

《The Treasury of David (Vol. 10)(C.H. Spurgeon)》

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Psalm 119 (Verse 129 to Verse 176)

EXPOSITION

Verse 129. -- Thy commands are wonderful. Full of wonderful revelations, commands and promises. Wonderful in their nature, as being free from all error, and bearing within themselves overwhelming self evidence of their truth; wonderful in their effects as instructing, elevating, strengthening, and comforting the soul. Jesus the eternal Word is called Wonderful, and all the uttered words of God are wonderful in their degree. Those who know them best wonder at them most. It is wonderful that God should have borne testimony at all to sinful men, and more wonderful still that his testimony should be of such a character, so clear, so full, so gracious, so mighty.

Therefore doth my soul keep them. Their wonderful character so impressed itself upon his mind that he kept them in his memory: their wonderful excellence so charmed his heart that he kept them in his life. Some men wonder at the words of God, and use them for their speculation; but David was always practical, and the more he wondered the more he obeyed. Note that his religion was soul work; not with head and hand alone did he keep the testimonies; but his soul, his truest and most real self, held fast to them.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 129. -- *Thy testimonies are wonderful.* The Scriptures are "wonderful," with respect to the matter which they contain, the manner in which they are written, and the effects which they produce. They contain the most sublime spiritual truths, veiled under external ceremonies and sacraments, figurative descriptions, typical histories, parables, similitudes, etc. When properly opened and

enforced, they terrify and humble, they convert and transform, they console and strengthen. Who but must delight to study and to "observe" these "testimonies" of the will and the wisdom, the love and the power of God Most High! While we have these holy writings, let us not waste our time, misemploy our thoughts, and prostitute our admiration, by doting on human follies, and wondering at human trifles. --George Horne.

Verse 129. -- *Thy testimonies are wonderful.* God's testimonies are "wonderful"

1. In their majesty and composure, which striketh reverence into the hearts of those that consider; the Scripture speaketh to us at a God like rate.
2. It is "wonderful" for the matter and depth of mystery, which cannot be found elsewhere, concerning God, and Christ, the creation of the world, the souls of men, and their immortal and everlasting condition, the fall of man, etc.
3. It is "wonderful" for purity and perfection. The Decalogue in ten words comprise the whole duty of man, and reacheth to the very soul, and all the motions of the heart.
4. It is "wonderful" for the harmony and consent of all the parts. All religion is of a piece, and one part doth not interfere with another, but conspires to promote the great end, of subjection of the creature to God.
5. It is "wonderful" for the power of it. There is a mighty power which goeth along with the word of God, and astonishes the hearts of those that consider it and feel it. 1 Thessalonians 1:5.
--Thomas Manton.

Verse 129. -- *Thy testimonies are wonderful.* The Bible itself is an astonishing and standing miracle. Written fragment by fragment through the course of fifteen centuries, under different states of society, and in different languages, by persons of the most opposite tempers, talents, and conditions, learned and unlearned, prince and peasant, bond and free; cast into every form of instructive composition and good writing; history, prophecy, poetry, allegory, emblematic representation, judicious interpretation, literal statement, precept, example, proverbs, disquisition, epistle, sermon, prayer -- in short, all rational shapes of human discourse, and treating, moreover, on subjects not obvious, but most difficult; its authors are not found like other men, contradicting one another upon the most ordinary matters of fact and opinion, but are at harmony upon the whole of their sublime and momentous scheme. --J. Maclagan, 1788-1852.

Verse 129. -- *Highly prize the Scriptures,* or you will not obey them. David said, "therefore doth my soul keep them"; and why was this, but that he counted them to be wonderful? Can he make a proficiency in any art, who doth slight and deprecate it? Prize this book of God above all other books. St. Gregory calls the Bible "the heart and soul of God." The rabbins say, that there is a mountain of sense hangs upon every apex and tittle of Scripture. "The law of the Lord is perfect" (Psalms 14:7). The Scripture is the library of the Holy Ghost; it is a pandect of divine knowledge, an exact model and

