beasts, "which swarm the sea; the armies of birds which fill the air, and the vast hordes of animals which people the dry land; and in this sentence we have the problem solved, "That thou givest them they gather." The work is stupendous, but it is done with ease because the Worker is infinite: if he were not at the head of it the task would never be accomplished. Blessed be God for the great They of the text. It is every way our sweetest consolation that the personal God is still at work in the world: leviathan in the ocean, and the sparrow on the bough, may be alike glad of this; and we, the children of the great Father, much more. The general principle of the text is, God gives to his creatures, and his creatures gather. That general principle we shall apply to our own case as men and women; for it is as true of us as it is of the fish of the sea, and the cattle on the hills: "That thou givest them they gather."

1. We have only to gather, for God gives. In temporal things: God gives us day by day our daily bread, and our business is simply to gather it. As to spirituals, the principle is true, most emphatically, we have, in the matter of grace, only to gather what God gives. The natural man thinks that he has to earn divine favour; that he has to purchase the blessing of heaven; but he is in grave error: the soul has only to receive that which Jesus freely gives.

2. We can only gather what God gives; however eager we may be, there is the end of the matter. The diligent bird shall not be able to gather more than the Lord has given it; neither shall the most avaricious and covetous man. "It is vain for you to rise up early and to sit up late, to eat the bread of carefulness; for so he giveth his beloved sleep."

3. We must gather what God gives, or else we shall get no good by his bountiful giving. God feeds the creeping things innumerable, but each creature collects the provender for itself. The huge leviathan receives his vast provision, but he must go ploughing through the boundless meadows and gather up the myriads of minute objects which supply his need. The fish must leap up to catch the fly, the swallow must hawk for its food, the young lions must hunt for their prey.

4. The fourth turn of the text gives us the sweet thought that, we may gather what he gives. We have divine permission to enjoy freely what the Lord bestows.

5. The last thing is, God will always give us something to gather. It is written, "The Lord will provide." Thus is it also in spiritual things. If you are willing to gather, God will always give. *C.H.S.*

**Verse 28.** *Gather.* The verb rendered "gather" means to pick up or collect from the ground. It is used in the history of the manna (Ex 16:1,5,16), to which there is obvious allusion. The act of gathering from the ground seems to presuppose a previous throwing down from heaven. *J.A. Alexander.*

**Verse 28.** *Thou openest thine hand.* The Greek expositors take the opening of the hand to indicate facility. I am of opinion that it refers also to abundance and liberality, as in Ps 145:16:—"Thou openest thine hand, and satisfiest the desire of every living thing." Using this same formula, God commands us not to close the hand, but to open it to the poor. *Lorinus.*

**Verse 29.** *They are troubled.* They are confounded; they are overwhelmed with terror and amazement. The word "troubled" by no means conveys the

sense of the original word—Nab, bahal—which means properly to tremble; to be in trepidation; to be filled with terror; to be amazed; to be confounded. It is that kind of consternation which one has when all support and protection are withdrawn, and when inevitable ruin stares one in the face. So when God turns away, all their support is gone, all their resources fail, and they must die. They are represented as conscious of this; or this is what would occur if they were conscious. *Albert Barnes.*

**Verse 30.** *Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created.* The Spirit of God creates every day: what is it that continueth things in their created being, but providence? That is a true axiom in divinity, Providence is creation continued. Now the Spirit of God who created at first, creates to this day: "Thou sendest forth thy spirit, they are created." The work of creation was finished in the first six days of the world, but the work of creation is renewed every day, and so continued to the end of the world. Successive providential creation as well as original creation is ascribed to the Spirit. "And thou renewest the face of the earth." Thou makest a new world; and thus God makes a new world every year, sending forth his Spirit, or quickening power, in the rain and sun to renew the face of the earth. And as the Lord sends forth his power in providential mercies, so in providential judgments. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 31.** *The Lord shall rejoice in his works.* Man alone amongst the creatures grieves God, and brought tears from the eyes of Christ, who rejoiced in Spirit, because the Father had deigned to reveal the mysteries to the little ones. It repented God that he had made men, because as a wise son maketh a glad father, so a foolish one is a vexation to him. *Lorinus.*

**Verse 31** (last clause). What the Psalmist adds, Let Jehovah rejoice in his works, is not superfluous, for he desires that the order which God has established from the beginning may be continued in the lawful use of his gifts. As we read in Ge 6:6, that "it repented the Lord that he had made man on the earth; "so when he sees that the good things which he bestows are polluted by our corruptions, he ceases to take delight in bestowing them. And certainly the confusion and disorder which take place, when the elements cease to perform their office, testify that God, displeased and wearied out, is provoked to discontinue, and put a stop to the regular course of his beneficence; although anger and impatience have strictly speaking no place in his mind. What is here taught is, that he bears the character of the best of fathers, who takes pleasure in tenderly cherishing his children, and in bountifully nourishing them. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 32.** *He looketh on the earth and it trembleth.* As man can soon give a cast with his eye, so soon can God shake the earth, that is, either the whole mass of the earth, or the inferior sort of men on the earth when he "looketh, "or casteth an angry eye "upon the earth it trembleth." "He toucheth the hills, "(that is, the powers and principalities of the world), "and they smoke; "if he do but touch them they smoke, that is, the dreadful effects of the power and judgment of God are visible upon them. *Joseph Caryl.*

**Verse 32.** No one save a photographer can sketch the desert around Sinai. Roberts' views are noble, and to a certain extent true; but they do not represent these desert cliffs and ravines. No artist can rightly do it. Only the photographer can pourtray the million of minute details that go to make up the bleakness, the wildness, the awfulness, and the dismal loneliness of these unearthly wastes. About noon I went out and walked upon the convent roof. The star light over the mountain peaks was splendid, while the gloom that hung round these enormous precipices and Impenetrable ravines was quite oppressive to the spirit. This is the scene of which David spoke. "He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth: he toucheth the hills, and they smoke." This is the mountain "that was touched, and that burned with fire" (Heb 7:18). Not the mount that "might be touched, "as our translators have rendered it, but the mount "that was touched, " qhla fwmena,—the mount on which the finger of God rested. We could imagine the black girdle of the thick darkness with which the mountain was surrounded, and the lightnings giving forth their quick fire through tiffs covering, making its blackness blacker. We could imagine, too, the supernatural blaze, kindled by no earthly hand, that shot up out of the midst of this, like a living column of fire, ascending, amid the sound of angelic trumpets and superangelic thunders, to the very heart of heaven. *Horatius Bonar, in "The Desert of Sinai", 1858.*

**Verse 32.** The philosopher labours to investigate the natural cause of earthquakes and volcanoes. Well, let him account as he will, still the immediate power of Jehovah is the true and ultimate cause. God works in these tremendous operations. "He looketh on the earth, and it trembleth; he toucheth the hills, and they smoke." This is the philosophy of Scripture: this, then, shall be my philosophy. Never was a sentence uttered by uninspired man so sublime as this sentence. The thought is grand beyond conception; and the expression clothes the thought with suitable external majesty. God needs no means by which to give effect to his purpose by his power, yet, in general, he has established means through which he acts. In conformity with this Divine plan, he created by means, and he governs by means. But the means which he has employed in creation, and the means which he employs



in providence, are effectual only by his almighty power. The sublimity of the expression in this passage arises from the infinite disproportion between the means and the end. An earthly sovereign looks with anger, and his courtiers tremble. God looks on the earth, and it trembles to its foundation. He touches the mountains, and the volcano smokes, vomiting forth torrents of lava. Hills are said to melt at the presence of the Lord. "Tremble, thou earth, at the presence of the Lord, at the presence of the God of Jacob." How chill and withering is the breath of that noxious philosophy, that would detach our minds from viewing God in his works of Providence! The Christian who lives in this atmosphere, or on the borders of it, will be unhealthy and unfruitful in true works of righteousness. This malaria destroys all spiritual life. *Alexander Carson.*

**Verse 32.** *He toucheth the hills, and they smoke.* It's therefore ill falling into his hands, who can do such terrible things with his looks and touches. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 33.** *I will sing unto the Lord.* The Psalmist, exulting in the glorious prospect of the renovation of all things, breaks out in triumphant anticipation of the great event, and says, "I will sing unto the Lord", ywxb bechaiyai, "with my lives, "the life that I now have, and the life that I shall have hereafter. "I will sing praise to my God, "ydweb beodi, "in my eternity; " my going on, my endless progression. What astonishing ideas! But then, how shall this great work be brought about? and how shall the new earth be inhabited with righteous spirits only? The answer is Ps 104:35, "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more."—*Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 33.** All having been admonished to glorify God, he discloses what he himself is about to do; with his voice he will declare his praises, "I will sing unto the Lord as long as I live:" with his hand he will write psalms, and set them to music, "I will sing psalms to my God while I have my being:" with his mind he will make sweet meditations, "My meditation of him shall be sweet:" with will and affection he will seek after God alone, "I will be glad in the Lord:" he predicts and desires the destruction of all sinners who think not of praising God, but dishonour him in their words and works, "Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth, and let the wicked be no more:" lastly, with his whole soul and all his powers he will bless God, "Bless thou the Lord, O my soul."—*Le Blanc.*

**Verse 34.** My meditation of him shall be sweet. A Christian needs to study nothing but Christ, there is enough in Christ to take up his study and

contemplation all his days; and the more we study Christ, the more we may study him; there will be new wonders still appearing in him. *John Pox*, 1680.

**Verse 34.** *My meditation of him shall be sweet.* The last words ever written by Henry Martyn, dying among Mohammedans in Persia, was: I sat in the orchard and thought with sweet comfort and peace of my God, in solitude my company, my Friend and Comforter.

**Verse 34.** *My meditation of him shall be sweet.* I must meditate on Christ. Let philosophers soar in their contemplations, and walk among the stars; what are the stars to Christ, the Sun of righteousness, the brightness of the Father's glory, and the express image of his person? God manifest in the flesh is a theme which angels rejoice to contemplate. *Samuel Lavington*.

**Verse 34.** *My meditation of him shall be sweet.* First. Take this as an assertion. The meditation on God is sweet. And the sweetness of it should stir us up to the putting of it in practice. Secondly. Take it as a resolution—that he would make it for his own practice; that is, that he would comfort himself in such performances as these are; whilst others took pleasure in other things, he would please himself in communion with God, this should be his solace and delight upon all occasions. David promises himself a great deal of contentment in this exercise of divine meditation which he undertook with much delight: and so likewise do others of God's servants of the same nature and disposition with him in the like undertakings. Thirdly. Take it as a prayer and petition. It "shall be," that is, let it be, the future put for the imperative, as it frequently uses to be; and so the word "gnatam" is to be translated, not, of God, but to God. Let my meditation, or prayer, or converse, be sweet unto him. Place at "illi meditatio mea", so some good authors interpret it. The English translation, "Let my words be acceptable," and the other before that, "Oh, that my words might please him," which comes to one and the same effect, all taking it in the notion of a prayer: this is that which the servants of God have still thought to be most necessary for them (as indeed it is); God's acceptance of the performances which have been presented by them. Condensed from *Thomas Horton*.

**Verse 34.** (*first clause*)—All the ancients join in understanding it thus, "My meditation shall be sweet to him," or, as the Jewish Arab, hedge with him, according to that of the Psalmist, Ps 14:14 "Let the meditation of my heart be always acceptable in thy sight." Thus the Chaldee here, ywmrq, before him; the LXXII hdunyeih antw, "Let it be sweet to him"; the Syriac to him, and so the others also. And so Ke signifies to as well as on. *Henry Hammond*.

**Verse 34.** I will be glad in the Lord. Compare this with verse 31, and observe the mutual and reciprocal pleasure and delight between God who is praised and the soul that praises him. God, who rejoices in his works, takes the highest delight in man, the compendium of his other works, and in that work, than which none more excellent can be pursued by man, the work of praising God in which the blessed are employed. Thus in this very praise of God which is so pleasing to him, David professes to be evermore willing to take delight. My beloved is mine, sings the Spouse, and I am his. *Lorinus*.

**Verse 35.** *Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth*, etc. It fell to my lot some years ago, to undertake a walk of some miles, on a summer morning, along a seashore of surpassing beauty. It was the Lord's day, and the language of the Hundred and fourth Psalm rose spontaneously in my mind as one scene after another unfolded itself before the eye. About half way to my destination the road lay through a dirty hamlet, and my meditations were rudely interrupted by the brawling of some people, who looked as if they had been spending the night in a drunken debauch. Well, I thought, the Psalmist must have had some such unpleasant experience. He must have fallen in with people, located in some scene of natural beauty, who, instead of being a holy priesthood to give voice to nature in praise of her Creator, instead of being, in the pure and holy tenor of their lives the most heavenly note of the general song, filled it with a harsh discord. His prayer is the vehement expression of a desire that the earth may no longer be marred by the presence of wicked men,—that they may be utterly consumed, and may give place to men animated with the fear of God, just and holy men, men that shall be a crown of beauty on the head of this fair creation. If this be the right explanation of the Psalmist's prayer, it is not only justifiable, but there is something wrong in our meditations on nature, if we are not disposed to join in it. *William Binnie*.

**Verse 35.** *Let the sinners be consumed out of the earth*. This imprecation depends on the last clause of the 31st verse, "Let Jehovah, rejoice in his works." As the wicked infect the world with their pollutions, the consequence is, that God has less delight in his own workmanship, and is even almost displeased with it. It is impossible, but that this uncleanness, which, being extended and diffused through every part of the world, vitiates and corrupts such a noble product of his hands, must be offensive to him. Since then the wicked, by their perverse abuse of God's gifts, cause the world in a manner to degenerate and fall away from its first original, the prophet justly desires that they may be exterminated, until the race of them entirely fails. Let us, then, take care so to weigh the providence of God, as

that being wholly devoted to obeying him, we may rightly and purely use the benefits which he sanctifies for our enjoying them. Further, let us be grieved, that such precious treasures are wickedly squandered away, and let us regard it as monstrous and detestable, that men not only forget their Maker, but also, as it were, purposely turn to a perverse and an unworthy end, whatever good things he has bestowed upon them. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 35.** *The sinners.*

All true, all faultless, all in tune,  
Creation's wondrous choir,  
Opened in mystic unison,  
To last till time expire.  
And still it lasts: by day and night,  
With one consenting voice,  
All hymn thy glory, Lord, aright,  
All worship and rejoice.  
Man only mars the sweet accord,  
Overpowering with harsh din  
The music of thy works and word,  
Ill matched with grief and sin.  
—*John Keble in "The Christian Year."*

**Verse 35.** *Bless thou the Lord, O my soul.* Rehearse the first words of the Psalm which are the same as these. They are here repeated as if to hint that the end of good men is like their beginning, and that he is not of the number who begins in the spirit and seeks to be made perfect in the flesh. A worthy beginning of the Psalm, says Cassiodorus, and a worthy end, ever to bless him who never at any time fails to be with the faithful. The soul which blesses shall be made fat... Reined in by this rein of divine praise, he shall never perish. *Lorinus.*

**Verse 35.** This is the first place where HALLELUJAH ("Praise ye the Lord") occurs in the Book of Psalms. It is produced by a retrospect of Creation, and by the contemplation of God's goodness in the preservation of all the creatures of his hand, and also by a prospective view of that future Sabbath, when, by the removal of evil men from communion with the good, God will be enabled to look on his works, as he did on the first Sabbath, before the Tempter had marred them, and see "everything very good." See Ge 1:31 2:2-3—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

**Verse 35.** *Praise ye the Lord.* This is the first time that we meet with Hallelujah; and it comes in here upon occasion of the destruction of the wicked; and the last time we meet with it, it is upon the like occasion, when the New Testament Babylon is consumed, this is the burden of the song,— "Hallelujah, "Re 14:1,3,4,6. *Matthew Henry.*

---

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

**Verse 1.** (*first clause*)—An exhortation to one's own heart.

1. To remember the Lord as the first cause of all good. Bless not man, or fate, but the Lord.
2. To do this in a loving, grateful, hearty, praising manner. Bless the Lord.
3. To do it truly and intensely. O my soul.
4. To do it now—for various reasons and in all possible ways.

**Verse 1** (second clause). He is all this essentially, and in nature, providence, grace, and judgment.

**Verse 2** (first clause). The clearest revelation of God is still a concealment; even light is but a covering to him. God is clothed with light as we see him in his omniscience, his holiness, his revelation, his glory, in heaven and his grace on earth.

**Verse 3** (last clause).

1. God is leisurely in his haste: "he walketh, "etc.
2. God is swift even in his slackness: "he walketh on the wings of the wind."
3. The practical conclusions are that there is time enough for the divine purposes but none for our trifling; and that we should both wait with patience for the victory of his cause and hasten it by holy activity.

**Verse 4.**

1. The Nature of Angels Spirits.

2. The Lord of Angels. "Who maketh, "etc. What must Iris own spirituality be who maketh spirits?

3. The ministry of Angels.

(a) Their office: "ministers."

(b) Their activity or zeal: "a flaming fire."

(c) Their dependence: made ministers.

—*G. Rogers.*

**Verse 7.** The power of the divine word in nature shows its power in other spheres.

**Verse 9.**

1. All things have their appointed bounds.

2. To pass those bounds without special permission by God is transgression. "Thou hast set a bound that they may not pass."

3. Extraordinary cases should be followed by a return to ordinary duties. "That they turn not again, "etc. *G.R.*

**Verse 10.** The thoughtfulness of God for those who, like the valleys, are lowly, hidden, and needy: the abiding character of his supplies: and the joyous results of his care.

**Verse 10.** God's care for wild creatures, reflections from it.

1. Shall he not much more care for his people?

2. Will he not look after wild, wandering men?

3. Ought we not also to care for all that live?

**Verse 10.** From the fertility, life and music which mark the course of a stream, illustrate the beneficial influences of the Gospel. *C.A. Davis.*

**Verse 14.** *In the Hayfield.* (See "Spurgeon's Sermons, "No. 757.) "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle."

1. Grass is in itself instructive.

(a) As a symbol of our mortality: "All flesh is grass."

(b) As an emblem of the wicked.

(c) As a picture of the elect of God. Isa 35:7 44:4 Ps 72:6,16

(d) Grass is comparable to the food wherewith the Lord supplies the necessities of his chosen ones. Ps 23:2 So 1:7

2. God is seen in the growing of the grass.

(a) As a worker: "He causeth, "etc. See God in common things—in solitary things.

(b) See God as a caretaker: "He causeth the grass to grow for the cattle." God cares for the beasts—the helpless—dumb and speechless things—providing suitable food for them: "grass". Let us, then, see his hand in providence at all times.

3. God's working in the grass for the cattle gives us illustrations concerning grace.

(a) God "cares for oxen" and satisfies their wants: there must then be something somewhere to satisfy the needs of the nobler creature man, and his immortal soul.

(b) Though God provides the grass for the cattle, the cattle must eat it themselves. The Lord Jesus Christ is provided as the food of the soul. We must, by faith, receive and feed upon Christ.

(c) Preventing grace may here be seen in a symbol: before the cattle were made, in this world there was grass. There were covenant supplies for God's people before they were in the world.

(d) Here is an illustration of free grace: the cattle bring nothing to purchase the food. Why is this?

(1) Because they belong to him, Ps 1:10.

(2) Because he has entered into a covenant with them to feed them, Ge 9:9,10.

In the text there is a mighty blow to free will: "He causeth the grass to grow." Grace does not grow in the heart without a divine cause. If God cares to make grass grow he will also make us grow in grace. Again; the grass

does not grow without an object; it is "for the cattle": but the cattle grow for man. What then, does man grow for? Observe, further, that the existence of the grass is necessary to complete the chain of nature. So the meanest child of God is necessary to the family.