platform of religion. The Scripture contains in it the credenda, "the things which we are to believe," and the agenda, "the things which we are to practise." It is "able to make us wise unto salvation": 2 Timothy 3:15. "The Scripture is the standard of truth," the judge of controversies; it is the pole star to direct us to heaven (Isaiah 8:20). "The commandment is a lamp": Proverbs 6:23. The Scripture is the compass by which the rudder of our will is to be steered; it is the field in which Christ, the Pearl of price, is hid; it is a rock of diamonds, it is a sacred collyrium, or "we salve;" it mends their eyes that look upon it; it is a spiritual optic glass in which the glory of God is resplendent; it is the panacea or "universal medicine" for the soul. The leaves of Scripture are like the leaves of the tree of life, "for the healing of the nations": Revelation 22:2. The Scripture is both the breeder and feeder of grace. How is the convert born, but by "the word of truth"? James 1:18. How doth he grow, but by "the sincere milk of the word"? 1 Peter 2:2. The word written is the book out of which our evidences for heaven are fetched; it is the sea mark which shows us the rocks of sin to avoid; it is the antidote against error and apostasy, the two edged sword which wounds the old serpent. It is our bulwark to withstand the force of lust; like the Capitol of Rome, which was a place of strength and ammunition. The Scripture is the "tower of David," whereon the shields of our faith hang: Song of Solomon 4:4. "Take away the word, and you deprive us of the sun," said Luther. The word written is above an angelic embassy, or voice from heaven. "This voice which came from heaven we heard. We have also," bebaioteron lolon, "a more sure word": 2Pe 1:18-19 O, prize the word written; prizing is the way to profiting. If Caesar so valued his Commentaries, that for preserving them he lost his purple robe, how should we estimate the sacred oracles of God? "I have esteemed the words of his mouth more than my necessary food": Job 23:12. King Edward the Sixth, on the day of his coronation, had presented before him three swords, signifying that he was monarch of three kingdoms. The king said, there was one sword wanting; being asked what that was, he answered, "The Holy Bible, which is the sword of the Spirit, and is to be preferred before these ensigns of royalty." Robert King of Sicily did so prize God's word, that, speaking to his friend Petrarcha, he said, "I protest, the Scriptures are dearer to me than my kingdom; and if I must be deprived of one of them, I had rather lose my diadem than the Scriptures." -- Thomas Watson, in "The Morning Exercises."

Verse 129. -- *The word contains matter to exercise the greatest minds.* Many men cannot endure to spend their thoughts and time about trivial matters; whereas others think it happiness enough if they can, by the meanest employments, procure subsistence. Oh, let all those of high aspirations exercise themselves in the law of God; here are objects fit for great minds, yea, objects that will elevate the greatest: and indeed none in the world are truly great but the saints, for they exercise themselves in the great counsels of God. We account those men the greatest that are employed in state affairs: now the saints are lifted up above all things in the world, and regard them all as little and mean, and are exercised in the great affairs of the kingdom of Jesus Christ. Hence the Lord would have the

kings and the judges to have the book of the law written, Deuteronomy 17:18-19; and it is reported of Alphonsus, king of Arragon, that in the midst of all his great and manifold occupations, he read over the Scriptures fourteen times with commentaries. How many have we, men of great estates, and claiming to be of great minds, that scarce regard the law of God: they look upon his law as beneath them. Books of history and war they will peruse with diligence; but for the Scripture, it is a thing that has little in it. It is a special means to obedience to have high thoughts of God's law. That is the reason why the prophet speaks thus, "I have written to him the great things of my law, but they were counted as a strange thing": Hosea 8:12. As if he should say, if they had had the things of my law in their thoughts, they would never so have acted. Psalms 114:129, "Thy testimonies are wonderful, therefore doth my soul keep them." He saith not, therefore do I keep them; but, therefore doth my soul keep them; my very soul is in this, in keeping thy testimonies, for I look upon them as wonderful things. It is a good sign that the spirit of the great God is in a man, when it raises him above other things, to look upon the things of his word as the only great things in the world. "All flesh is grass, and all the godliness thereof is as the flower of the field: the grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever:" Isa 40:6,8. There is a vanity in all things of the world; but in that which the word reveals, in that there is an eternity: we should therefore admire at nothing so as at the word, and we should greatly delight in God's commandments; an ordinary degree of admiration or delight is not sufficient, but great admiration and great delight there should be in the law of God. And all arguments drawn from God's law should powerfully prevail with you. -- Jeremiah Burroughs.

Verse 129. -- *Thy testimonies are wonderful.* Wonders will never cease. Air, earth, water, the world above, the world beneath, time, eternity, worms, birds, fishes, beasts men, angels are all full of wonders. The more all things are studied, the more do wonders appear. It is idle, therefore, to find fault with the mysteries of Scripture, or to deny them. Inspiration glories in them. He who rejects the mysteries of love, grace, truth, power, justice and thankfulness of God's word, rejects salvation. It has marvels in itself, and marvels in its operation. They are good cause of love, not of offence; of keeping, not of breaking God's precepts. --William S. Plumer.

Verse 129. -- *My soul,* not merely I, but I with all my heart and soul. --Joseph Addison Alexander.