**Verse 16.** "The Cedars of Lebanon." (See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 529.)

1. The absence of all human culture. These trees are peculiarly the Lord's trees, because,

- (a) They owe their planting entirely to him: "He hath planted."
- (b) They are not dependent upon man for their watering.
- (c) No mortal might protects them.
- (d) As to their inspection—they preserve a sublime indifference to human gaze.
- (e) Their exultation is all for God.
- (f) There is not a cedar upon Lebanon which is not independent of man in its expectations.

2. The glorious display of divine care.

- (a) In the abundance of their supply.
- (b) They are always green.
- (c) Observe the grandeur and size of these trees.
- (d) Their fragrance.
- (e) Their perpetuity.
- (f) They are very venerable.

3. The fulness of living principle: "The trees of the Lord are full of sap."

- (a) This is vitally necessary.
- (b) It is essentially mysterious.
- (c) It is radically secret.
- (d) It is permanently active.
- (e) It is externally operative.
- (f) It is abundantly to be desired.



**Verses 17-18.** "Lessons from Nature." (See "Spurgeon's Sermons, " No. 1,005.)

1. For each place God has prepared a suitable form of life: for "the fir trees, ""the stork"; for "the high hills" "the wild goat, "etc. So, for all parts of the spiritual universe God has provided suitable forms of divine life.

(a) Each age has its saints.

(b) In every rank they are to be found. The Christian religion is equally well adapted for all conditions.

(c) In every church spiritual life is to be found.

(d) God's people are to be found in every city.

2. Each creature has its appropriate place.

(a) Each man has by God a providential position appointed to him.

(b) This is also true of our spiritual experience.

(c) The same holds good as to individuality of character.

3. Every creature that God has made is provided with shelter.

4. For each creature the shelter is appropriate.

5. Each creature uses its shelter.

**Verse 19.**

1. The wisdom of God as displayed in the material heavens. In the changes of the moon and the variety of the seasons.

2. The goodness of God as there displayed in the adaptation of these changes to the wants and enjoyments of men.

3. The faithfulness of God as there displayed. Inspiring confidence in his creatures by their regularity.

"So like the sun may I fulfil  
The appointed duties of the day;  
With ready mind and active will  
March on and keep my heavenly way."

**Verse 20.** Darkness and the beasts that creep forth therein.

1. Ignorance of God, and unrestrained lusts. Ro 1:2 Sins discovered. Beasts there before, but not noticed, now terrify man.

3. Spiritual despondency, dismay, despair, etc.

4. Church lethargy. All sorts of heresies, etc., begin to creep forth.

5. Papal influence. Monks, friars, priests, etc., creep about in this dark age.  
*A.G. Brown.*

**Verse 20.**

1. Night work is for wild beasts: "Thou makest darkness, " etc.

2. Day work is for men: "Man goeth forth, "etc. Good men do their work by day; bad men by night: their work is in the dark. Ministers who creep into their studies by night, and "roar after their prey, "and "seek their meat from God", are more like wild beasts than rational men.—*G.R.*

**Verse 21.** Inarticulate prayers, or how faulty the expression may be and yet how real the prayer in the esteem of God. **Verse 22.** From the effect of sunrise on the beasts of prey, exhibit the influence of Divine Grace on our evil passions. *C.A.D.*

**Verse 23.** "*Early Closing.*" A sermon preached on behalf of the "Early Closing Association, "by James Hamilton, D.D., 1850. In the "Pulpit," Vol. 57.

**Verse 24.**

1. The language of wonder: "O Lord, how manifold, "etc. Their number, variety, cooperation, harmony.

2. Of admiration: "In wisdom, "etc. Everywhere the same wisdom displayed. God, says Dr. Chalmers, is as great in minutia as in magnitude.

3. Of gratitude: "The earth is full," etc. *G.R.*

**Verse 24.**

1. The works of the Lord are multitudinous and varied.

2. They are so constructed as to show the most consummate wisdom in their design, and in the end for which they are formed.

3. They are all God's property, and should be used only in reference to the end for which they were created. All abuse and waste of God's creatures are spoil and robbery on the property of the Creator. *Adam Clarke.*

**Verse 26.** *There go the ships.* (See" Spurgeon's Sermons, "No. 1,259.)

1. We see that the ships go.

- (a) The ships are intended for going.
- (b) The ships in going at last disappear from view.
- (c) The ships as they go are going upon business.
- (d) The ships sail upon a changeful sea.

2. How go the ships?

- (a) They must go according to the wind.
- (b) But still the mariner does not go by the wind without exertion on his own part.
- (c) They have to be guided and steered by the helm.
- (d) He who manages the helm seeks direction from charts and lights.
- (e) They go according to their build.

3. Let us signal them.

- (a) Who is your owner?
- (b) What is your cargo?
- (c) Where are you going?

**Verse 27.** Trace the analogy in the spiritual world. The saints waiting, Ps 5:27; their sustenance from the opened hand, Ps 5:28; their trouble under the hidden face; their death if the Spirit were gone, Ps 5:29; their revival when the Spirit returns, Ps 5:30.

**Verse 29.**

1. The commencement of life is from God: "Thou sendest forth thy Spirit, "etc.
2. The continuance of life is from God: "Thou renewest, " etc.
3. The decline of life is from God: "Thou hidest thy face, " etc.
4. The cessation of life is from God: "Thou takest away their breath, "etc.
5. The resurrection of life is from God: "Thou renewest, " etc. *G.R.*

**Verse 30.** The season of Spring and its moral analogies. See John Foster's "Lectures, "1844.

**Verse 32.**

1. What there is in a Look of God. "He looketh, "etc.
  - (a) What in a look of anger.
  - (b) What in a look of love. He looked out of the fiery pillar upon the Egyptians." The Lord hath looked out from his pillar of glory," etc. He gave another look from the same pillar to Israel.
2. What there is in a Touch of God: "He toucheth," etc. A touch of his may raise a soul to heaven, or sink a soul to hell. *G.R.*

**Verse 33.**

1. The singer—"I."
2. The song—"praises."
3. The audience—"The Lord, ""My God."
4. The length of the song—"long as I live; while I have my being."—*A.G.B.*

**Verse 33.** Two "I wills."

1. Because he made me live.
2. Because he has made me to live in him.
3. Because he is Jehovah and "my God."
4. Because I shall live for ever, in the best sense.

**Verse 34.**

1. David's contemplation.
2. David's exultation. *Thomas Horton*.

**Verse 35.**

1. They who praise not God are not fit to be on the earth: "Let the sinners be consumed, "etc.
  2. Much less are they fit to be in heaven.
  3. They who praise God are fit both for earth and heaven. Though others do not praise him here, the saints will. "Bless thou the Lord," etc.
- (a) In opposition to others, they praise him on earth.
- (b) In harmony with others, they praise him in heaven, etc. Everywhere it is with them, "Praise ye the Lord."—*G. R.*

# Psalm 105

## Exposition

## Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

## Hints to the Village Preacher

---

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

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

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

---

## EXPOSITION

**Verse 1.** O give thanks unto the Lord. Jehovah is the author of all our benefits, therefore let him have all our gratitude. Call upon his name, or call him by his name; proclaim his titles and fill the world with his renown. Make known his deeds among the people, or among the nations. Let the heathen hear of our God, that they may forsake their idols and learn to worship him. The removal of the ark was a fit occasion for proclaiming aloud the glories of the Great King, and for publishing to all mankind the greatness of his doings, for it had a history in connection with the nations which it was well for them to remember with reverence. The rest of the psalm is a sermon, of which these first verses constitute the text.

**Verse 2.** *Sing unto him.* Bring your best thoughts and express them in the best language to the sweetest sounds. Take care that your singing is "unto him," and not merely for the sake of the music or to delight the ears of others. Singing is so delightful an exercise that it is a pity so much or it

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

**Verse 3.** *Glory ye in his holy name.* Make it a matter of joy that you have such a God. His character and attributes are such as will never make you blush to call him your God. Idolaters may well be ashamed of the actions attributed to their fancied deities, their names are foul with lust and red with blood, but Jehovah is wholly glorious; every deed of his will bear the strictest scrutiny; his name is holy, his character is holy, his law is holy, his government is holy, his influence is holy. In all this we may make our boast, nor can any deny our right to do so. Let the heart of them rejoice that seek the Lord. If they have not yet found him so fully as they desire, yet even to be allowed and enabled to seek after such a God is cause for gladness, To worship the Lord and seek his kingdom and righteousness is the sure way to happiness, mad indeed there is no other. True seekers throw their hearts into the engagement, hence their hearts receive joy; according to the text they have a permit to rejoice and they have the promise that they shall do so. How happy all these sentences are! Where can men's ears be when they talk of the gloom of psalm singing? What worldly songs are fuller of real mirth? One hears the sound of the timbrel and the harp in every verse. Even seekers find

bliss in the name of the Lord Jesus, but as for the finders, we may say with the poet,

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

**Verse 4.** *Seek the Loan and his strength.* Put yourselves under his protection. Regard him not as a puny God, but look unto his omnipotence, and seek to know the power of his grace. We all need strength; let us look to the strong One for it. We need infinite power to bear us safely to our eternal resting place, let us look to the Almighty Jehovah for it. Seek his face evermore. Seek, seek, seek, we have the word three times, and though the words differ in the Hebrew, the sense is the same. It must be a blessed thing to seek, or we should not be thus stirred up to do so. To seek his face is to desire his presence, his smile, his favour consciously enjoyed. First we seek him, then his strength and then his face; from the personal reverence, we pass on to the imparted power, and then to the conscious favour. This seeking must never cease—the more we know the more we must seek to know. Finding him, we must "our minds inflame to seek him more and more." He seeks spiritual worshippers, and spiritual worshippers seek him; they are therefore sure to meet face to face ere long.

**Verse 5.** *Remember his marvellous works that he hath done.* Memory is never better employed than upon such topics. Alas, we are far more ready to recollect foolish and evil things than to retain in our minds the glorious deeds of Jehovah. If we would keep these in remembrance our faith would be stronger, our gratitude warmer, our devotion more fervent, and our love more intense. Shame upon us that we should let slip what it would seem impossible to forget. We ought to need no exhortation to remember such wonders, especially as he has wrought them all on the behalf of his people. His wonders, and the judgments of his mouth—these also should be had in memory. The judgments of his mouth are as memorable as the marvels of his band. God had but to speak and the enemies of his people were sorely afflicted; his threats were not mere words, but smote his adversaries terribly. As the Word of God is the salvation of his saints, so is it the destruction of the ungodly: out of his mouth goeth a two edged sword with which he will slay the wicked.

**Verse 6.** *O ye seed of Abraham his servant, ye children of Jacob his chosen.* Should all the world forget, ye are bound to remember. Your father Abraham



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

**Verse 7.** *He is the Lord our God.* Blessed be his name. Jehovah condescends to be our God. This sentence contains a greater wealth of meaning than all the eloquence of orators can compass, and there is more joy in it than in all the sonnets of them that make merry. His judgments are in all the earth, or in all the land, for the whole of the country was instructed by his law, ruled by his statutes, and protected by his authority. What a joy it is that our God is never absent from us, he is never nonresident, never an absentee ruler, his judgments are in all the places in which we dwell. If the second clause of this verse refers to the whole world, it is very beautiful to see the speciality of Israel's election united with the universality of Jehovah's reign. Not alone to the one nation did the Lord reveal himself, but his glory flashed around the globe. It is wonderful that the Jewish people should have become so exclusive, and have so utterly lost the missionary spirit, for their sacred literature is full of the broad and generous sympathies which are so consistent with the worship of "the God of the whole earth." Nor is it less painful to observe that among a certain class of believers in God's election of grace there lingers a hard exclusive spirit, fatal to compassion and zeal. It would be well for these also to remember that their Redeemer is "the Saviour of all men, specially of them that believe."

**Verse 8.** *He hath remembered his covenant for ever.* Here is the basis of all his dealings with his people: he had entered into covenant with them in their father Abraham, and to this covenant he remained faithful. The exhortation to remember (Ps 105:5) receives great force from the fact that God has remembered. If the Lord has his promise in memory surely we ought not to forget the wonderful manner in which he keeps it. To us it should be matter for deepest joy that never in any instance has the Lord been unmindful of his covenant engagements, nor will he be so world without end. O that we were

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

**Verse 9.** *Which covenant he made with Abraham.* When the victims were divided and the burning lamp passed between the pieces (Gen. 15.) then the Lord made, or ratified, the covenant with the patriarch. This was a solemn deed, performed not without blood, and the cutting in pieces of the sacrifice; it points us to the greater covenant which in Christ Jesus is signed, sealed, and ratified, that it may stand fast for ever and ever. And his oath unto Isaac. Isaac did not in vision see the solemn making of the covenant, but the Lord renewed unto him his oath (Ge 26:2-5). This was enough for him, and must have established his faith in the Most High. We have the privilege of seeing in our Lord Jesus both the sacrificial seal, and the eternal oath of God, by which every promise of the covenant is made yea and amen to all the chosen seed.

**Verse 10.** *And confirmed the same unto Jacob for a law.* Jacob in his wondrous dream (Ge 28:10-15) received a pledge that the Lord's mode of procedure with him would be in accordance with covenant relations: for said Jehovah, "I will not leave thee till I have done that which I have spoken to thee of." Thus, if we may so speak with all reverence, the covenant became a law unto the Lord himself by which he bound himself to act. O matchless condescension, that the most free and sovereign Lord should put himself under covenant bonds to his chosen, and make a law for himself, though he is above all law. And to Israel for an everlasting covenant. When he changed Jacob's name he did not change his covenant, but it is written, "he blessed him there" (Ge 32:29), and it was with the old blessing, according to the unchangeable word of abiding grace.

**Verse 11.** *Saying, Unto thee will I give the land of Canaan, the lot of your inheritance.* This repetition of the great covenant promise is recorded in Ge 35:9-12 in connection with the change of Jacob's name, and very soon after that slaughter of the Shechemites, which had put the patriarch into such great

alarm and caused him to use language almost identical with that of the next verse. When they were but a few men in number; yea, very few, and strangers *in it*. Jacob said to Simeon and Levi, "Ye have troubled me to make me to stink among the inhabitants of the land, among the Canaanites and the Perizzites: and I being few in number, they shall gather themselves together against me, and slay me, and I shall be destroyed, and my house." Thus the fears of the man of God declared themselves, and they were reasonable if we look only at the circumstances in which he was placed, but they are soon seen to be groundless when we remember that the covenant promise, which guaranteed the possession of the land, necessarily implied the preservation of the race to whom the promise was made. We often fear where no fear is. The blessings promised to the seed of Abraham were not dependent upon the number of his descendants, or their position in this world. The covenant was made with one man, and consequently the number could never be less, and that one man was not the owner of a foot of soil in all the land, save only a cave in which to bury his dead, and therefore his seed could not have less inheritance than he. The smallness of a church, and the poverty of its members, are no barriers to the divine blessing, if it be sought earnestly by pleading the promise. Were not the apostles few, and the disciples feeble, when the good work began? Neither because we are strangers and foreigners here below, as our fathers were, are we in any the more danger: we are like sheep in the midst of wolves, but the wolves cannot hurt us, for our shepherd is near.

**Verse 12.** *When they were but a few men in number.* bpom ytm. Literally, "homines numeri", men of number; so few as easily to be numbered: in opposition to what their posterity afterwards were, as the sand of the sea, without number. *Samuel Chandler.*

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

**Verse 14.** *He suffered no man to do them wrong.* Men cannot wrong us unless he suffers them to do so; the greatest of them must wait his permission before they can place a finger upon us. The wicked would devour

us if they could, but they cannot even cheat us of a farthing without divine sufferance. Yea, he reproved kings for their sakes. Pharaoh and Abimelech must both be made to respect the singular strangers who had come to sojourn in their land; the greatest kings are very second rate persons with God in comparison with his chosen servants.

**Verse 15.** *Saying, touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.*

Abraham and his seed were in the midst of the world a generation of priests anointed to present sacrifice unto the most High God; since to them the oracles were committed, they were also the prophets of mankind; and they were kings too—a royal priesthood; hence they had received a threefold anointing. Their holy office surrounded them with a sacredness which rendered it sacrilege to molest them. The Lord was pleased to impress the wild tribes of Canaan with a respectful awe of the pious strangers who had come to abide with them, so that they came not near them to do them ill. The words here mentioned may not have been actually spoken, but the impression of awe which fell upon the nations is thus poetically described. God will not have those touched who have been set apart unto himself. He calls them his own, saying, "*Mine anointed*" he declares that he has "*anointed*" them to be prophets, priests, and kings unto himself, and yet again he claims them as his prophets—"Do *my prophets* no harm." All through the many years in which the three great fathers dwelt in Canaan no man was able to injure them; they were not able to defend themselves by force of arms; but the eternal God was their refuge. Even so at this present time the remnant according to the election of grace cannot be destroyed, nay, nor so much as touched, without the divine consent. Against the church of Christ the gates of hell cannot prevail. In all this we see reasons for giving thanks unto the Lord, and proclaiming his name according to the exhortation of the first verse of the Psalm. Here ends the portion which was sung at the moving of the ark: its fitness to be used for such a purpose is very manifest, for the ark was the symbol both of the covenant and of that mystic dwelling of God with Israel which was at once her glory and her defence. None could touch the Lord's peculiar ones, for the Lord was among them, flaming forth in majesty between the cherubims. The presence of God having remained with his chosen ones while they sojourned in Canaan, it did not desert them when they were called to go down into Egypt. They did not go there of their own choice, but under divine direction, and hence the Lord prepared their way and prospered them until he saw fit to conduct them again to the land of promise.

**Verse 16.** *Moreover he called for a famine upon the land.* He had only to call for it as a man calls for his servant, and it came at once. How grateful ought we to be that he does not often call in that terrible servant of his, so meagre and gaunt, and grim, so pitiless to the women and the children, so bitter to the strong men, who utterly fail before it. He brake the whole staff of bread. Man's feeble life cannot stand without its staff—if bread fail him he fails. As a cripple with a broken staff falls to the ground, so does man when bread no longer sustains him. To God it is as easy to make a famine as to break a stall. He could make that famine universal, too, so that all countries should be in like case: then would the race of man fall indeed, and its staff would be broken for ever. There is this sweet comfort in the matter, that the Lord has wise ends to serve even by famine: he meant his people to go down into Egypt, and the scarcity of food was his method of leading them there, for "they heard that there was corn in Egypt."

**Verse 17.** *He sent a man before them, even Joseph.* He was the advance guard and pioneer for the whole clan. His brethren sold him, but God sent him. Where the hand of the wicked is visible God's hand may be invisibly at work, overruling their malice. No one was more of a man, or more fit to lead the van than Joseph: an interpreter of dreams was wanted, and his brethren had said of him, "Behold, this dreamer cometh." Who was sold for a servant, or rather for a slave. Joseph's journey into Egypt was not so costly as Jonah's voyage when he paid his own fare: his free passage was provided by the Midianites, who also secured his introduction to a great officer of state by handing him over as a Slave. His way to a position in which he could feed his family lay through the pit, the slaver's caravan, the slave market and the prison, and who shall deny but what it was the right way, the surest way, the wisest way, and perhaps the shortest way. Yet assuredly it seemed not so. Were we to send a man on such an errand we should furnish him with money—Joseph goes as a pauper; we should clothe him with authority—Joseph goes as a slave; we should leave him at full liberty—Joseph is a bondman: yet money would have been of little use when corn was so dear, authority would have been irritating rather than influential with Pharaoh, and freedom might not have thrown Joseph into connection with Pharaoh's captain and his other servants, and so the knowledge of his skill in interpretation might not have reached the monarch's ear. God way is the way. Our Lord's path to his mediatorial throne ran by the cross of Calvary; our road to glory runs by the rivers of grief.

**Verse 18.** *Whose feet they hurt with fetters.* From this we learn a little more of Joseph's sufferings than we find in the book of Genesis: inspiration had

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

**Verse 19.** *Until the time that his word came.* God has his times, and his children must wait till his "until" is fulfilled. Joseph was tried as in a furnace, until the Lord's assaying work was fully accomplished. The word of the chief butler was nothing, he had to wait until God's word came, and meanwhile the word of the Lord tried him. He believed the promise, but his faith was sorely exercised. A delayed blessing tests men, and proves their metal, whether their faith is of that precious kind which can endure the fire. Of many a choice promise we may say with Daniel "the thing was true, but the time appointed was long." If the vision tarry it is good to wait for it with patience. There is a trying word and a delivering word, and we must bear the one till the other comes to us. How meekly Joseph endured his afflictions, and with what fortitude he looked forward to the clearing of his slandered character we may readily imagine: it will be better still if under similar trials we are able to imitate him, and come forth from the furnace as thoroughly purified as he was, and as well prepared to bear the yet harder ordeal of honour and power.

**Verse 20.** *The king sent and loosed him.* He was thrust into the roundhouse by an officer, but he was released by the monarch himself. Even the ruler of the people, and let him go free. The tide had turned, so that Egypt's haughty potentate gave him a call from the prison to the palace. He had interpreted the dreams of captives, himself a captive; he must now interpret for a ruler and become a ruler himself. When God means to enlarge his prisoners, kings become his turnkeys.

**Verse 21.** *He made him lord of his house.* Reserving no power, but saying "only in the throne will I be greater than thou." The servitor of slaves becomes lord over nobles. How soon the Lord lifteth his chosen from the

dunghill to set them among princes. And ruler of all his substance. He empowered him to manage the storing of the seven plenteous harvests, and to dispense the provisions in the coming days of scarcity. All the treasures of Egypt were under his lock and key, yea, the granaries of the world were sealed or opened at his bidding. Thus was he in the best conceivable position for preserving alive the house of Israel with whom the covenant was made. As our Lord was himself secured in Egypt from Herod's enmity, so, ages before, the redeemed race found an equally available shelter, in the hour of need. God has always a refuge for his saints, and if the whole earth could not afford them sanctuary, the Lord himself would be their dwelling place, and take them up to lie in his own bosom. We are always sure to be fed if all the world should starve. It is delightful to think of our greater Joseph ruling the nations for the good of his own household, and it becomes us to abide in quiet confidence in every political disaster, since Jesus is on the throne of providence, King of kings and Lord of lords, and will be so till this dispensation ends.

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

**Verse 23.** *Israel also came into Egypt.* The aged patriarch came, and with him that increasing company which bore his name. He was hard to bring there. Perhaps nothing short of the hope of seeing Joseph could have drawn him to take so long a journey from the tombs of his forefathers; but the divine will was accomplished and the church of God was removed into an enemy's country, where for a while it was nourished. And Jacob sojourned in the land of Ham. Shem the blessed came to lodge awhile with Ham the accursed: the dove was in the vulture's nest. God so willed it for a time, and therefore it was safe and right: still it was only a sojourn, not a settlement.

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

**Verse 24.** *And he increased his people greatly.* In Goshen they seem to have increased rapidly from the first, and this excited the fears of the Egypt, inns, so that they tried to retard their increase by oppression, but the Lord continued to bless them, And made them stronger than their enemies. Both in physical strength and in numbers they threatened to become the more powerful race. Nor was this growth of the nation impeded by tyrannical measures, but the very reverse took place, thus giving an early instance of what has since become a proverb in the church—"the more they oppressed them the more they multiplied." It is idle to contend either with God or his people.

**Verse 25.** *He turned their hearts to hate his people.* It was his goodness to Israel which called forth the ill will of the Egyptian court, and so far the Lord caused it, and moreover he made use of this feeling to lead on to the discomfort of his people, and so to their readiness to leave the land to which they had evidently become greatly attached. Thus far but no further did the Lord turn the hearts of the Egyptians. God cannot in any sense be the author of sin so far as to be morally responsible for its existence, but it often happens through the evil which is inherent in human nature that the acts of the Lord arouse the ill feelings of ungodly men. Is the sun to be blamed because while it softens wax it hardens clay? Is the orb of day to be accused of creating the foul exhalations which are drawn by its warmth from the pestilential marsh? The sun causes the reek of the dunghill only in a certain sense had it been a bed of flowers his beams would have called forth fragrance. The evil is in men, and the honour of turning it to good and useful purposes is with the Lord. Hatred is often allied with cunning, and so in the case of the Egyptians, they began to deal subtilly with his servants. They treated them in a fraudulent manner, they reduced them to bondage by their exactions, they secretly concerted the destruction of their male children, and at length openly ordained that cruel measure, and all with the view of checking their increase, lest in time of war they should side with invaders in



order to obtain their liberty. Surely the depths of Satanic policy were here reached, but vain was the cunning of man against the chosen seed.

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

When the oppression was at the worst, Moses came. For the second time we have here the expression, "he sent"; he who sent Joseph sent also Moses and his eloquent brother. The Lord had the men in readiness and all he had to do was to commission them and thrust them forward. They were two, for mutual comfort and strength, even as the apostles and the seventy in our Lord's day were sent forth two and two. The men differed, and so the one became the supplement of the other, and together they were able to accomplish far more than if they had been exactly alike: the main point was that they were both sent, and hence both clothed with divine might.

**Verse 27.** *They showed his signs among them, and wonders in the land of Ham.* The miracles which were wrought by Moses were the Lord's, not his own: signs, as being the marks of Jehovah's presence hence they are here called "his" and power. The plagues were "words of his signs" (see margin), that is to say, they were speaking marvels, which testified more plainly than words to the omnipotence of Jehovah, to his determination to be obeyed, to his anger at the obstinacy of Pharaoh. Never were discourses more plain, pointed, personal, or powerful, and yet it took ten of them to accomplish the end designed. In the preaching of the gospel there are words, and signs, and wonders and these leave men without excuse for their impenitence; to have the kingdom of God come nigh unto them, and yet to remain rebellious is the unhappy sin of obstinate spirits. Those are wonders of sin who see wonders of grace, and yet are unaffected by them: bad as he was, Pharaoh had not this guilt, for the prodigies which lie beheld were marvels of judgment and not of mercy.

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

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

**Verse 29.** *He turned their waters into blood, and slew their fish.* So that the plague was not a mere colouring of the water with red earth, as some suppose, but the river was offensive and fatal to the fish. The beloved Nile and other streams were all equally tainted and ensanguined. Their commonest mercy became their greatest curse. Water is one of the greatest blessings, and the more plentiful it is the better, but blood is a hideous sight to look upon, and to see rivers and pools of it is frightful indeed. Fish in Egypt furnished a large part of the food supply, and it was no small affliction to see them floating dead and white upon a stream of crimson. The hand of the Lord thus smote them where all classes of the people would become aware of it and suffer from it.

**Verse 30.** *Their land brought forth frogs in abundance.* If fish could not live frogs might, yea, they multiplied both on land and in the water till they swarmed beyond all count. In the chambers of their kings. They penetrated the choicest rooms of the palace, and were found upon the couches of state. The Lord called for them and they marched forth. Obnoxious and even loathsome their multitudes became, but there was no resisting them; they seemed to spring out of the ground, the very land brought them forth. Their universal presence must have inspired horror and disgust which would cause sickness and make life a burden; their swarming even in the king's own chambers was a rebuke to his face, which his pride must have felt. Kings are no more than other men with God, nay less than others when they are first in rebellion; if the frogs had abounded elsewhere, but had been kept out of his select apartments, the monarch would have cared little, for he was a heartless being, but God took care that there should be a special horde of the invaders for the palace; they were more than ordinarily abundant in the chambers of their kings.

**Verse 31.** *He spake.* See the power of the divine word. He had only to say it and it was done: and there came divers sorts of flies. Insects of various annoying kinds came up in infinite hordes, a mixture of biting, stinging, buzzing gnats, mosquitos, flies, beetles, and other vermin such as make men's flesh their prey, the place of deposit for their eggs, and the seat of peculiar torments. And lice in all their coasts. These unutterably loathsome forms of life were as the dust of the ground, and covered their persons, their garments, and all they ate. Nothing is too small to master man when God commands it to assail him. The sons of Ham had despised the Israelites and now they were made to loathe themselves. The meanest beggars were more approachable than the proud Egyptians; they were reduced to the meanest condition of filthiness, and the most painful state of irritation. What armies the Lord can send forth when once his right arm is bared for war! And what scorn he pours on proud nations when he fights them, not with angels, but with lice! Pharaoh had little left to be proud of when his own person was invaded by filthy parasites. It was a slap in the face which ought to have humbled his heart, but, alas, man, when he is altogether polluted, still maintains his self conceit, and when he is the most disgusting object in the universe he still vaunts himself. Surely pride is moral madness.

**Verse 32.** *He gave them hail for rain.* They seldom had rain, but now the showers assumed the form of heavy, destructive hail storms, and being accompanied with a hurricane and thunderstorm, they were overwhelming, terrible, and destructive. And flaming fire in their land. The lightning was peculiarly vivid, and seemed to run along upon the ground, or fall in fiery flakes. Thus all the fruit of the trees and the harvests of the fields were either broken to pieces or burned on the spot, and universal fear bowed the hearts of men to the dust. No phenomena are more appalling to the most of mankind than those which attend a thunderstorm; even the most audacious blasphemers quail when the dread artillery of heaven opens fire upon the earth.

**Verse 33.** *He smote their vines also and their fig trees.* So that all hope of gathering their best fruits was gone, and the trees were injured for future bearing. All the crops were destroyed, and these are mentioned as being the more prominent forms of their produce, used by them both at festivals and in common meals. And brake the trees of their coasts. From end to end of Egypt the trees were battered and broken by the terrible hailstorm. God is in earnest when he deals with proud spirits, he will either end them or mend them.

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

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

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

**Verse 37.** *He brought them forth also with silver and gold.* This they asked of the Egyptians, perhaps even demanded, and well they might, for they had been robbed and spoiled for many a day, and it was not meet that they should go forth empty handed. Glad were the Egyptians to hand over their

jewels to propitiate a people who had such a terrible friend above; they needed no undue pressure, they feared them too much to deny them their requests. The Israelites were compelled to leave their houses and lands behind them, and it was but justice that they should be able to turn these into portable property. And there was not one feeble person among their tribes—a great marvel indeed. The number of their army was very great and yet there was not one in hospital, not one carried in an ambulance, or limping in the rear. Poverty and oppression had not enfeebled them. JEHOVAH ROPHI had healed them; they carried none of the diseases of Egypt with them, and felt none of the exhaustion which sore bondage produces. When God calls his people to a long journey he fits them for it; in the pilgrimage of life our strength shall be equal to our day. See the contrast between Egypt and Israel—in Egypt one dead in every house, and among the Israelites not one so much as limping.

**Verse 38.** *Egypt was glad when they departed*, which would not have been the case had the gold and silver been borrowed by the Israelites, for men do not carry their goods into a far country. The awe of God like to see borrowers led to nay them to be was on Egypt, and they feared his people and were glad to pay them to be gone. What a change from the time when the sons of Jacob were the drudges of the land, the offscouring of all things, the brick makers whose toil was only requited by the lash or the stick. Now they were revered as prophets and priests; for the fear of them fell upon them, the people proceeded even to a superstitious terror them. Thus with cheers and good wishes their former taskmasters sent them on their way: Pharaoh was foiled and the chosen people were once more on the move, journeying to the place which the Lord had given to them by a covenant of salt. "O give thanks unto Jehovah; call upon his name, make known his deeds among the people."

**Verse 39.** *He spread a cloud for a covering*. Never people were so favoured. What would not travellers in the desert now give for such a canopy? The sun could not scorch them with its burning ray; their whole camp was screened like a king in his pavilion. Nothing seemed to be too good for God to give his chosen nation, their comfort was studied in every way. And fire to give light in the night. While cities were swathed in darkness, their town of tents enjoyed a light which modern art with all its appliances cannot equal. God himself was their sun and shield, their glory and their defence. Could they be unbelieving while so graciously shaded, or rebellious while they walked at midnight in such a light? Alas, the tale of their sin is as extraordinary as this story of His love; but this Psalm selects the happier theme and dwells only

upon covenant love and faithfulness. O give thanks unto the Lord for he is good. We, too, have found the Lord all this to us, for he has been our sun and shield, and has preserved us alike from the perils of joys and the evils of grief;

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

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

**Verse 40.** *The people asked.* But how badly, how wickedly! And yet his grace forgave the sin of their murmuring and heard its meaning: or perhaps we may consider that while the multitude murmured there were a few, who were really gracious people, who prayed, and therefore the blessing came. He brought quails, and satisfied them with the bread of heaven. He gave them what they asked amiss as well as what was good for them, mingling judgment with goodness, for their discipline. The quails were more a curse than a blessing in the end, because of their greed and lust, but in themselves they were a peculiar indulgence, and favour: it was their own fault, that the dainty meat brought death with it. As for the manna it was unmingled good to them, and really satisfied them, which the quails never did. It was bread from heaven, and the bread of heaven, sent by heaven; it was a pity that they were not led to look up to heaven whence it came, and fear and love the God who out of heaven rained it upon them. Thus they were housed beneath the Lord's canopy and fed with food from his own table; never people were so lodged and boarded. O house of Israel, praise ye the Lord.

**Verse 41.** *He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out.* With Moses' rod and his own word he cleft the rock in the desert, and forth leaped abundant floods for their drinking where they had feared to die of thirst. From most unlikely sources the all sufficient God can supply his people's needs; hard rocks become springing fountains at the Lord's command. They ran in the dry places like a river: so that those at a distance from the rock could stoop down and refresh themselves, and the stream flowed on, so that in future journeyings they were supplied. The desert sand would naturally swallow up the streams, and yet it did not so, the refreshing river ran "in the dry places." We know that the rock set forth our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom there flows a fountain of living waters which shall never be exhausted till the last pilgrim has crossed the Jordan and entered Canaan.

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

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

**Verse 43.** *And he brought forth his people with joy, and his chosen with gladness.* Up from the wilderness he led them, rejoicing over them himself and making them rejoice too. They were his people, his chosen, and hence in them he rejoiced, and upon them he showered his favours, that they might rejoice in him as their God, and their portion.

**Verse 44.** *And gave them the lands of the heathen.* He drove out the Canaanites and allotted the lands to the tribes. They were called on to fight, but the Lord wrought so wonderfully that the conquest was not effected by their bow or spear—the Lord *gave* them the land. And they inherited the labour of the people, they dwelt in houses which they had not built, and gathered fruit from vines and olives which they had not planted. They were not settled in a desert which needed to be reclaimed, but in a land fertile to a proverb, and cultivated carefully by its inhabitants. Like Adam, they were placed in a garden. This entrance into the goodly land was fitly celebrated when the ark was being moved to Zion.

**Verse 45.** *That they might observe his statutes, and keep his laws.* This was the practical design of it all. The chosen nation was to be the conservator of truth, the exemplar of morality, the pattern of devotion: everything was so ordered as to place them in advantageous circumstances for fulfilling this trust. Theirs was a high calling and a glorious election. It involved great responsibilities, but it was in itself a distinguished blessing, and one for which the nation was bound to give thanks. Most justly then did the music close with the jubilant but solemn shout of HALLELUJAH. Praise ye the Lord. If this history did not make Israel praise God, what would?

**Whole Psalm.** This is the first of a series of "*Confitemini Domino*" Psalms, "O give thanks unto the Lord" (Ps 105:1 106:1 107:1 108:1 136:1)—*Christopher Wordsworth*.

**Whole Psalm.** The 105th Psalm is a meditation on the covenant as performed on the part of God, the 106th on the covenant as kept by Israel. They both dwell on the predestinating will of God, electing men to holiness and obedience, and the mode in which human sin opposes itself to that will, and yet cannot make it void. *Plain Commentary*.

**Verse 1.** The first fifteen verses were written at the bringing up of the Ark, 1 Chron. 6. They tell that it is sovereign grace that ruleth over all—it is a sovereign God. Out of a fallen world he takes whom he pleases—individuals, families, nations. He chose Israel long ago, that they might be the objects of grace, and their land the theatre of its display. He will yet again return to Israel, when the days of his Kingdom of Glory draw near; and Israel shall have a full share—the very fullest and richest—in his blessings, temporal and spiritual. *Andrew A. Bonar*.

**Verse 1.** *Call upon his name.* The original meaning of this phrase is call (*him*) *by his name*, i.e., give him the descriptive title most expressive of his divine perfections; or more specifically, call him by his name Jehovah, i.e., ascribe to him the attributes which it denotes, to wit, eternity and self existence, together with that covenant relation to his people, which though not denoted by the name was constantly associated with it, and therefore necessarily suggested by it. The meaning of the next phrase is obscured, if not entirely concealed in the common version, "*among the people*." The plural form and sense of the original expression are essential to the writer's purpose, which is to glorify the God of Israel among the nations. *Joseph Addison Alexander*.

**Verse 1.** *Make known his deeds among the people.* The people of God were not shut up in that narrow corner of the earth for the purpose of confining within their straitened territories the true knowledge and worship of God; but God wished that to be the fixed seat of the church, from which the sound of heavenly doctrine should go forth into all nations. Therefore he chose Canaan, which is interjected among the most powerful nations of the world, that from it as from a fountain might more easily issue the doctrine of God to the rest, of the nations: as Isaiah says, "*Out of Zion shall go forth the law*."—*Mollerus*.



**Verse 2.** *Talk ye of all his wondrous works, yytalpn niphleothaiv*, "of his miracles." Who have so many of these to boast of as Christians! Christianity is a tissue of miracles; and every part of the work of grace on the soul is a miracle. Genuine Christian converts may talk of miracles from morning to night; and they should talk of them, and recommend to others their miracle working God and Saviour. *Adam Clarke*.

**Verse 2.** *Sing...talk*, etc. Music and conversation are two things by which the mind of man receiveth much good, or a great deal of harm. They who make "Jehovah" and his "wondrous works" the subject of both, enjoy a heaven upon earth. And they who do in reality love the Saviour, will always find themselves inclined to "sing to him, "and to "talk of him."—*George Horne*.

**Verse 2.** *Sing psalms*. It is not sufficient to offer the empty vessel of our joy unto God, or our singing voice in musical tune only; but also it is required that we fill our joyful voice with holy matter and good purpose, whereby God only may be reasonably praised: "Sing *psalms* unto him."—*David Dickson*.

**Verse 2.** *Sing psalms*. Psalmody is the calm of the soul, the repose of the spirit, the arbiter of peace. It silences the wave, and conciliates the whirlwind of our passions, soothing the impetuous, tempering the unchaste. It is an engenderer of friendship, a healer of dissension, a reconciler of enemies. For who can longer count him his enemy, with whom to the throne of God he hath raised the strain? Psalmody repels the demons, and lures the ministry of angels. It is a weapon of defence in nightly terrors and a respite from daily toil. To the infant it is a presiding genius; to manhood a crown of glory; a balm of comfort to the aged; a congenial ornament to women. *Basil*.