Verse 129. -- *I have completed reading the whole Bible through since January last.* I began it on the first day of the present year, and finished it on the 26th of October. I have read it in that space four times, and not without real profit to myself. I always find in it something new; it being, like its Author, infinite and inexhaustible. --Samuel Eyles Pierce, 1814.

Verse 129. -- *What do I not owe to the Lord for permitting me to take a part in the translation of his word? Never did I see such wonders,* and wisdom, and love, in the blessed book, as since I have been obliged to study every expression; and it is a delightful reflection, that death cannot deprive us of the pleasure of studying its mysteries. -- Henry Martyn.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Outlines Upon Keywords of the Psalm, by Pastor C. A. Davis.

Verse 129-136. -- The wonderfulness of God's testimonies. (Psalms 119:129), instanced as light giving (Psalms 119:130), pantingly longed (Psalms 119:131). An appeal for divine ordering in the word (Psalms 119:132-135) at its rejection by others (Psalms 119:136).

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 129-136. -- In this division the Psalmist --

1. Praises God's word.
2. Shows his affection to it.
3. Prays for grace to keep it.
4. Mourns for those who do not. --Adam Clarke.

Verse 129. -- The wonderful character of the word a reason for obedience. So wonderfully pure, just, balanced, elevating. So much for our own benefit, for the good of society, and for the divine glory.

Verse 129. --

1. What is wonderful in God's word should be believed.
2. What is believed should be obeyed. --G.R.

Verse 129. -- Thy testimonies are wonderful.

1. The facts which they record are wonderful -- so wonderful, that, if the book recording them were now published for the first time, there would be no bounds to the avidity and curiosity with which it would be sought and perused.
2. The morality which they inculcate is wonderful.
3. If you turn from the morality to the doctrines of the Bible, your admiration will rather increase than diminish at the contents of the singular book.
4. These testimonies are wonderful for the style in which they are written.
5. They are wonderful for their preservation in the world.
6. They are wonderful for the effects which they have produced. --Hugh Hughes, 1838.

Verse 129. -- Thy testimonies are wonderful. The ceremonial law is wonderful, because the mystery of our redemption by the blood of Christ is pointed out in it.

1. The prophecies are wonderful, as predicting things, humanly speaking, so uncertain, and at such great distance of time, with so much accuracy.
2. The decalogue is wonderful, as containing in a very few words all the principles of justice and charity.
3. Were we to go to the New Testament, here wonders rise on wonders! All is astonishing; but the Psalmist could not have had this in view. --Adam Clarke.

Verse 129. (first clause). --

1. Let us look at five of the wonders of the Bible.

(a) Its authority. It prefaces every statement with a "Thus saith the Lord."

(b) Its light.

(c) Its power -- it has a convincing, awakening, drawing, life giving power.

(d) Its depth.

(e) Its universal adaptation.

1. Indicate three practical uses.

(a) Study the Bible daily.

(b) Pray for the Spirit to grave it on your heart with a pen of iron.

(c) Practise it daily. --D. Macgregor.

Verse 129. -- To whom and in what respects are God's testimonies wonderful?

1. To whom? To those, and those only, who through grace do know, believe, and experience the truth and power of them for themselves.

2. In what respects wonderful, i.e., astonishingly pleasing, delightful, and profitable (see Psalms 119:174).

a. In respect of the Author and origin of them, whose they are and from whence they come.

(b) In respect of the subject matter of them, which they contain and reveal.

(c) In respect of the manner of language in which they are revealed and declared.

(d) In respect of the multitude and variety of them suited to every case.

(e) In respect of the usefulness of them, and the great benefit and advantage he received from them.

(f) In the respect of the pleasure and delight he finds in them (see Psalms 119:111).

(g) In respect of the final design, intent, and end of them: viz., eternal life, salvation, and glory. --Samuel Medley, 1738-1799.

EXPOSITION

Verse 130. The entrance of thy words giveth light. No sooner do they gain admission into the soul than they enlighten it: what light may be expected from their prolonged indwelling! Their very

entrance floods the mind with instruction for they are so full, so clear; but, on the other hand, there must be such an "entrance," or there will be no illumination. The mere hearing of the word with the external ear is of small value by itself, but when the words of God enter into the chambers of the heart then light is scattered on all sides. The word finds no entrance into some minds because they are blocked up with self conceit, or prejudice, or indifference; but where due attention is given, divine illumination must surely follow upon a knowledge of the mind of God. Oh, that thy words, like the beams of the sun, may enter through the window of my understanding, and dispel the darkness of my mind!