**Verse 4.** *Seek the Lord, and be strengthened*; so divers ancient versions read it. They that would be "strengthened in the inward man, " must fetch in strength from God by faith and prayer. "*Seek his strength*, "and then seek his face; for by his strength we hope to prevail with him for his favour, as Jacob did, Ho 7:3. "*Seek his face evermore*, "i.e., seek to have his favour to eternity, and therefore continue seeking it to the end of the time of your probation. Seek it while you live in this world, and you shall have it while you live in the other world, and even there shall be for ever seeking it, in an infinite progression, and yet be for ever satisfied in it. *Matthew Henry*.

**Verse 4.** *His strength*. In classical language, his aegis, or protection, his ark, the symbol of the divine presence. *John Mason Good*.

**Verse 4.** *Seek his face evermore.* It is added "evermore, "lest they should imagine that they had performed their duty, if they assembled twice or three times in the year at the tabernacle, and observed the external rites according to the law. *Mollerus.*

**Verse 4.** *Seek...seek.* None do seek the Lord so earnestly, but they have need of stirring up to seek him more earnestly; neither have any attained to such a measure of communion with God, but they have need to seek for a further measure: therefore it is said, "*Seek the Lord, seek his strength, seek his face evermore.*"—*David Dickson.*

**Verse 5.** *Remember.* How others may be affected I do not ask. For myself, I confess, that there is no care or sorrow, by which I am so severely harassed, as when I feel myself guilty of ingratitude to my most kind Lord. It not seldom appears to be a fault so inexplicable, that I am alarmed when I read these words, inasmuch as I consider them addressed to myself, and others like me. Remember, O ye forgetful, thoughtless, and ungrateful, the works of God, which he hath done to us, with so many signs and proofs of his goodness. What more could he have done, which he hath not done?—*Folengius.*

**Verse 6.** *O ye seed of Abraham his servant.* Consider the relation ye stand in to him. Ye are "the seed of Abraham his servant"; you are born in his house, and being thereby entitled to the privilege of his servants, protection and provision, you are also bound to do the duty of servants, to attend your master, consult his honour, obey his commands, and do what you can to advance his interests. *Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 8.** *He hath remembered his covenant.* As a long series of years had elapsed between the promise and the performance, the prophet uses the word "remember, "intimating that the Divine promise does not become obsolete by length of time, but that even when the world imagines that they are extinguished and wholly forgotten, God retains as distinct a remembrance of them as ever, that he may accomplish them in due season. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 8.** *The word which he commanded.* All that God says must of necessity be said with authority, so that even his promises partake of the nature of commands. *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

**Verse 11.** *The lot of your inheritance:* literally lbh, *the cord of your inheritance*, an expression taken from the ancient method of measuring land by the cord or line; whence the measuring cord is metonymically put for the

part measured, and divided by the cord. Thus, "*the lines*, Myl<sup>bx</sup>, the cords, are *fallen unto me in pleasant places*, "i.e., as the psalmist explains it: "I have a goodly heritage." Ps 16:6—*Samuel Chandler*.

**Verse 11.** *Your inheritance.* The change of the number (from "thee" to "your") points out that God made a covenant with all the people in general, though lie spake the words only to a few individuals; even as we have seen a little before, that it was a decree or an everlasting law. The holy patriarchs were the first and principal persons into whose hands the promise was committed; but they did not embrace the grace which was offered to them as belonging only to themselves, but as a blessing which their posterity in common with them were to become sharers of. *John Calvin*.

**Verse 12.** One would think that all the world would have been upon them; but here was the protection, God has a negative voice, "*He suffered no man to do them wrong.*" Many had (as we say) an aching tooth at the people of God, their finger itched to be dealing with them, and the text shows four advantages the world had against them. First, "*They were few.*" Secondly, "*very few.*" Thirdly, "*strangers.*" Fourthly, unsettled. What hindered their enemies? It was the Lord's negative voice. "*He reprov'd kings for their sakes; saying, Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.*" We see an instance of this (Ge 35:5). When Jacob and his family journeyed, "the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob." They had a mind to pursue after them, to revenge the slaughter of the Shechemites; but God said, *Pursue not*, and then they could not pursue, they must stay at home. And when his people the Jews were safe in Canaan he encourages them to come up freely to worship at Jerusalem, by this assurance, "No man shall desire the land, when thou shalt go up to appear before the Lord thy God, thrice in the year" (Ex 34:24). God can stop not only hands from spoiling, but hearts from desiring. *Joseph Caryl*.

**Verse 13.** *From one kingdom to another people.* Where we might have expected from kingdom to kingdom, the car is somewhat disappointed by the phrase, "*from one kingdom to another people,* " which may have been intended to distinguish the Egyptian and other monarchies from the more democratical or patriarchal institutions of the Arabians and other nations. *Joseph Addison Alexander*.

**Verse 13.** Though frequent flitting is neither desirable nor commendable, yet sometimes there is a just and necessary occasion for it, and it may be the lot of some of the best of men. *Matthew Henry*.

**Verse 14.** *He suffered no man to do them, wrong.* As many rose up, one after another, in troops against them, the Psalmist says indefinitely, that men were withheld from hurting them; for *mda*, Adam, is the word here used, which is the one most generally employed to signify *man*. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 14.** I resolve the words into these three parts.

1. Here is the nearness and the dearness of the saints unto God. They are dearer to him than kings and states, simply considered; that is, otherwise than as they in their persons are also saints; for you see that for their sakes he reproveth kings, and so sheweth that he prefers them to kings.

2. Here is the great danger to kings and states, to deal with his saints otherwise than well. Which appeareth many ways; for he doth not only in words give a charge not to touch them, but he carries it in a high way (for so God will do when he pleads their cause). Touch them not; as if he had said, Let me see if you dare so much as touch them; and it is with an intimation of the highest threatening if they should; upon your peril if you do so; for that is the scope of such a speech. And accordingly in deeds he made this good; for the text saith he suffered no man to do them wrong; not that he did altogether prevent all wrong and injuries, for they received many as they went through those lands; but at no time did lie let it go unpunished. In that sense he suffered them not. You know how he plagued Pharaoh, king of Egypt, with great plagues, and all his household, for Abraham's wife's sake, Gen. 7. And so Abimelech, king of Gerar, the Lord cometh upon him with a greatness, and his first word is in Ge 2:3, "Behold, thou art but a dead man," afore he had first told him why or wherefore, though then he adds the reason; he brings him upon his knees, verse 4, bids him look to it, that he give satisfaction to Abraham, and restore his wife to him again, verse 7; and well he escaped so; and tells him also that he must be beholden to Abraham's prayers for his life. "He is a prophet," saith he, "and he shall pray for thee, and thou shalt live."

3. The third is the care and protection which God had over them, set and amplified, 1, by the number and condition of the persons whom he defended; though "*few men in number*," that is, soon reckoned, for their power and strength a few, or very small, *eivs mikron*, so the Septuagint in the parallel place, 1Ch 16:19; as also, 2, by what he did for them: He suffered no man, how great soever, to do them any wrong, how small soever; not without recompense and satisfaction; not to do it, though they had a mind to it. Though the people had an ill eye at them, Ge 26:11, God causeth Abimelech to make a law on purpose; Abimelech charged all his people in Isaac's

behalf, and spake in the very words of the text, "He that toucheth this man or his wife shall be put to death."—*Thomas Goodwin*.

**Verse 15.** *Mine anointed.* Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob had no external anointing. They were, however, called "*anointed*," because they were separated by God from the multitude of wicked men, and endowed with the Spirit and his gifts, of which the oil was an emblem. *Mollerus*.

**Verse 15.** *Touch not mine anointed, and do my prophets no harm.* We see here a vivid description of the people of God. They are "his anointed ones," "having the residue of his Spirit"; they are his prophets, to whom is intrusted the word of life, that they may be witnesses in the world. To these he gives as it were a safe passport through the world. Though they have ever been but men of number, accounted as a vile thing, they are precious in his sight. They are not distinguished by external dignity, numbers and power, as Rome sets forth the marks of her communion. They are in the midst of kingdoms, but not of them. They form usually the humblest portions of most communities, and yet they receive honour from God. Despised by the world, but unto God kings and priests, ordained and anointed to reign with Christ for ever. *W. Wilson*.

**Verse 15.** *Prophets.* The aybk is the prophet, or forth speaker; the term laying stress on the utterance, and not upon the vision. The Hebrew word comes from a root which means to bubble up and overflow as from a full fountain. But the fulness of the true prophets of Jehovah was not that of their own thoughts and emotions. It was of the Divine Spirit within them. "The prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spake as they were moved by the Holy Ghost," 2Pe 1:21. The first application of the word is to Abraham (Ge 2:7); although, long before Abraham, "Enoch the seventh from Adam, prophesied," Jude 14. *Donald Fraser*, in "*Synoptical Lectures on the Books of Holy Scripture*." 1873.

**Verse 16.** *He called for a famine.* As a master *calls for* a servant ready to do his bidding. On the contrary, God says (Eze 36:29), "I will call for the corn, and will increase it, and lay no famine upon you." Compare the centurion's words as to sickness being Christ's servant, ready to come or go at his call, Mt 8:8,9. *A.R. Fausset*.

**Verse 17.** Joseph may be a fit type to us of our spiritual deliverance. Consider him sold into Egypt, not without the determinate counsel of God, who preordained this to good; "God did send me before you to preserve life," Ge 45:5. Here is the difference, the brethren sold Joseph, we sold ourselves.

Consider us thus sold unto sin and death; God had a purpose to redeem us; there is election. Joseph was delivered out of prison, and we ransomed out of the house of bondage; there was redemption. Joseph's cause was made known, and himself acquitted; we could not be found innocent ourselves, but were acquitted in Christ; wherein consists our justification. Lastly, Joseph was clothed in glorious apparel, and adorned with golden chains, and made to ride in the second chariot of Egypt: so our last step is to be advanced to high honour, even the glory of the celestial court; "This honour have all the saints, " Ps 149:9. *Thomas Adams*.

**Verse 17.** In many circumstances concerning Joseph—in his being beloved of his father—in his being hated of his brethren—in his sufferings and deep abasement—in his being brought out of prison—in his advancement and exaltation—in his wisdom and prudence—in his providing for his father's family—in his free forgiveness of the injuries he had sustained from his brethren—it maybe truly said, we have Christ delineated therein, and set forth thereby, in type, figure, and representatively. But I have nothing to do with this here; I only give this hint to the reader. *Samuel Eyles Pierce*, 1817.

**Verse 18.** *His soul came into iron* (margin). The whole person is denoted by the soul, because the soul of the captive suffers still more than the body. Imprisonment is one of the most severe trials to the soul. Even to spiritual heroes, such as a Savonarola and St. Cyran, the waters often go over the soul. *E.W. Hengstenberg*.

**Verse 18.** *His soul came into iron.* Till we have felt it, we cannot conceive that sickness of heart, which at times will steal upon the patient sufferer; that sense of loneliness, that faintness of soul, which comes from hopes deferred and wishes unshared, from the selfishness of brethren and the heartlessness of the world. We ask ourselves, If the Lord were with me, should I suffer thus, not only the scorn of the learned and the contempt of the great, but even the indifference and neglect of those whom I have served, who yet forget me? So Joseph might have asked; and so till now may the elect ask, as they stand alone without man's encouragement or sympathy, not turned aside by falsehood or scorn, with their face set as a flint, yet deeply feeling what it costs them. *Andrew dukes*, in "The Types of Genesis," 1858.

**Verse 19.** *Until the time that his word came: the word of the LORD tried him.* This verse forms the key to the whole meaning of Joseph's mysterious trial, and at the same time illustrates a deep mystery in the spiritual life of man. By "the word of the Lord" that "tried him," the psalmist evidently refers to the dreams of his future destiny which were sent to Joseph from

God; and in saying that they tried him "until his word came," he evidently means that his faith in those promises was tested by his long imprisonment, until the day of his deliverance dawned. Consider for a moment his position, and you will see the purpose of that trial. A youth educated amidst all the quiet simplicity of the early patriarchal life, he was haunted by dream visions of a mighty destiny. Those visions were mysteriously foretelling his government in Egypt, and the blessings which his wise and just rule would confer on the land; but while unable to comprehend them, he yet believed that they were voices of the future, and promises of God. But the quietude of that shepherd life was not the preparation for the fulfilment of his promised destiny. The education that would form the man who could withstand, firmly, the temptations of Egyptian life with its cities and civilization; the education that would form the ruler whose clear eye should judge between the good and the evil, and discern the course of safety in the hour of a nation's peril—all this was not to be gained under the shadow of his father's tent; it must come through trial, and through trial arising from the very promise of God in which he believed. Hence, a great and startling change crossed his life, that seemed to forbid the fulfilment of that dream promise, and tempted him to doubt its truth. Sold into Egypt as a slave, cast into prison through his fidelity to God, the word of the Lord most powerfully tried his soul. In the gloom of that imprisonment it was most hard to believe in God's faithfulness, when his affliction had risen from his obedience; and most hard to keep the promise clearly before him, when his mighty trouble would perpetually tempt him to regard it as an idle dream. But through the temptation, he gained the strong trust which the pomp and glory of the Egyptian court would have no power to destroy; and when the word of deliverance came, the man came forth, strong through trial, to fulfil his glorious destiny of ruling Egypt in the name of God, and securing for it the blessings of heaven. Thus his trial by the word of the Lord—his temptation to doubt its truth—was a divine discipline preparing him for the fulfilment of the promise. And looking at it in this aspect, this verse presents to us a deep spiritual truth: The promises of God try man, that through the trial he may be prepared for their fulfilment. Our subject then is this: The trial of man by the promises of God. This verse suggests three great facts which exhibit the three aspects of that trial.

1. God's promises must try man. Every promise of the Lord is of necessity a trial. Now, this necessity arises from two sources; from man's secret unbelief, and from God's purposes of discipline.

(a) God's word must try man by revealing his secret unbelief. We never know our want of faith till some glorious promise rouses the soul into the attitude of belief; then the coldness and unfaithfulness of the heart are lighted up by that flash of belief, and the promise is a trial. Thus Paul with his profound insight into the facts of spiritual experience, says, "The word of the Lord is sharper than a two edged sword, piercing even to the dividing asunder of soul and spirit, and of the joints and marrow, and is a *discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart*." In illustration of this we may observe that many promises of the Lord come to us, as they came to Joseph, like dream visions of the future. Visions come to the Christian soul, as grand and wonderful as those which came to the Hebrew youth of old; and they, too, are prophecies of what we are destined to be. There comes a time when the voice of God is more clearly heard, and the great inheritance revealed. No dream of the night—no spirit of the dead—has visited us; but like a spirit some truth of God has entered the soul's presence chamber and summoned it to noble aspiration and Christ like endeavour. Then the earnest of the future gleams on life's horizon. The Sabbath of eternity, with all its balm and music, seems near, and rapt with its glory, we are roused to all surrendering zeal. But I appeal to your experience whether it is not true that such revelations of the promise rapidly become limes of trial. Then the mocking voice of unbelief tells us that aspiration is vain. The cold cross currents of indifference chill the fiery impulses of the heart. We are in prison like Joseph, by no material bars indeed, but by the invisible bonds of unbelief; and we find it most hard to keep the promise clear and bright, while tempted to believe that our aspirations were merely idle dreams. And there is that arousing, by the promise, of the soul's hidden unbelief, which makes every promise an inevitable trial.

(b) Again: *God causes his promises to try nature that he may accomplish his own purposes of discipline*. It is a law of our nature that no belief in any unseen thing can ever pass into the active form of strong endeavour to attain it, until we are tempted to disbelieve it. Thus the great idea of an undiscovered land across the wastes of the Atlantic smote the soul of Columbus; but it remained a dreamy faith until by opposition and ridicule he was tempted to regard it as a dream, and then it became heroic endeavour, and the land was found. Thus with all men of genius. They stand in the front of their age, with thoughts which the world cannot understand; but those thoughts are dreams until suffering and scorn try the men, and then they are awakened into effort to realise them. Hence God leads us into circumstances in which we are tempted to doubt his promises, that by temptation he may discipline faith into power. There is a wilderness of temptation in every life,



and like Christ, we are often led into it, from the solemn hour when we heard the voice, "Thou art my son; " but like Christ, we come forth strong, through the long, silent wrestling with temptation, to do our Father's will.

2. God sends the Hour of Deliverance: *"until the time that his word came."* When the discipline was perfected, Joseph came forth ready for his mission. But our deliverance does not always come in this way. Take from the Bible histories the four great methods by which God sends deliverance. *Sometimes by death.* Thus with Elijah Weariness, loneliness, failure, had wrung from by death the strong man the cry, "Take away my life for I and not better than my fathers." The temptation was becoming too strong, and God sent deliverance in the chariot of fire. *Sometimes by transforming the height of trial into the height of blessing.* The three youths in Babylon had clenched their nerves for the climax of agony, when the fire became a Paradise. So, now, God makes the climax of trial the herald of spiritual blessedness. By suffering we are loosened from the bonds of time and sense; there is one near to us like the Son of God; and deliverance has come. *Sometimes by the glance of love on the falling soul.* Thus with Peter. The temptation was mastering him; one glance of that eye, and he went out weeping and delivered. *Sometimes by continuing the trial,* but increasing the power to endure it. Thus with Paul. After the vision of the third heaven came "the thorn in the flesh, "The temptation made him cry thrice to, God; the trial remained, but here was the deliverance" my grace is sufficient for thee." The suffering lost none of its pressure, but he learned to glory in infirmity; and *then* came his delivering hour.

3. God makes the Trial by Promise fulfil the Promise itself. In Joseph the temptation to doubt the word of God silently meetened him for its fulfilment. So with us all. We hope not for an Egyptian kingdom, our dream vision is of a heavenly inheritance, and the palace of a heavenly King. But every temptation resisted, every mocking voice of doubt overcome, is an aid upwards and onwards. Trials, sufferings, struggles, are angels arraying the souls in the white robes of the heavenly world, and crowning it with the crown that fadeth not away. And when the end comes, then it will be seen that the long dreary endeavour to hold fast the dream promise—the firm resolute "no" to the temptation to disbelieve, are all more than recompensed with "the exceeding and eternal weight of glory."—*Edward Zuscombe, in "Sermons preached at Kings Lynn."* 1867.

**Verse 19.** *The word of the Lord tried him.* As we try God's word, so God's word tries us; and happy if, when we are tried, we come forth as gold; and

the trial of our faith proves more precious than that of gold which perisheth, though it be tried with fire. *William Jay*.

**Verse 19.** *Tried him.* I doubt not that Joseph's brethren were humbled, yet Joseph may be more, he must be cast into the ditch, and into the prison, and the iron must enter not only into his legs, but into his soul. He must be more affected in spirit, because he was to do greater work for God, and was to be raised up higher than the rest, and therefore did need the more ballast. *Thomas Shepard*, in "*The Sound Believer*," 1649.

**Verse 19.** *Tried.* Kdu, "assayed;" "Ps 7:6 17:3 18:30. He came out of the ordeal, as gold from the fining pot, more pure and lustrous. *William Kay*.

**Verse 19.** *Tried him.* "Made him lord of his house." Joseph's feet were hurt in irons, to fit him to tread more delicately in the King's Palace at Zoan; and when the Lord's time was come, by the same stairs which winded him into the dungeon he climbs up into the next chariot to Pharaoh's. Few can bear great and sudden mercies without pride and wantonness, till they are hampered and humbled to carry it moderately. *Samuel Lee*, in "*The Triumph of Mercy in the Chariot of Praise*," 1677.

**Verse 20.** *The king sent and loosed him.* And that by his own master, Potiphar, who had clapt him up there by his wanton wife's wicked instigation. He had been bound ignominiously, but now comes he to be loosed honourably. *Christopher Ness*.

**Verse 21.** *Ruler of all his substance*, or "possession." Herein also he was a type of Jesus Christ, who, as God, is possessor of heaven and earth, being the creator of them. *John Gill*.

**Verse 21.** He was received into the Royal Society of the right honourable the king's privy councillors, and was constituted as Chairman of the council table, which, though Moses doth not express, yet David intimates in Ps 105:21,22. All the privy councillors, as well as the private people were bound (possibly by oath) to obey him in all things, and, as out of the chair, he magisterially taught these senators wisdom. Thus the Hebrew reading runs: He bound the princes to his soul (or according to his will) and made wise his elders; teaching them not only civil and moral, but also divine wisdom, for which cause God sent Joseph (saith he) into Egypt, that some sound of the redemption of fallen mankind might be heard in that kingdom, at that time the most flourishing in the world: neither is Moses altogether silent herein, for he calls him a master of wisdom, or father to Pharaoh (Ge

45:8). Much more to his councillors, and he says that no hand or foot shall move (to wit, in affairs of state, at home, or, in foreign embassies, abroad) without Joseph's order; he was the king's plenipotentiary, Ge 41:44.

*Christopher Ness.*

**Verse 22.** *To bind his Princes.* The meaning of *wydv doal* signifies to exercise control over the greatest men in the kingdom, which power was conferred on Joseph by Pharaoh: see Ge 41:40,43,44. The capability of binding is to be regarded as an evidence of authority; a power of compelling obedience; or, in default thereof, of inflicting punishment. *George Phillips.* 1846.

**Verse 22.** *At his pleasure.* Literally, with his soul which some explain as a bold metaphor, describing Joseph's mind or soul as the cord or chain with which he bound the Egyptians, i.e., forced them to perform his will. But see Ps 17:9 27:12 41:2. *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

**Verse 22.** *And teach his senators wisdom.* That in that wisdom wherein he had been instructed of God he might also instruct the princes, and teach prudence to those who were much his seniors. Herein some sparks of divine wisdom shine, that he should order even the princes and old men to learn wisdom from one who was a slave and a foreigner, although the Egyptians are always want to boast that Egypt is the native place of wisdom. *Yansenius.*

**Verse 23.** *Egypt...the land of Ham.* The Egyptians were a branch of the race of Ham. They came from Asia through the desert of Syria to settle in the valley of the Nile. This is a fact clearly established by science, and entirely confirms the statements of the book of Genesis. *F. Lenormant and E. Chevalier*, in "*A Manual of Ancient History*," 1869.

**Verse 24.** *He increased his people greatly.* Behold here the concealed blessing in the secret of the cross. Under it the people of God are in the most fruitful state. *Berleb. Bible.*

**Verse 24.** Church prosperity desirable. Increase of numbers, increase of rigour. Attainable under great persecution and opposition. Divine in its origin,—"he increased." Satisfactory as a text it is only true of "his people."

**Verse 25.** *He turned their heart to hate his people.* Not by putting this wicked hatred into them, which is not consistent either with the holiness of God's nature, or with the truth of his word, and which was altogether

unnecessary, because they had that and all other wickedness in them by nature; but partly by withdrawing the common gifts and operations of his Spirit, and all the restraints and hindrances to it, and wholly leaving them to their own mistakes, and passions, and corrupt affections, which of their own accord were ready to take that course; and partly, by directing and governing that hatred, which was wholly in and from themselves, so as it should fall upon the Israelites rather than upon other people. *Matthew Pool.*

**Verse 25.** When by the malice of enemies God's people are brought to greatest straits there is deliverance near to be sent from God unto them. *"They dealt subtilly with, his servants. He sent Moses his servant."*—*David Dickson.*

**Verse 26.** *Moses and Aaron.* God usually sendeth his servants by two and two for mutual helps and comfort. *John Trapp.*

**Verse 28.** *He sent darkness.* The darkness here stands at the beginning, (not in the historical order that the particular plague of darkness stood), to mark how God's wrath hung over Egypt as a dark cloud during all the plagues. *A.R. Fausset.*

**Verse 28.** *Darkness.* There is an awful significance in this plague of darkness. The sun was a leading object of devotion among the Egyptians under the name of Osiris. The very name Pharaoh means not only the king but also the sun, and characterises the king himself as the representative of the sun and entitled in some sort to divine honours. But now the very light of the sun has disappeared and primeval chaos seems to have returned. Thus all the forms of Egyptian will worship were covered with shame and confusion by the plagues. *James G. Murphy, in "A Commentary on Exodus," 1866.*

**Verse 28.** *Made it dark.* God is often described as manifesting his displeasure in a cloud. Joel speaks of the day of God's vengeance as "a day of darkness and of gloominess, a day of clouds and of thick darkness" (Joel 2:2); and Zephaniah employs nearly the same language (Ps 1:15). The pillar that went before the Israelites, and gave them light, was to the Egyptians "a cloud and darkness" (Ex 14:20). The darkness which was upon the face of the earth "in the beginning," is described by Jehovah in the book of Job as a cloud: "When I made the cloud the garment thereof, and thick darkness a swaddling band for it" (Job 38:9). So now the land of Egypt may have been wrapped about by a thick palpable cloud, cold, damp, impenetrable: the people would feel it upon their limbs, as swaddling bands; the sun would be blotted out by it, and all things reduced almost to a state of death—of which

this ninth plague was in a certain sense the shadow cast before. Such a cloud would be even more terrible in Egypt, sunny Egypt, than in other countries; for there the sky is almost always clear, and heavy rains unknown. But in any place, and under any conditions, it must have been full of horror and misery. Nothing could represent this more forcibly than the short sentence, "Neither rose any from his place for three days." It was an horror of great darkness; it rested on them like a pall; they knew not what dangers might be around them, what judgment was next to happen: they had not been forewarned of this plague, and they could not tell but it might be only a prelude to some more awful visitation: their soul melted in them, for fear of those things that might come upon them: they dared not move from chamber to chamber, nor even from seat to seat: wherever they chanced to be at the moment when the darkness fell upon them, there they must remain. Pharaoh might call in vain for his guards; they could not come to him. Moses and Aaron were no longer within reach, for none could go to seek them. Masters could not command their slaves, nor slaves hasten to obey their master's call; the wife could not flee to her husband nor the child cling to its parents: the same fear was upon all, both high and low; the same paralysing terror and dismay possessed them every one. As says the patriarch Job, they "laid hold on horror" (Job 18:20). And this continued for three days and nights: they had no lamps nor torches; either they could not kindle them, or they dared not move to procure them: they were silent in darkness, like men already dead. Hope and expectation of returning light might at first support them; but hope delayed through seventy-two weary hours would presently die out, and leave them to despair. The darkness would become more oppressive and intolerable the longer it continued; "felt" upon their bodies as a physical infliction, and "felt" even more in their souls in agonies of fear and apprehension; such a darkness as that which, in the book of Revelation, the fifth angel pours out upon the seat of the beast—"Whose kingdom was full of darkness; and they gnawed their tongues for pain, and blasphemed the God of heaven because of their pains and their sores, and repented not of their deeds" (Re 16:10,11). If there be any truth in the traditions of the Jews on this subject, there were yet greater alarms under this canopy of darkness, this palpable obscurity, than any which would arise out of the physical infliction. Darkness is a type of Satan's kingdom; and Satan had some liberty in Egypt to walk up and down upon the land, and to go to and fro in it. The Jewish Rabbis tell us that the devil and his angels were let loose during these three dreadful days; that they had a wider range and greater liberty than usual for working mischief. They describe these evil spirits going among the wretched people, glued to their seats as they were, with terror; frightening them with fearful apparitions; piercing their ears with hideous shrieks and

groans; driving them almost to madness with the intensity of their fears; making their flesh creep, and the hair of their head to stand on end. Such a climax seems to be referred to by the Psalmist, "He cast upon them the fierceness of his anger, wrath, and indignation, and trouble, by sending evil angels among them" (Ps 78:40). *Thomas S. Millington*, in "*Signs and Wonders in the Land of Ham*," 1873.

**Verse 28.** *And they rebelled not against his word.* The plague of darkness and the rest of the plagues which God commanded; these as they were his servants, were not disobedient to him, they came at his word. Ps 105:31,34. *John Gill*.

**Verse 28.** *They rebelled not against his word;* as Jonah did, who, when he was sent to denounce God's judgments against Nineveh, went to Tarshish. Moses and Aaron were not moved, either with a foolish fear of Pharaoh's wrath, or a foolish pity of Egypt's misery, to relax or retard any of the plagues which God ordered them to inflict on the Egyptians; but stretched forth their hand to inflict them as God appointed. They that are instructed to execute judgment, will find their remissness construed a rebellion against God's word. *Matthew Henry*.

**Verse 29.** *He turned their waters into blood,* etc. The Nile begins to rise about the end of June, and attains its highest point at the end of September. About the commencement of the rise it assumes a greenish hue, is disagreeable to the taste, unwholesome, and often totally unfit for drinking. It soon, however, becomes red and turbid, and continues in this state for three or more weeks. In this condition it is again healthy and fit for use. The miracle now performed was totally different from this annual change. For,

1. It occurred after the winter, not the summer, solstice;
2. The water was turned into blood, and not merely reddened by an admixture of red clay or animalcule;
3. The fish died, a result which did not follow from the periodical change of colour;
4. The river stank, and became offensive, which it ceased to be when the ordinary redness made its appearance;
5. The stroke was arrested at the end of seven days, whereas the natural redness continued for at least three weeks; and

6. The change was brought on instantly at the word of command before the eyes of Pharaoh. The calamity was appalling. The sweet waters of the Nile were the common beverage of Egypt. It abounded in all kinds of fish, which formed a principal article of diet for the inhabitants. It was revered as a god by Egypt. But now it was a putrid flood, from which they turned away with loathing. *James G. Murphy.*

**Verse 29.** *He turned their waters into blood.* By the miraculous change of the waters into blood, a practical rebuke was given to their superstitious. This sacred and beautiful river, the benefactor and preserver of the country, this birthplace of their chief gods, this abode of their lesser deities, this source of all their prosperity, this centre of all their devotion, is turned to blood: the waters stink; the canals and pools, the vessels of wood and vessels of stone, which were replenished from the river, all are alike polluted. The Nile, according to Pliny, was the "only source from whence the Egyptians obtained water for drinking" (Hist. Nat. 76, c. 33). This water was considered particularly sweet and refreshing; so much so that the people were in the habit of provoking thirst in order that they might partake more freely of its soft and pleasant draughts. Now it was become abominable to them, and they loathed to drink of it. *Thomas S. Millington.*

**Verse 29.** *And slew their fish.* Besides the fish cured, or sent to market for the table, a very great quantity was set apart expressly for feeding the sacred animals and birds,—as the cats, crocodiles, ibises, and others; and some of the large reservoirs, attached to the temples, were used as well for keeping fish as for the necessary ablutions of the devout and for various purposes connected with religion. The quantity of fish in Egypt was a very great boon to the poor classes, and when the Nile overflowed the country inhabitants of the inland villages benefited by this annual gift of the river, as the land did by the fertilizing mud deposited upon it. The canals, ponds, and pools, on the low lands, continued to abound in fish, even after the inundation had ceased; and it was then that their return to the Nile was intercepted by closing the mouths of the canals. *Sir J. Gardner Wilkinson, in "A Popular Account of the Ancient Egyptians," 1854.*

**Verse 30.** *Their land brought forth frogs in abundance.* This is the natural appearance next in the order of occurrence to the Red Nile, and of it also the God of nature availed himself to vindicate his power before Pharaoh, and before Egypt. The Nile, its branches, and the great canals of irrigation are all bank full, and the exuberant moisture has aroused from their summer torpor, into life and activity, the frogs of the Nile, in numbers inconceivable to those who have not been in hot countries. Even in ordinary years the annoyance of

these loathsome creatures night and day, gives some idea of what this plague must have been, and renders abundantly reasonable the creation of a goddess, Ranipula, {1} at the very commencement of the mythology of ancient Egypt. In the whole of this fearful succession of judgments there is not one more personally revolting than the plague of frogs. *William Osborne.*

{1} "Driver away of frogs." Her name was Heki; Birch ap. Bunsen. She was the Buto of the Greek authors.

**Verse 30.** *Their land brought forth frogs in abundance.* It is not difficult for an Englishman, in an Eastern wet monsoon, to form a tolerable idea of that plague of Egypt, in which the frogs were in the "houses, bed chambers, beds and kneading troughs, "of the Egyptians. In the rainy season, myriads of them send forth their constant croak in every direction; and a man not possessed of over much patience, becomes as petulant as was the licentious god, and is ready to exclaim,

"Croak, croak! Indeed I shall choke,  
If you pester and bore my ears any more  
With your croak, croak, croak!"

A newcomer, on seeing them leap about the rooms, becomes disgusted, and forthwith begins an attack upon them; but the next evening will bring a return of his active visitors. It may appear almost incredible, but in one evening we killed upwards of forty of these guests in the Jaffna Mission house. They had principally concealed themselves in a small tunnel connected with the bathing room, where their noise had become almost insupportable. *Joseph Roberts*, in "*Oriental Illustrations*," 1844.

**Verse 30.** *Chambers of their Icings.* God plagued Pharaoh in his bedchamber: it may be because he would show that his judgments can penetrate the greatest privacy; for the field, and the hall, and the bed chamber, and the closet are all one to God. It is like enough that it would not move Pharaoh much that his borders were filled with frogs; but they must come into his house, and into his bed chamber. My observation is—the greatest princes in the world if they offend God are not exempted from judgments. Princes and great persons, are usually exempted from the reproof of men. As for the laws, oftentimes they are as cob webs, the great flies break through them. Who dare say to a prince, "Thou art wicked?" Nay, one saith concerning the Pope, it is not lawful to say, "What doth he so?" Now when they are not within the compass of human reproof, God strikes them. *Josias Shute*, in "*Judgment and Mercy: or, the Plague of Frogs*," 1645.



**Verse 31. *Flies.*** This term serves to denote a kind of insect that alights on the skin or leaves of plants, by its bite inflicting pain in the one case, and causing destruction in the other. The swarms of flies in Egypt are usually numerous, and excessively annoying. They alight on the moist part of the eyelids and nostrils, and inflict wounds that produce great pain, swelling and inflammation. They are also ruinous to the plants in which they lay their eggs. Philo (vit. Mos. 2 pg 110) describes the dog fly or gad fly as a grievous pest of Egypt. Gnats and mosquitoes are also abundant and virulent. A plague of such creatures would cause immense suffering and desolation.  
*James G. Murphy.*

**Verse 31.** As an illustration of the power of flies we give an extract from Charles Marshall's "Canadian Dominion." "I have been told by men of unquestioned veracity, that at midday the clouds of mosquitoes on the plains would sometimes hide the leaders in a team of four horses from the sight of the driver. Cattle could only be recognised by their shape; all alike becoming black with an impenetrable crust of mosquitoes. The line of the route over the Red River plains would be marked by the carcasses of oxen stung to death by this insignificant foe."

**Verse 31. *Lice in all their coasts.*** The priests, being polluted by this horrible infection, could not stand to minister before their deities. The people could not, in their uncleanness, be admitted within the precincts of their temples. If they would offer sacrifice, there were no victims fit for the purpose. Even the gods, the oxen, and goats, and cats, were defiled with the vermin. The Egyptians not only writhed under the loathsome scourge, but felt themselves humbled and disgraced by it. Josephus notices this:—"Pharaoh, "he says, "was so confounded at this new plague, that, what with the danger, the scandal, and the nastiness of it, he was half sorry for what he had done" (b. it. c. 14). The plague assumed the form of a disease, being "in the people." Ex 8:17. As Josephus says again, "The bodies of the people bred them, and they were all covered over with them, gnawing and tearing intolerably, and no remedy, for baths and ointments did no good." But, however distressing to their bodies, the foul and disgraceful character of the plague, and the offence brought upon their religion by the defilement of their deities and the interruption of all their religious ceremonies, was its most offensive feature.  
*Thomas S. Millington.*

**Verse 31. *Lice.*** Vermin of the kind is one of the common annoyances of Egypt. Herodotus tells us (Ps 2:37) that the priests shave their whole body every other day, that no lice or other impure thing may adhere to them when

they are engaged in the service of the gods. It is manifest that this species of vermin was particularly disgusting to the Egyptians. *James G. Murphy.*

**Verse 32.** *He gave them hail for rain.* I had ridden out to the excavations at Gizeh, when seeing a large black cloud approaching, I sent a servant to the tents to take care of them, but as it began to rain slightly I soon rode after him myself. Shortly after my arrival a storm of wind began; I therefore ordered the cords of the tents to be secured, but soon a violent shower of rain came in addition, which alarmed all our Arabs, and drove them into the rock tomb, in which is our kitchen... Suddenly the storm became a regular hurricane, such as, I had never witnessed in Europe, and a hailstorm came down on us, which almost turned the day into night... It was not long before first our common tent fell down, and when I had hastened from that into my own, in order to hold it from the inside, this also broke down above me. *Carl Richard Lepsius, in "Letters from Egypt, Ethiopia, and the Peninsula of Sinai." 1853.*

**Verse 32.** *Hail.* Extraordinary reports of the magnitude of hailstones, which have fallen during storms so memorable as to find a place in general history, have come down from periods of antiquity more or less remote. According to the "Chronicles, "a hailstorm occurred in the reign of Charlemagne, in which hailstones fell which measured fifteen feet in length by six feet in breadth, and eleven feet in thickness; and under the reign of Tippoo Saib, hailstones equal in magnitude to elephants are said to have fallen. Setting aside these and like recitals as partaking rather of the character of fable than of history, we shall find sufficient to create astonishment in well authenticated observations on this subject.

In a hailstorm which took place in Flintshire on the 9th of April, 1672, Halley saw hailstones which weighed five ounces.

On the 4th of May, 1697, Robert Taylor saw fall hailstones measuring fourteen inches in circumference.

In the storm which ravaged Como on 20th August, 1787, Volta saw hailstones which weighed nine ounces.

On 22nd May, 1822, Dr. Noggerath saw fall at Bonn hailstones which weighed from twelve to thirteen ounces.

It appears, therefore, certain that in different countries hailstorms have occurred in which stones weighing from half to three quarters of a pound have fallen. *Dionysius Lardner*, in "*The Museum of Science and Art*," 1854.

**Verse 34.** *Locusts came, and caterpillars, and that without number.* In this country, and in all the dominions of Prete Janni, is a very great and horrible plague, which is an innumerable company of locusts, which eat and consume all the corn and trees; and the number of them is so great, as it is incredible; and with their multitude they cover the earth and fill the air in such wise, that it is a hard matter to be able to see the sun... We travelled five days journey through places wholly waste and destroyed, wherein millet had been sown, which had stalks as great as those we set in our vineyards, and we saw them all broken and beaten down as if a tempest had been there; and this the locusts did. The trees were without leaves, and the bark of them was all devoured; and no grass was there to be seen, for they had eaten up all things; and if we had not been warned and advised to carry victual with us, we and our cattle had perished. This country was all covered with locusts without wings; and they told us these were the seed of them which had eaten up all, and that as soon as their wings were grown they would seek after the old ones. The number of them was so great, that I shall not speak of it, because I shall not be believed: but this! will say, that I saw men, women, and children sit as forlorn and dead among the locusts. *Samuel Purchas*, 1577-1628.

**Verse 34.** *Locusts and caterpillars.* God did not bring the same plague twice; but when there was occasion for another, it was still a new one; for he has many arrows in his quiver. *Matthew Henry*.

**Verse 34.** *Without number.* A swarm of locusts, which was observed in India in 1825, occupied a space of forty English square miles, contained at least forty millions of locusts in one line, and cast a long shadow on the earth. And Major Moore thus describes an immense army of these animals which ravaged the Mahratta country: "The column they composed extended five hundred miles; and so compact was it when on the wing, that like an eclipse, it completely hid the sun, so that no shadow was cast by any object." Brown, in his travels in Africa, states that an area of nearly two thousand square miles was literally covered by them; and Kirby and Spence mention that a column of them was so immense, that they took four hours to fly over the spot where the observer stood. *M. Kalisch*.

**Verse 34.** *Came...and that without number.*

Onward they came, a dark continuous cloud  
 Of congregated myriads number less;  
 The rushing of whose wings was as the sound  
 Of some broad river, headlong in its course,  
 Plunged from a mountain summit; or the roar  
 Of a wild ocean in the autumnal storm,  
 Shattering its billows on a shore of rocks,  
 Onward they came, the winds impelled them on.  
 —*Robert Southey*, 1774-1843.

**Verse 36.** *He smote also all the firstborn.* Did you hear that cry? It is the moment of midnight, and some tragedy is enacted in that Egyptian dwelling, for such an unearthly shriek! and it is repeated and reechoed, as doors burst open and frantic women rush into the street, and, as the houses of priests and physicians are beset, they only shake their heads in speechless agony, and point to the death sealed features of their own firstborn. Lights are flashing at the palace gates, and flitting through the royal chambers; and as king's messengers hasten through the town enquiring where the two venerable Hebrew brothers dwell, the whisper flies, "The royal prince is dead!" Be off, ye sons of Jacob! speed from your house of bondage, ye oppressed and injured Israelites! And in their eagerness to "thrust forth" the terrible because Heaven protected race, they press upon them gold and jewels, and bribe them to be gone. *James Hamilton*.

**Verse 37.** *There was not one feeble person among their tribes,* when Israel came out of Egypt; there was while dwelling there: so there shall be no *feeble saint* go to heaven, but they shall be perfect when carried hence by the angels of God, though they complain of feebleness here. "There shall be no more thence an infant of days, nor an old man that hath not filled his days: for the child shall die an hundred years old; "Isa 65:20. As there is in all dying or departed persons a great shooting in their stature observed; so is there in the soul much more. The least infant shoots in the instant of dissolution to such a perfect knowledge of God, and such a measure of grace is not attainable here, that he is "as David; "and the tallest Christian comes to such a height, that he is "as an angel of God, "Zec 7:8. *John Sheffield*, in "The Rising Sun," 1654.

**Verse 37.** *There was not one feeble person among their tribes.* They came out all in good health, and brought not with them any of the diseases of Egypt. Surely never was the like; that among so many thousands there was not one sick! so false was the representation which the Jews' enemies in after ages gave of the matter, that they were all sick of a leprosy, or some

loathsome disease, and therefore the Egyptians thrust them out of their land.  
*Matthew Henry.*

**Verse 37.** *Feeble person.* A totterer or stumbler. The word denotes a person unfit for military service. *Joseph Addison Alexander.*

**Verse 39.** In the army of Alexander the Great, the march was begun by a great beacon being set upon a pole as a signal from head quarters, so that "the fire was seen at night, the smoke in the daytime; "and the plan is still found in use amongst the caravans of Arabia. It is probable enough, in that unchanging land, that such may have been the custom at the time of the Exodus, and that God taught the people by parable in this wise, as well as by fact, that he was their true leader, and heaven the general pavilion, whence the order of march was enjoined. *Neale and Littledale.*

**Verse 39.**

When Israel, of the Lord beloved,  
Out of the land of bondage came,  
Her father's God before her moved,  
An awful guide in smoke and flame.  
By day, along the astonished lands,  
The cloudy pillar glided slow;  
By night, Arabia's crimson sands  
Returned the fiery column's glow.  
There rose the choral hymn of praise,  
And trump and timbrel answered keen,  
And Zion's daughters poured their lays,  
With priest's and warrior's voice between.  
But present still, though now unseen,  
When brightly shines the prosperous day,  
Be thoughts of Thee a cloudy screen,  
To temper the deceitful ray!  
And oh, when stoops on Judah's path,  
In shade and storm, the frequent night,  
Be Thou—long suffering, slow to wrath—  
A burning and a shining light.  
—*Sir Walter Scott*, 1771-1832.

**Verse 40.** *Quails.* The quail is met with abundantly in Syria and Judaea, and there seems to be little doubt of its identity with the quails so frequently mentioned in the Holy Scriptures. "We have, "says Tristram, "a clear proof

of the identity of the common quail with the Hebrew *selac*, in its Arabic name, *salwa*, from a root signifying 'to be fat'—very descriptive of the round, plump form and fat flesh of the quail... It migrates in vast flocks, and regularly crosses the Arabian desert, flying for the most part at night, and when the birds settle they are so utterly exhausted that they may be captured in any numbers by the hand. Notwithstanding their migratory habits, they instinctively select the shortest sea passages, and avail themselves of any island as a halting place. Thus in Spring and Autumn they are slaughtered in numbers on Malta and many of the Greek islands, very few being seen till the period of migration comes round. They also fly with the wind, never facing it like many other birds." "The Israelites 'spread them out' when they had taken them before they were sufficiently refreshed to escape; exactly as Herodotus tells us that the Egyptians were in the habit of doing with quails—drying them in the sun." Brehm mentions having been a witness to the arrival of a huge flock of quails upon the coast of North Africa, and tells us that the weary birds fell at once to the ground completely exhausted by their toilsome journey, and remained therefore some minutes as though stupefied. *Cassell's "Book of Birds."*

#### **Verse 40.**

Brought from his store, at sute of Israel,  
 Quails, in whole beavies each remove pursue;  
 Himself from skies their hunger to repel  
 Candies the grass with sweet congealed dew.  
 He wounds the rock, the rock doth wounded, swell;  
 Swelling affords new streams to channels new,  
 All for God's mindful will can not be dryven,  
 From sacred word once to his Abraham given.  
 —*Sir Philip Sidney*, 1554-1586.

**Verse 44.** *They inherited the labour of the people.* In like manner the heavenly Canaan is enjoyed by the saints without any labour of theirs; this inheritance is not of the law, nor of the works of it; it is the gift of God. Ro 4:14 6:23. *John Gill*.

---

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

#### **Verse 1.**

1. Praise God for former mercies.
2. Pray for further mercies.
3. Publish his famous mercies.

**Verse 1.** A series of holy exercises.

"Give thanks"—  
 "call upon his name"—  
 "make known"—  
 "sing"—  
 "talk"—  
 "glory"—  
 "rejoice"—  
 "seek"—  
 "remember".

**Verse 2.**

1. The pleasure of talking to God. "Sing, "etc.; making melody in the heart.
2. The duty of talking of God. "Talk ye, "etc. *G.R.*

**Verse 2.** The Christian's table talk.

**Verse 3.**

1. Those who find: or—"glory ye, "etc.
2. Those who seek: or—"rejoice."

**Verse 3** (second clause). Let the seeker rejoice that there is such a God to seek, that he invites us to seek, that he moves us to seek, enables us to seek, and promises to be found of us. The tendency of the seeker is to despond, but there are many grounds of comfort.

**Verse 4.** How can we seek the Lord's strength?

1. By desiring to be subject to it.
2. By being supported by it.
3. By being equipped with it for service.
4. By seeing its results upon others.

**Verse 4.** Threefold seeking.

1. The Lord for mercy.
2. His strength for service.
3. His face for happiness. *A.G. Brown.*

**Verse 4** (last clause). Seeking the Lord the perpetual occupation of a believer.

**Verse 5.** Themes for memory.

1. What God has done.
2. What he has said.

**Verse 5.** Our memory and God's memory. "Remember." "He hath remembered."

**Verse 7.** God's relation to his elect and to all mankind.

**Verse 9.** The making, swearing, and confirming of the covenant. See our comment on these verses with the passages referred to.

**Verse 12.** Comfort to the few. The typical and spiritual Israel few at first. A few in the ark peopled the world. Small companies have done wonders. Christ's presence is promised to two or three. God saith not by many or by few, etc.

**Verse 13.**

1. God's people may be often removed.
2. They can never be injured.
3. God's property in them will not be renounced.

**Verse 14.** Dr. T. Goodwin has an excellent sermon on these verses, entitled "The Interest of England, "in which he condenses the history of the world, to show, that those nations which have persecuted and afflicted the people of God have invariably been broken in pieces. (*Goodwin's Works*, volume 12 pg 34-60, Nichol's edition).

**Verse 15.** In what respect Abraham was a prophet, and how far believers are the same.

**Verse 16.**



1. All things come at the call of God. He called for plenty, and it came, for famine, and it came; for captivity, and it came; for deliverance, and it came.

2. The most unlikely means of accomplishing an end with man is often the direct way with God. He fulfilled the promise of Canaan to Abraham by banishing him from it; of plenty, by sending a famine; of freedom, by bringing into captivity. *G.R.*

**Verse 19.** The duration of our troubles, the testing power of the promise, the comfortable issue which is secured to us.

**Verse 24** (second clause). In what respects grace can make believers stronger than their enemies.

**Verse 25.**

1. The natural hatred of the world to the church.
2. God's permitting it to be shown. When? Why?
3. The subtle manner in which this enmity seeks its object.

**Verse 32.** *He gave them hail for rain.* Judgment substituted for mercy.

**Verse 37** (first clause). Wealth found upon us after affliction.

**Verse 37** (second clause). A consummation to be desired. This was the direct result of the divine presence. The circumstances out of which it grew were hard labour, and persecution. It enabled them to leave Egypt, to journey far, to carry burdens, to fight enemies, etc.

**Verse 39.**

1. A dark cloud of providence is the guide of the people of God by day.
2. A bright cloud of promises is their guide by night. *G.R.*

**Verse 39.** The Lord's goodness exemplified in our varying conditions.

1. For prosperity—a cloud.
2. For adversity—a light. A good text would be found in "light in the night."

**Verse 40.**

1. God often gives in love what is not asked. So the bread from heaven which was beyond all they could ask or think.
2. He sometimes gives in anger what is asked. They asked for flesh to eat—"and he brought quails."—*G.R.*

**Verse 41.** We have,

1. A type of the person of Christ, in the rock.
  - (a) Unsightly as Horeb—"When we shall see him, there is no beauty, "etc. (Isa 43:2).
  - (b) Firm and immovable "Who is a rock, save our God?" (2Sa 22:32).
2. A type of the sufferings of Christ, in the smitten rock.
  - (a) Smitten by the rod of the Law.
  - (b) Smitten to the heart.
3. A type of the benefits of Christ, in the water flowing from the rock—pure, refreshing, perpetual, abundant. *James Bennett*, 1828.

**Verse 41.**

1. The miraculous energy of God's grace in the conversion of a sinner: "He opened the rock, and the waters gushed out."
2. The effect in relation to others, which demonstrates at once the excellence and the reality of the miracle in ourselves: "They ran in the dry places like a river."—*Thomas Dale*, 1836.

**Verse 41.**

1. The grand source—the rock opened.
2. The liberal stream—"gushed out".
3. The continued flow—"in dry places".

**Verse 42.**

1. The grand source—the rock opened.
2. The liberal stream—"gushed out".
3. The continued law—"in dry places".

**Verse 45.** Obedience to God the design of his mercies to us.

# Psalm 106

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

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

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

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

## EXPOSITION

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

the first attribute which excites praise, and that praise takes the form of gratitude. We praise the Lord truly when we give him thanks for what we have received from his goodness. Let us never be slow to return unto the Lord our praise; to thank him is the least we can do—let us not neglect it. For his mercy endureth for ever. Goodness towards sinners assumes the form of mercy, mercy should therefore be a leading note in our song. Since man ceases not to be sinful, it is a great blessing that Jehovah ceases not to be merciful. From age to age the Lord deals graciously with his church, and to every individual in it he is constant and faithful in his grace, even for evermore. In a short space we have here two arguments for praise, "for he is good: for his mercy endureth for ever, "and these two arguments are themselves praises. The very best language of adoration is that which adoringly in the plainest words sets forth the simple truth with regard to our great Lord. No rhetorical flourishes or poetical hyperboles are needed, the bare facts are sublime poetry, and the narration of them with reverence is the essence of adoration. This first verse is the text of all that which follows; we are now to see how from generation to generation the mercy of God endured to his chosen people.

**Verse 2.** *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD?* What tongue of men or angels can duly describe the great displays of divine power? They are unutterable. Even those who saw them could not fully tell them. Who can shew forth all his praise? To declare his works is the same thing as to praise him, for his own doings are his best commendation. We cannot say one tenth so much for him as his own character and acts have already done? Those who praise the Lord have an infinite subject, a subject which will not be exhausted throughout eternity by the most enlarged intellects, nay, nor by the whole multitude of the redeemed, though no man can number them. The questions of this verse never can be answered; their challenge can never be accepted, except in that humble measure which can be reached by a holy life and a grateful heart.

**Verse 3.** Since the Lord is so good and so worthy to be praised, it must be for our happiness to obey him. Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness *at all times*. Multiplied are the blessings which must descend upon the whole company of the keepers of the way of justice, and especially upon that one rare man who at all times follows that which is right. Holiness is happiness. The way of right is the way of peace. Yet men leave this road, and prefer the paths of the destroyer. Hence the story which follows is in sad contrast with the happiness here depicted, because the way of Israel was not that of judgment and righteousness, but that of folly and

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

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

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

At the same time we pray to have their sweets as well as their bitters. If the Lord smiled upon their souls we cannot rest unless he smiles upon us also. We would dwell where they dwell, rejoice as they rejoice, sorrow as they sorrow, and in all things be for ever one with them in the favour of the Lord. The sentence before us is a sweet prayer, at once humble and aspiring, submissive and expansive; it might be used by a dying thief or a living apostle; let us use it now. O visit me with thy salvation. Bring it home to me. Come to my house and to my heart, and give me the salvation which thou hast prepared, and art alone able to bestow. We sometimes hear of a man's dying by the visitation of God, but here is one who knows that he can only live by the visitation of God. Jesus said of Zacchaeus, "This day is salvation come to this house," and that was the case because he himself had come there. There is no salvation apart from the Lord, and he must visit us with it or we shall never obtain it. We are too sick to visit our Great Physician, and therefore he visits us. O that our great Bishop would hold a visitation of all the churches, and bestow his benediction upon all his flock. Sometimes the second prayer of this verse seems to be too great for us, for we feel that we are not worthy that the Lord should come under our roof. Visit me, Lord?

Can it be? Dare I ask for it? And yet I must, for thou alone cans: bring me salvation: therefore, Lord, I entreat thee come unto me, and abide with me for ever.

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

**Verse 6.** *We have sinned with our fathers.* Here begins a long and particular confession. Confession of sin is the readiest way to secure an answer to the prayer of verse 4; God visits with his salvation the soul which acknowledges its need of a Saviour. Men may be said to have sinned with their fathers when they imitate them, when they follow the same objects, and make their own lives to be mere continuations of the follies of their sires. Moreover, Israel was but one nation in all time, and the confession which follows sets forth the national rather than the personal sin of the Lord's people. They enjoyed national privileges, and therefore they shared in national guilt. We have committed iniquity, we have done wickedly. Thus is the confession repeated three times, in token of the sincerity and heartiness of it. Sins of omission, commission, and rebellion we ought to acknowledge under distinct heads, that we may show a due sense of the number and heinousness of our offences.

**Verse 7.** *Our fathers understood not thy wonders in Egypt.* The Israelites saw the miraculous plagues and ignorantly wondered at them: their design of

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

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

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



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

**Verse 10.** *And he saved them from the hand of them that hated them.*

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

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

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

**Verse 13.** *They soon forgot his works.* They seemed in a hurry to get the Lord's mercies out of their memories; they hasted to be ungrateful. They waited not for his counsel, neither waiting for the word of command or promise; eager to have their own way, and prone to trust in themselves. This

is a common fault in the Lord's family to this day; we are long in learning to wait for the Lord, and upon the Lord. With him is counsel and strength, but we are vain enough to look for these to ourselves, and therefore we grievously err.

**Verse 14.** *But lusted exceedingly in the wilderness.* Though they would not wait God's will, they are hot to have their own. When the most suitable and pleasant food was found them in abundance, it did not please them long, but they grew dainty and sniffed at angel's food, and must needs have flesh to eat, which was unhealthy diet for that warm climate, and for their easy life. This desire of theirs they dwelt upon till it became a mania with them, and, like a wild horse, carried away its rider. For a meal of meat they were ready to curse their God and renounce the land which floweth with milk and honey. What a wonder that the Lord did not take them at their word! It is plain that they vexed him greatly, And tempted God in the desert. In the place where they were absolutely dependent upon him and were everyday fed by his direct provision, they had the presumption to provoke their God. They would have him change the plans of his wisdom, supply their sensual appetites, and work miracles to meet their wicked unbelief: these things the Lord would not do, but they went as far as they could in trying to induce him to do so. They failed not in their wicked attempt because of any goodness in themselves, but because God "cannot be tempted,"—temptation has no power over him, he yields not to man's threats or promises.

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

**Verse 16.** *They envied Moses also in the camp.* Though to him as the Lord's chosen instrument they owed everything, they grudged him the authority which it was needful that he should exercise for their good. Some were more

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Verse 23.** *Therefore he said that he would destroy them.* The threatening of destruction came at last. For the first wilderness sin he chastened them, sending leanness into their soul; for the second he weeded out the offenders, the flame burned up the wicked; for the third he threatened to destroy them; for the fourth he lifted up his hand and almost came to blows (Ps 106:26); for the fifth he actually smote them, "and the plague brake in among them"; and so the punishment increased with their perseverance in sin. This is worth noting, and it should serve as a warning to the man who goeth on in his iniquities. God tries words before he comes to blows, "he said that he would destroy them": but his words are not to be trifled with, for he means them, and has power to make them good. Had not Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach. Like a bold warrior who defends the wall when there is an opening for the adversary and destruction is rushing in upon the city, Moses stopped the way of avenging justice with his prayers. Moses had great power with God. He was an eminent type of our Lord, who is called, as Moses here is styled, "mine elect, in whom my soul delighteth." As the Elect Redeemer interposed between the Lord and a sinful world, so did Moses stand between the Lord and his offending people. The story as told by Moses himself is full of interest and instruction, and tends greatly to magnify the goodness of the Lord, who thus suffered himself to be turned from the fierceness of his anger. With disinterested affection, and generous renunciation of privileges offered to himself and his family, the great Lawgiver interceded with the Lord to turn away his wrath, lest he should destroy them. Behold the power of a righteous man's intercession. Mighty as was the sin of Israel to provoke vengeance, prayer was mightier in turning it away. How diligently ought we to plead with the Lord for this guilty world, and especially for his own backsliding people! Who would not employ an agency so powerful for an

end so gracious! The Lord still harkens to the voice of a man, shall not our voices be often exercised in supplicating for a guilty people? **Verse 24.** *Yea, they despised the pleasant land.* They spoke lightly of it, though it was the joy of all lands: they did not think it worth the trouble of seeking and conquering; they even spoke of Egypt, the land of their iron bondage, as though they preferred it to Canaan, the land which floweth with milk and honey. It is an ill sign with a Christian when he begins to think lightly of heaven and heavenly things; it indicates a perverted mind, and it is, moreover, a high offence to the Lord to despise that which he esteems so highly that he in infinite love reserves it for his own chosen. To prefer earthly things to heavenly blessings is to prefer Egypt to Canaan, the house of bondage to the land of promise. They believed not his word. This is the root sin. If we do not believe the Lord's word, we shall think lightly of his promised gifts. "They could not enter in because of unbelief"—this was the key which turned the lock against them. When pilgrims to the Celestial City begin to doubt the Lord of the way, they soon come to think little of the rest at the journey's end, and this is the surest way to make them bad travellers. Israel's unbelief demanded spies to see the land; the report of those spies was of a mingled character, and so a fresh crop of unbelief sprang up, with consequences most deplorable.

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

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

father's inheritance was a just and weighty doom, which their rebellions had richly deserved. Our own loss of fellowship with God, and the divisions in our churches, doubtless often come to us as punishments for the sins out of which they grow. If we will not honour the Lord we cannot expect him to honour us. Our captains shall soon become captives, and our princes shall be prisoners if we forget the Lord and despise his mercies. Our singing shall be turned into sighing, and our mirth into misery if we walk contrary to the mind of the Lord.

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

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

**Verse 30.** *Then stood up Phinehas, and executed judgment: and so the plague was stayed.* God has his champions left in the worst times, and they will stand up when the time comes for them to come forth to battle. This righteous indignation moved him to a quick execution of two open offenders. His honest spirit could not endure that lewdness should be publicly practised at a time when a fast had been proclaimed. Such daring defiance of God and of all law he could not brook, and so with his sharp

javelin he transfixes the two guilty ones in the very act. It was a holy passion which inflamed him, and no enmity to either of the persons whom he slew. The circumstances were so remarkable and the sin so flagrant that it would have involved great sin in a public man to have stood still and seen God thus defied, and Israel thus polluted. Phinehas was not of this mind, he was no trimmer, or palliator of sin, his heart was sound in God's statutes, and his whole nature was ablaze with zeal for God's glory, and therefore, though a priest, and therefore not obliged to be an executioner, he undertook the unwelcome task, and though both transgressors were of princely stock he had no respect of persons, but dealt justice upon them as if they had been the lowest of the people. This brave and decided deed was so acceptable to God as a proof that there were some sincere souls in Israel that the deadly visitation went no further. Two deaths had sufficed to save the lives of the multitude.

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

**Verse 32.** *They angered him also at the waters of strife.* Will they never have done? The scene changes, but the sin continues. Aforetime they had mutinied about water when prayer would soon have turned the desert into a standing pool, but now they do it again after their former experience of the divine goodness. This made the sin a double, yea a sevenfold offence, and caused the anger of the Lord to be the more intense. So that it went in with Moses for their sakes. Moses was at last wearied out, and began to grow angry with them and utterly hopeless of their ever improving; can we wonder at it, for he was man and not God? After forty years bearing with them the meek man's temper gave way, and he called them rebels, and showed unhallowed anger; and therefore he was not permitted to enter the



land which he desired to inherit. Truly, he had a sight of the goodly country from the top of Pisgah, but entrance was denied him, and thus it went ill with him. It was their sin which angered him, but he had to bear the consequences; however clear it may be that others are more guilty than ourselves, we should always remember that this will not screen us, but every man must bear his own burden.

**Verse 33.** *Because they provoked his spirit, so that he spake unadvisedly with his lips.* Which seems a small sin compared with that of others, but then it was the sin of Moses, the Lord's chosen servant, who had seen and known so much of the Lord, and therefore it could not be passed by. He did not speak blasphemously, or falsely, but only hastily and without care; but this is a serious fault in a lawgiver, and especially in one who speaks for God. This passage is to our mind one of the most terrible in the Bible. Truly we serve a jealous God. Yet he is not a hard master, or austere; we must not think so, but we must then rather be jealous of ourselves, and watch that we live the more carefully, and speak the more advisedly, because we serve such a Lord. We ought also to be very careful how we treat the ministers of the gospel, lest by provoking their spirit we should drive them into any unseemly behaviour which should bring upon them the chastisement of the Lord. Little do a murmuring, quarrelsome people dream of the perils in which they involve their pastors by their untoward behaviour.

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

**Verse 35.** *But were mingled among the heathen, and learned their works.* It was not the wilderness which caused Israel's sins; they were just as disobedient when settled in the land of promise. They found evil company,

and delighted in it. Those whom they should have destroyed they made their friends. Having enough faults of their own, they were yet ready to go to school to the filthy Canaanites, and educate themselves still more in the arts of iniquity. It was certain that they could learn no good from men whom the Lord had condemned to utter destruction. Few would wish to go to the condemned cell for learning, yet Israel sat at the feet of accursed Canaan, and rose up proficient in every abomination. This, too, is a grievous but common error among professors: they court worldly company and copy worldly fashions, and yet it is their calling to bear witness against these things. None can tell what evil has come of the folly of worldly conformity.

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

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

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

**Verses 40.** Therefore was the wrath of the LORD kindled against his *people, in so much that he abhorred his own inheritance.* Not that even then he broke his covenant or utterly cast off his offending people, but he felt the deepest indignation, and even looked upon them with abhorrence. The feeling described is like to that of a husband who still loves his guilty wife, and yet when he thinks of her lewdness feels his whole nature rising in righteous anger at her, so that the very sight of her afflicts his soul. How far the divine wrath can burn against those whom he yet loves in his heart it were hard to say, but certainly Israel pushed the experiment to the extreme. And he gave them into the hand of the heathen. This was the manifestation of his abhorrence. He gave them a taste of the result of sin; they spared the heathen, mixed with them and imitated them, and soon they had to smart from them, for hordes of invaders were let loose upon them to spoil them at their pleasure. Men make rods for their own backs. Their own inventions become their punishments. And they that hated them ruled over them. And who could wonder? Sin never creates true love. They joined the heathen in their wickedness, and they did not win their hearts, but rather provoked their contempt. If we mix with men of the world they will soon become our masters and our tyrants, and we cannot want worse.

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

happiness for misery. God can make our enemies to be rods in his hands to flog us back to our best Friend.

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

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

**Verse 45.** *And he remembered for them his covenant.* The covenant is the sure foundation of mercy, and when the whole fabric of outward grace manifested in the saints lies in ruins this is the fundamental basis of love which is never moved, and upon it the Lord proceeds to build again a new structure of grace. Covenant mercy is sure as the throne of God. And repented according to the multitude of his mercies. He did not carry out the

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

"Now blest, for ever blest, be He,

The same throughout eternity,

Our Israel's God adored!

Let all the people join the lay,

And loudly, 'Hallelujah', say,

'Praise ye the living Lord!'"

---

#### EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

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

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

**Verse 1.** There is,

1. The doxology;
2. Invitation;
3. The reason that we should, and why we should, give thanks always;
4. The greatness of the work. But "who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD? who can shew forth all his praise?" That is, it is impossible for any man in the world to do this great duty aright, as he should.
5. The best mode and method of giving thanks. "Blessed are they that keep judgment, and he that doeth righteousness at all times." As if he had said, "This is indeed a vast duty; but yet he makes the best essay towards it that sets himself constantly to serve God and keep his commandments."—*William Cooper*, in the "*Morning Exercises*."

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

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

we yet come far short of perfection? But the thing which ought to inspire us with the greatest encouragement is the knowledge that, though ability may fail us, the praises which from the heart we offer to God are pleasing to him; only let us beware of callousness; for it would certainly be very absurd for those who cannot attain to a tithe of perfection, to make that the occasion of their not reaching to the hundredth part of it. *John Calvin.*

**Verse 2.** *Who can utter the mighty acts of the LORD?* etc. Our sight fails us when we look upon the sun, overpowered by the splendour of his ways; and the mind's eye suffers the like in every meditation on God, and the more attention is bestowed in thinking of God, the more is the mental vision blinded by the very light of its own thoughts. For what canst thou say of him, what, I repeat, canst thou adequately say of him, who is more sublime than all loftiness, and more exalted than all height, and deeper than all depth, and clearer than all light, and brighter than all brightness, and more splendid than all splendour, stronger than all strength, more vigorous than all vigour, fairer than all beauty, truer than all truth, and more puissant than puissance, and greater than all majesty, and mightier than all might, richer than all riches, wiser than all wisdom, gentler than all gentleness, more just than all justice, more merciful than all mercy?—*Tertullian*, quoted by Neale and Littledale.

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

**Verse 2.** *Mighty acts of the Lord.* Or powers, to which answers the Greek word for the miracles of Christ (Mt 11:20,21), and Kimchi here restrains them to the wonders wrought in Egypt and at the Red Sea; but they may as well be extended to the mighty acts of God, and the effects of his power, in the creation of all things out of nothing; in the sustentation and government of the world; in the redemption of his people by Christ; in the conversion of



sinners, and in the final perseverance of the saints; in all which there are such displays of the power of God as cannot be uttered and declared by mortal tongues. *John Gill*.

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

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

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

**Verse 4.** *O visit me*. This is a beautiful figure. The prayer is not, "Give me a more intense desire, increased energy of action, that I may please thee, that I may serve thee, that I may go step by step up to thee, every step bringing with it is fresh sense of meritorious claim upon thee". No such thing. It is "Visit me"; "descend down upon me" daily from thine own lofty throne, for the fulfilment of thine own purposes. "Visit me". *George Fisk*, 1851.

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

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

**Verse 5.** We may note that the threefold nature of man prompts the union of the three petitions of this verse in one. "That I may see," is the prayer of the body, desiring the open vision of God; "and rejoice," is the wish of the soul or mind, that the affections may likewise be gratified; and vice thanks, as the spirit needs to pour itself out in worship. Further, there are three names here given to the saints, each for a reason of its own. They are God's "chosen," because of his predestinating grace, "according as he hath chosen us in him

before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph 1:4); they are his "nation, "having one law and one worship under him as sole king, "And what nation is there so great, that hath statutes and judgments so righteous as all this law?" (De 4:8) they are his "inheritance, "for it is written, "I shall give the heathen for thine inheritance" (Ps 2:8). *Hugo Cardinalis and Albertus Magnus*, in *Neale and Littledale*.

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

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

**Verse 6.** *We have sinned with our fathers.* It enhances the sin considerably by adding "with our fathers." He would have seemed to extenuate, not exaggerate, if he had said, We have sinned with other mortals. But by saying, We have sinned with our fathers, he by no means lessens but aggravates their offences, while he thereby extols the goodness of God who blessed not only those who acted sinfully and impiously, but also the

children and descendants of the sinful and impious, even those whom he could with the highest justice have cut off as doubly detestable. *Musculus*.

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

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

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

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

**Verse 7.** *Understood not...remembered not.* He reproveth both their understanding and memory. Understanding there was need of; that they might meditate unto what eternal blessings God was calling them through these temporal ones; and of memory, that at least they might not forget the temporal wonders which had been wrought, and might faithfully believe, that by the same power which they had already experienced, God would free them from the persecution of their enemies; whereas they forgot the aid which he had given them in Egypt, by means of such wonders, to crush their enemies. *Augustine.*

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

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

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

Secondly. Provoking God imports an abuse of his goodness. God, as he is clothed with power, is the proper object of our fear; but as he displays his goodness, of our love. By one he would command, by the other he would win and (as it were) court our obedience. And an affront to his goodness, his tenderness, and his mercy, as much exceeds an affront of his power as a wound at the heart transcends a blow on the hand. For when God shall show

miracles of mercy, step out of the common road of providence, commanding the host of heaven, the globe of the earth, and the whole system of nature out of its course, to serve a design of goodness upon a people, as he did upon the Israelites; was not a provocation, after such obliging passages, infinitely base and insufferable, and a degree of ingratitude, higher than the heavens struck at, and deeper than the sea that they passed through?

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

*Robert South.*

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

could not remove and overcome them. And will not the Lord (think you) visit in anger such a sin as this?—*Joseph Caryl*.

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

**Verses 7-8.** This psalm is a psalm of thanksgiving, as the first and last verses declare. Now because a man is most fit to praise God when he is most sensible of his own sin and unworthiness; the psalmist doth throughout this psalm lay Israel's sin and God's mercy together. Ps 106:7. Our Fathers (says he) *understood not thy wonders in Egypt*. They saw them with their eyes, but they did not understand them with their heart: they did not apprehend the design and scope and end of God in those wonders: and therefore, "they remembered not (says the text) *thy mercies*; for a man remembers no more than he understands."

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

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

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

What, then, did not the Lord destroy them? No says the text, *Notwithstanding*, all their grievance, unthankfulness, and their rebellion, *he*

*saved them for his name's sake. William Bridge, in a Sermon preached before the House of Commons, Nov. 5, 1647.*

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

**Verse 8.** *For his name's sake.* Improve his name in every case; for he hath a name suiting every want, every need. Do you need wonders to be wrought for you? His name is Wonderful; look to him so to do, for his name's sake. Do you need counsel and direction? His name is the Counsellor: cast yourself on him and his name for this. Have you mighty enemies to debate with? His name is the Mighty God; seek that he may exert his power for his name's sake. Do you need his fatherly pity? His name is the everlasting Father; "As a Father pitieth his children, so the Lord pitieth them that fear him." Plead his pity, for his name's sake. Do you need peace external, internal, or eternal? His name is the Prince of Peace; seek for his name's sake, that he may create peace. O sirs, his name is JEHOVAH ROPHI, the Lord, the healer and physician; seek, for his name's sake, that he may heal all your diseases. Do you need pardon? His name is JEHOVAH TSIDKENU, the Lord our righteousness: seek, for his name's sake, that he may be merciful to your unrighteousness. Do you need defence and protection? His name is JEHOVAH NISSI, the Lord your banner; seek, for his name's sake,

that his banner of love and grace may be spread over you. Do you need provision in extreme want? His name is JEHOVAH JIREH, in the mount of the Lord it shall be seen, the Lord will provide. Do you need his presence? His name is JEHOVAH SHAMMAH, the Lord is there: IMMANUEL, God with us: look to him to be with you, for his name's sake. Do you need audience of prayer? His name is the Hearer of prayer. Do you need strength? His name is the Strength of Israel. Do you need comfort? His name is the Consolation of Israel. Do you need shelter? His name is the City of Refuge. Have you nothing and need all His name is All in all. Sit down and devise names to your wants and needs, and you will find he hath a name suitable thereunto; for your supply, he hath wisdom to guide you; and power to keep you; mercy to pity you; truth to shield you; holiness to sanctify you; righteousness to justify you; grace to adorn you; and glory to crown you. Trust in his name, who saves for his name's sake. *Ralph Erskine, 1685-1752.*

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

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

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

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



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

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

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

**Verses 12-13.** They sang his praise. They soon forgat his works. This was said of that generation of the Israelites, which came out of Egypt. The chapter which contains the portion of their history here alluded to, begins with rapturous expressions of gratitude, and ends with the murmurs of discontent; both uttered by the same lips, within the short space of three days. Their expressions of gratitude were called forth by that wonderful display of the divine perfections, which delivered them from the host of Pharaoh, and destroyed their enemies. Their murmurs were excited by a comparatively trifling inconvenience, which in a few hours was removed. Of persons whose thanksgivings were so quickly, and so easily changed to murmurings, it might well be said,—though they *sang God's praises,* "*they soon forgat his works.*" Unhappily, the Israelites are by no means the only persons of whom this may, in truth, be said. Their conduct, as here described, affords a striking exemplification of that spurious gratitude, which often bursts forth in a sudden flash, when dreaded evils are averted, or

unexpected favours bestowed; but expires with the occasion that gave it birth; a gratitude resembling the joy excited in an infant's breast by the gift of some glittering toy, which is received with rapture, and pleases for an hour; but when the charm of novelty vanishes, is thrown aside with indifference; and the hand that bestowed it is forgotten. Springing from no higher principle than gratified self love, it is neither acceptable to God, nor productive of obedience to his laws; nor does it in any respect really resemble that holy, heaven born affection, whose language it often borrows, and whose name it assumes. It may be called, distinctively, the gratitude of sinners; who, as they love those that love them, will of course be grateful to those that are kind to them; grateful even to God when they view him as kind.

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

But the feeling is usually transient; and the acknowledgment is forgotten almost as soon as it is made. In a similar manner are men often affected by God's works of *grace*; or those works whose design and tendency it is, to promote the spiritual and eternal interests of man. These works most clearly display, not only the natural, but the moral perfections of Jehovah. Here his

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

**Verse 13.** *They soon forgat his works.* They forgat, yea, "*soon*"; they made haste to forget, so the original is: "They made haste, they forgat." Like men that in sleep shake Death by the hand, but when they are awake they will not know him. *Thomas Adams.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Verse 13.** *They waited not for his counsel.* A believer acting his faith, hath great advantage of an unbeliever. An unbeliever is froward and passionate,

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

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

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

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

1. Grossness; which takes away agility to any good work; which makes a man more like a tun upon two pottle pots. Caesar said he mistrusted not Antony and Dolabella for any practices, because they were fat; but Casca and Cassius, lean, hollow fellows, who did think too much. The other are the devil's crammed fowls, too fat to lay. Indeed, what need they travel far, whose felicity is at home; placing paradise in their throats, and heaven in their food?

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

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

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

**Verse 17.** *The earth opened*, etc. This element was not used to such morsels. It devours the carcasses of men; but bodies informed with living souls, never

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

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

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

**Verse 19.** The modern Jews are of opinion that all the afflictions which ever since have, do, or shall befall their nation, are still the just punishments on them for this their first act of idolatry. And the rabbins have a saying that God never inflicts any judgment upon them, but there is an ounce of his anger on them for their ancestors' making the golden calf. A reverend friend of mine, conversing at Amsterdam with a Jewish youth (very capable and ingenious for one of that nation) endeavoured to make him sensible of God's anger upon them for rejecting and crucifying of Christ, for which foul act he showed how the Jews have lived many hundred years in miserable banishment. But the youth would in no wise acknowledge in their sufferings any effect or punishment of their murdering of Christ, but taking his Bible turned to God's threatening immediately after their making of the calf (Ex 33:34); "Nevertheless in the day when I visit, I will visit their sin upon them", so interpreting and applying all the numerous calamities which since have befallen them to relate to no other cause than that their first idolatry. Whereas, indeed, the arrears of their idolatry long ago were satisfied, and this is a new debt of later date contracted on themselves by their infidelity. *Thomas Fuller, 1608-1661, in "A Pisgah Sight of Palestine."*

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



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

**Verse 19-20.** Apis, or Serapis, was a true living black bull, with a white list or streak along the back, a white mark in fashion of an half moon on his right shoulder, only two hairs growing on his tail (why just so many and no more, the devil knows), with a fair square blaze on his forehead, and a great bunch called cantharus under his tongue. What art their priests did use to keep up the breed and preserve succession of cattle with such gwrismata, or privy marks, I list not to inquire... Besides this natural and living bull, kept in one place, they also worshipped boun diacruson, a golden or gilded ox, the image or portraiture of the former. Some conceive this Apis to have been the symbol and emblem of Joseph the patriarch, so called from ba, *ab*, a father, seeing he is said to be made by God a father to Pharaoh (Ge 45:8), that is, preserver of him and his country; and therefore the Egyptians, in after ages, gratified his memory with statues of an ox, a creature so useful in ploughing, sowing, bringing home, and treading out of corn, to perpetuate that gift of grain he had conferred upon them. They strengthen their conjecture because Serapis (which one will have to be nothing else but Apis with addition of *rv*, *sar*, that is, a prince, whence perchance our English Sir) was pictured with a bushel over his head, and Joseph (we know) was corn meter general in Egypt. Though others, on good ground, conceive ox worship in Egypt of far greater antiquity. However, hence Aaron (Ex 32:4), and hence afterwards Jeroboam (who flying from Solomon, lived some years with Shishak, king of Egypt, 1Ki 11:40) had the pattern of their calves, which they made for the children of Israel to worship. If any object the Egyptians' idols were bulls or oxen, the Israelites' but calves, the difference is not considerable; for (besides the objector never looked into the mouths of the latter to know their age) *gradus non variat speciem*, a less character is not another letter. Yea, Herodotus calls Apis himself moscov, a calf, and Vitulus is of as large acceptance among the Latins. Such an old calf the poet describes—

Ego hanc vitalam (ne forte recuses  
 Bis venit ad mulctram binos alit ubere faetus)  
 Depono.  
 My calf I lay (lest you mistake both tides  
 She comes to the pail and suckles twain besides).  
 But to put all out of doubt, what in Exodus is termed a calf, the psalmist

calleth an ox (Ps 106:20).

—*Thomas Fuller.*

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

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

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

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

**Verse 21.** Let us observe in this place that Israel is now for the third time accused of forgetting God; above in Ps 106:7, afterwards in Ps 106:13, and now in Ps 106:21. And that he might shew the greatness of this forgetfulness he does not simply say they forgot God, but adds, *their Saviour*: not the Saviour of their fathers in former times, but *their own Saviour.* *Musculus.*

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

**Verse 23.** *Moses his chosen stood before him in the breach.* Moses stood in the gap, and diverted the wrath of God; the hedge of religion and worship was broken down by a golden calf, and he made it up: Nu 16:41-42, the people murmured, rose up against Moses and Aaron, trod down the hedge of authority, whereupon the plague brake in upon them; presently Aaron steps That into the gap, makes up the hedge, and stops the plague, Nu 16:47-48 which they did was honourable; and they were repairers of breaches. We,

through infinite mercy, have had some like Moses and Aaron, to make up our hedges, raise up our foundations, and stop some gaps; but all our gaps are not yet stopped. Are there not gaps in the hedge of doctrine? If it were not so, how came in such erroneous, blasphemous, and wild opinions amongst us? Are there not gaps in the hedges of civil and ecclesiastical authority? Do not multitudes trample upon magistracy and ministry, all powers, both human and divine? Are there not gaps in the worship of God? Do not too many tread down all churches, all ordinances, yea, the very Scriptures? Are there not gaps in the hedge of justice, through which the bulls of Bashan enter, which oppress the poor, and crush the needy? Am 4:1: Are there not gaps in the hedge of love; is not that bond of perfection broken? Are there not bitter envyings and strife amongst us; do we not bite and devour one another? Are there not gaps in the hedge of conscience? Is not the peace broken between God and your souls? Doth not Satan come in oft at the gap, and disturb you? Are there not gaps also in your several relations, whereby he gets advantage? Surely, if our eyes be in our heads, we may see gaps enough. *William Greenhill.*

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

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

**Verse 24.** *Yea, they despised.* When the promised inheritance of heaven (which was figured by the pleasant *land of promise*), is not counted worthy of all the pains and difficulties which can be sustained and met with in the way of going toward it; the promised inheritance is but little esteemed of, as appeareth in the Israelites, who for love of ease, and fear of the Canaanites, were ready to turn back to Egypt: *They despised the pleasant land.* *David Dickson.*

**Verse 24.** *They despised the pleasant land.* This was a type of heaven, the good land afar off; the better country, the land of promise and rest; in which

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

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

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

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

walled up to heaven. Oh, what a take in! and the last breath of the last survivors of that querulous race goes forth in a hurricane of reproach and remonstrance—a perfect storm of murmurs. *James Hamilton* (1814-1867) in "*Moses the man of God.*"

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

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

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

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

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

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

His obsequies to Polydorus paying  
A tomb we raise, and altars to the dead  
With dark blue fillets and black cypress bind  
Our dames with hair dishevelled stand to mourn;

Warm frothy bowls of milk and sacred blood  
 We offer, in his grave the spirit lay,  
 Call him aloud, and bid our last farewell. *Virgil.*

**Verse 29.** *They provoked him to anger with their inventions.* Note, that it is not said, *with their deeds*, but with their pursuits (*studies*). It is one thing simply to do a thing; it is quite another to pursue it earnestly night and day. The first may take place by chance, or through ignorance, or on account of some temptation, or violence, and that without the consent and against the inclination of the mind. But the latter is brought about in pursuance of a fixed purpose and design and by effort and forethought. We see, therefore, in this passage that the patience of God was at length provoked to anger and fury when the people sinned not merely once and again, but when the pursuit of sin grew and strengthened. *Musculus.*

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

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

**Verse 30.** *Then stood up Phinehas.* All Israel saw the bold lewdness of Zimri, but their hearts and eyes were so full of grief, that they had not room enough for indignation. Phinehas looked on with the rest, but with other affections. When he saw this defiance bidden to God, and this insult upon

the sorrow of his people (that while they were wringing their hands, a proud miscreant durst outface their humiliation with his wicked dalliance), his heart boils with a desire of a holy revenge; and now that hand, which was used to a censer and sacrificing knife, takes tip his javelin, and, with one stroke, joins these two bodies in their death, which were joined in their sin, and in the very fragrance of their lust, makes a new way for their souls to their own place. O noble and heroical courage of Phinehas! Which, as it was rewarded of God, so is worthy to be admired of men. He doth not stand casting of scruples: Who am I to do this? The son of the high priest. My place is all for peace and mercy: it is for me to sacrifice, and pray for the sin of the people, not to sacrifice any of the people for their sin. My duty calls me to appease the anger of God what I may, not to revenge the sins of men; to pray for their conversion, not to work the confusion of any sinner. And who are these? Is not the one a great prince in Israel, the other a princess of Midian? Can the death of two so famous personages go unrevenge? Or, if it be safe and fit, why doth my uncle Moses rather shed his own tears than their blood? I will mourn with the rest; let them revenge whom it concerneth. But the zeal of God hath barred out all weak deliberations; and he holds it now both his duty and his glory, to be an executioner of so shameless a pair of offenders. . . . Now the sin is punished, the plague ceaseth. The revenge of God sets out ever after the sin; but if the revenge of men (which commonly comes later) can overtake it, God gives over the chase. How oft hath the infliction of a less punishment avoided a greater! There are none so good friends to the state, as courageous and impartial ministers of justice: these are the reconcilers of God and the people, more than the prayers of them that sit still and do nothing. *Joseph Hall.*

**Verse 30.** *Then stood up Phinehas, etc.* Mark the mighty principle, which rolled like a torrent in the heart of Phinehas. The Spirit leaves it not obscure. The praise is this, "He was zealous for his God", Nu 25:13. He could not fold his arms, and see God's law insulted, his rule defied, his majesty and empire scorned. The servant's heart blazed in one blaze of godly indignation. He must be up to vindicate his Lord. His fervent love, his bold resolve, fear nothing in a righteous cause. The offending Zimri was a potent prince: nevertheless he spared him not. Believer, can you read this and feel no shame? Do your bold efforts testify your zeal? Sinners blaspheme God's name. Do you rebuke? His Sabbaths are profaned. Do you protest? False principles are current? Do you expose the counterfeits? Vice stalks in virtue's garb. Do you tear down the mask? Satan enthral the world. Do you resist? Nay, rather are you not dozing unconcerned? Whether Christ's cause succeeds, or be cast down, you little care. If righteous zeal girded your loins,

and braced your nerves, and moved the rudder of your heart, and swelled your sails of action, would God be so unknown, and blasphemy so daring? Mark, next, the zeal of Phinehas is sound minded. It is not as a courser without rein, a torrent unembanked, a hurricane let loose. Its steps are set in order's path. It executes God's own will in God's own way. The mandate says, let the offenders die. He aims a death blow, then, with obedient hand. The zeal, which heaven kindles, is always a submissive grace. *Henry Law, in "Christ is All", 1858.*

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

**Verse 30.** *So the plague was stayed.* God himself puts this peculiar honour of staying the plague (when he was about to destroy the whole camp) upon this fact of Phinehas, saying, "He hath turned away my wrath", Nu 25:10-11, because he was acted with the same zeal for God's glory and Israel's good, as God himself is acted with for them, and feared not to lose his life in God's cause, by putting to death a prince and a princess in the very flagrancy of their lust at one blow. There is such an accent and such an emphasis put by the Lord on this act, (as the Jewish Rabbis observe), that here they begin the forty-first section or lecture of the Law, or (as Vatablus saith) the seventh section of the book, which they call Phinehas. Moreover, it teacheth us, that zeal of justice in the cause of God is an hopeful means to remove God's wrath from, and to procure his mercy to, man. Thus David also made an atonement by doing justice on Saul's house, 2Sa 21:3, etc. . . . Phinehas by virtue of this promise of the priesthood (Nu 25:12-13) lived himself to a great old age, even (as some say) to three hundred years, as appeareth by Jud 20:28, where he then is found alive, for his zeal at this time. He lived so long that some of the Rabbis are of opinion that he died not at all, but is still alive, whom they suppose to be the Elias that is to come before the coming of Christ; but this notion is confuted by others of their Rabbis, and by the mention of his seed succeeding him in sacred Scripture. However, though few after the Flood did near attain to any such age, yet must Phinehas be very old in that time of Israel's warring with Benjamin...Phinehas's priesthood is called "everlasting", not in his person, but in his posterity, whose sons were successively high priests till the captivity of Babylon, 1Ch 6:4-16; and at the return out of captivity, Ezra, the great priest and scribe, was of his line, Ezr 7:1-6; and so it continued in that line until, or very near,



the approach of our evangelical High Priest (as Christ is called, Heb 5:6), who was of the order of Melchizedek. *Christopher Ness*.

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

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

**Verse 30.** Elevation of mind and sweetness of spirit are pearls of great price, and if we wish to preserve them we had better intrust them to God's own keeping. If Moses lost his faith, it was by first losing self command: and if a man lose this, it is hard to say what next he may lose: like the mad warrior who makes a missile of his shield and hurls it at the head of all enemy, he is henceforward open to every fiery dart, to the cut and thrust of every assailant. But, as John Newton remarks, "The grace of God is as necessary to create a right temper in a Christian on the breaking of a china plate as on the death of an only son"; and as no man can tell on any dawning day but what that may be the most trying day in all his life, how wise to pray without ceasing, "uphold me according unto thy word. Hold thou me up, and I shall be safe." "Set a watch, O Lord, before my mouth: keep the door of my lips." "Who can understand his errors? Cleanse thou me from secret faults. Keep back thy servant also from presumptuous sins; let them not have dominion over me: then shall I be upright, and I shall be innocent from the great transgression."—*James Hamilton.*

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

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

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

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

"Ho! every one that thirsteth", the preacher says, "Hear now, ye rebels; must we fetch you water out of this rock?" and makes the very invitation repulsive.

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

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

**Verse 33.** *They provoked his spirit*, etc. Angry he certainly was; and when, reverting to a former miracle, the Most High directed him to take the wonder staff—his rod of many miracles and at the head of the congregation "speak to the rock", and it would "give forth its water", in the heat and agitation of his spirit he failed to implement implicitly the Divine command. Instead of speaking to the rock he spoke to the people, and his harangue was no longer in the language calm and dignified of the lawgiver, but had a certain tone of petulance and egotism. "Hear now, ye rebels, must we—must I and Aaron, not must Jehovah—fetch you water out of this rock?" And instead of simply speaking to it, he raised the rod and dealt it two successive strokes, just as if the rock were sharing the general perversity, and would no more than the people obey its Creator's bidding. He was angry, and he sinned. He sinned and was severely punished. Water flowed sufficient for the whole camp and the cattle, clear, cool, and eagerly gushing, enough for all the million; but at the same moment that its unmerited bounty burst on you, ye rebels, "a cup of

wrath was put into the hand of Moses." (Van Oosterzee.) To you, ye murmurers, there came forth living water; to your venerable leaders the cup of God's anger. "The Lord spoke unto Moses and Aaron, Because ye believed me not, to sanctify me in the eyes of the children of Israel, therefore ye shall not bring this congregation into the land which I have given them." Nu 20:12. *James Hamilton.*

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

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

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

1. They spared the nations which God had doomed to destruction (Ps 106:34). When they had got the good land God had promised them, they had

no zeal against the wicked inhabitants, whom the Lord commanded them to extirpate, pretending pity; but so merciful is God, that no man needs to be in any case more compassionate than he.

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

3. When they mingled with them, and learned some of their works that seemed innocent diversions and entertainments, yet they thought they would never join with them in their worship; but by degrees they learned that too (Ps 106:36). *They served their idols* in the same manner, and with the same rites that they served them; and they became a snare unto them, that sin drew on many more, and brought the judgments of God upon them, which they themselves could not but be sensible of, and yet knew not how to recover themselves.

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

**Verse 37.** *Yea, they sacrificed their sons and their daughters unto devils.* We need no better argument to discover the nature of these gods than this very service in my text accepted of them: for both by the record of sacred writ, and relation of heathen authors and other writers, we know that nothing was so usually commanded nor gratefully accepted by these heathenish gods, as

was the shedding of man's blood, and the sacrificing of men, maids, and children unto them, as appears by the usual practice of men in former times. From the testimonies of Scripture, I give only the example of the king of Moab, mentioned in 2Ki 3:27, where it is said, that, being in some straits, "He took his eldest son that should have reigned in his stead, and offered him for a burnt offering upon the wall."

The stories likewise of the heathen are full of like examples. When the oracle of Apollo was asked by the Athenians how they might make amends for their killing of Androgens, it willed them to send yearly to king Minos seven bodies of each sex to appease the wrath of god. Now this kind of yearly sacrifice continued still in Athens in the time of Socrates. Thus the Carthaginians, being vanquished by Agathocles, king of Sicily, and supposing their god to be displeased, to appease him did sacrifice two hundred noble men's children. This custom was ancient even before the Trojan war, for then was Iphigenia sacrificed. Thus we read that the Latins sacrificed the tenth of their children to Jupiter; that men and children were usually sacrificed to Saturn in many places in Candia, Rhodomene, Phoenice, Africa, and those commonly the choice and dearest of their children and most nobly descended. The manner of sacrificing their children to Saturn, Diodorus relates to be this: bringing their children to the statue or image of Saturn, which was of huge greatness, they gave them into his hands, which were made so hollow and winding that the children offered slipped and fell down through into a cave and furnace of fire. These sacrifices continued in use till the birth and death of our Saviour Christ, who came to destroy the work of the devil; for such sacrifices were first forbidden by Augustus Caesar; after more generally by Tiberius (in whose reign our Saviour suffered) who, as Tertullian writes, so straitly forbade them, that he crucified the priests who offered them: howbeit, even in Tertullian's time, and after in Eusebius' and Lactantius' times, such sacrifices were offered (but closely) to Jupiter Latialis.

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

*"The Height of Israel's Heathenish Idolatrie, in Sacrificing their Children to the Devil," 1621.*

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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



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

---

### HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

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

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

**Verse 2.**

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

**Verse 3.** The blessedness of a godly life.

**Verse 4.**

1. The language of Humility: "Remember me, O Lord." Let me not escape thy notice amongst the many millions of creatures under thy care.
2. The language of Faith.

(a) That God has a people to whom he shows special favour.

(b) That he himself has provided salvation for them.

3. The language of prayer.

(a) For the free gift of salvation.

(b) For the common salvation—not wishing to be peculiar, but to be as "Thy people", taking them for all in all, both here and hereafter. Walking in the footsteps of the flock.

"Be this my glory, Lord, to be  
Joined to thy saints, and near to thee."—*G.R.*

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

### **Verse 5.**

1. The Persons: "Thy chosen"; "Thy nation"; "Thine inheritance."

2. The Privileges: "The good of thy chosen"; "The gladness of thy nation"; "The glory of thine inheritance."

3. The Pleas: "That I may see", etc. They were once as I am: make me what they are now.

(a) My salvation is everything to me. "That I may see," etc. "That I may rejoice", etc. They are many, I am but one. "That I may glory", etc.—*G.R.*

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

### **Verses 7-8.**

1. On man's part a darkened understanding, ungrateful forgetfulness, and provocation.

2. On God's part: understanding discovering a reason for mercy; memory mindful of the covenant; patience revealing its power.

### **Verses 7-8.**

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

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

**Verse 8.**

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

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

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

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

2. Israel's three helps.

(a) Providence.

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

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

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

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

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

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

**Verses 13-15.**

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

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

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

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

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

**Verse 14.** The wickedness of inordinate desires.

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

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

3. They are despisers of former mercies—see preceding verses.
4. They involve solemn danger—see following verse.

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

**Verse 19.** The sinner as an inventor.

**Verses 19-22.**

1. The Sin remembered.

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

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

(c) The idolatry of Egypt under which they had suffered, and from which they had been delivered.

(d) Idolatry after many wonderful interpositions of the true God in their behalf.

2. The Remembrance of Sin.

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

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

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

**Verse 23.**

1. Mediation required: "He said that he would destroy them," etc.

2. Mediation offered: "Moses stood before him in the breach."

3. Mediation accepted: "To turn away his wrath", etc. Ex 32:1-35. *G.R.*

**Verse 24-26.** Murmuring.

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

**Verse 24-27.**

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

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

**Verses 32-33.**

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

**Verse 33.**

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

**Verse 34-42.**

1. What Israel did not do. They began well, but did not complete the conquest of their foes: Ps 106:34.
2. What they did do: Ps 106:35-39.
  - (a) They became friendly with them.

- (b) They adopted their habits: "learned their works."
- (c) They embraced their religion: "served their idols."
- (d) They imitated their cruelties; Ps 106:37-38.
- (e) They did worse than the heathen (Ps 106:39), they added wicked inventions of their own.

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

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

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

- 1. Is very provoking to God.
- 2. Ensures chastisement.
- 3. Is to be sincerely mourned—"their cry."
- 4. Will be graciously forgiven, and its effect removed. So the covenant promises.

**Verse 47.**

- 1. An earnest Prayer: "Save us, O Lord", etc.
- 2. A Believing Prayer: "O Lord *our* God."
- 3. A humble Prayer: "Gather us from among the heathen."
- 4. A sincere Prayer: "To give thanks unto thy holy name"; to own thy justice and holiness in all thy ways.
- 5. A confident Prayer: "To triumph in thy praise." None but bruised spices give forth such odours.—*G.R.*

**Verse 48.**

1. God is to be praised as the "God of Israel."
  - (a) Of typical Israel.
  - (b) Of the true Israel.
2. He is to be praised as the God of Israel under all circumstances: for his judgments as well as for his mercies.
3. At all times: "From everlasting to everlasting."
4. By all people: "Let all the people say, Amen."
5. As the beginning and end of every song: "Praise ye the Lord."—*G.R.*

**Verse 48.** *Let all the people say, Amen.* The exhortation to universal praise. All men are indebted to the Lord, all have sinned, all hear the gospel, all his people are saved. Unanimity in praise is pleasant, and promotes unity in other matters.