It giveth understanding unto the simple. The sincere and candid are the true disciples of the word. To such it gives not only knowledge, but understanding. These simple hearted ones are frequently despised, and their simplicity has another meaning infused into it, so as to be made the theme of ridicule; but what matters it? Those whom the world dubs as fools are among the truly wise if they are taught of God. What a divine power rests in the word of God, since it not only bestows light, but gives that very mental eye by which the light is received -- "It giveth understanding." Hence the value of the words of God to the simple, who cannot receive mysterious truth unless their minds are aided to see it and prepared to grasp it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 130. -- *The opening of thy words enlightens*, making the simple understand. The common version of the first word (entrance) is inaccurate, and the one here given, though exact, is ambiguous. The clause does not refer to the mechanical opening of the book by the reader, but to the spiritual opening of its true sense by divine illumination, to the mind which naturally cannot discern it. --Joseph Addison Alexander.

Verse 130. -- *Entrance*, lit. opening, i.e. unfolding or unveiling. --J.J Stewart Perowne.

Verse 130. -- *The entrance of thy words giveth light*. The first entrance, or vestibule: for the Psalmist wishes to point out that only the beginnings are apprehended in this life; and that these beginnings are to be preferred to all human wisdom. --Henricus Mollerus.

Verse 130. -- *The entrance of thy words giveth light*, etc. The beginning of them; the first three chapters in Genesis, what light do they give into the origin of all things; the creation of man, his state of innocence; his fall through the temptations of Satan, and his recovery and salvation by Christ, the seed of the woman! The first principles of the oracles of God, the rudiments of religion, the elements of the world, the rites of the ceremonial law gave great light unto Gospel mysteries. --John Gill.

Verse 130. -- *The entrance of thy words giveth light*. A profane shop man crams into his pocket a leaf of a Bible, and reads the last words of Daniel: "Go thou thy way, till the end be, for thou shalt rest and stand in thy lot at the end of the days," and begins to think what his own lot will be when days are ended. A Gottingen Professor opens a big printed Bible to see if he has eyesight enough to read it,

and alights on the passage, "I will bring the blind by a way that they knew not," and in reading in the eyes of his understanding are enlightened. Cromwell's soldier opens his Bible to see how far the musket ball has pierced, and finds it stopped at the verse: "Rejoice, O young man, in thy youth, and let thy heart cheer thee in the days of thy youth; and walk in the ways of thine heart and the sight of thine eyes; but know thou that for all these things God will bring thee into judgment." And in a frolic the Kentish soldier opens the Bible which his broken hearted mother had sent him, and the first sentence that turns up is the text so familiar in boyish days: "Come unto me, all ye that labour and are heavy laden," and the weary profligate repairs for rest to Jesus Christ. --James Hamilton, 1814-1867.

Verse 130. -- *He amplifies this praise of the word of God when he saith that the entrance thereof, the first operant of the door of the word, gives light: for if the first entrance to it give light, what will the progress and continuance thereof do? This accuseth the age wherein we live, who now of a long time hath been taught by the word of God so clearly, that in regard of time they might have been teachers of others, yet are they but children in knowledge and understanding. But to whom doth the word give understanding? David saith to the "simple": not to such as are high minded, or double in heart, or wise in their own eyes, who will examine the mysteries of godliness by the quickness of natural reason. No: to such as deny themselves, as captive their natural understanding, and like humble disciples submit themselves, not to ask, but to hear; not to reason, but to believe. And if for this cause, naturalists who want this humility cannot profit by the word; what marvel that Papists far less become wise by it, who have their hearts so full of prejudices concerning it, that they spare not to utter blasphemies against it, calling it not unprofitable, but pernicious to the simple and to the idiots. And again, where they charge it with difficulty, that simple men and idiots should not be suffered to read it, because it is obscure; all these frivolous allegations of men are annulled by this one testimony of God, that it gives light to the simple.* --William Cowper.

Verse

- a. -- Light. This "light" hath excellent properties.
- b. It is lux manifestans, it manifests itself and all things else. How do I see the sun, but by the sun, by its own light? How do I know the Scripture to be the word of God, but by the light that shineth in it, commending itself to my conscience! So it manifests all things else; it layeth open all frauds and impostures of Satan, the vanity of worldly things, the deceits of the heart, the odiousness of sin.
- c. It is lux dirigens, a directing light, that we may see our way and work. As the sun lighteth man to his labour, so doth this direct us in all our conditions: Ps 119:
- d. It directs us how to manage ourselves in all conditions.
- e. It is lux vivificans, a quickening light. "I am the light of the world: he that followeth me shall not walk in darkness, but shall have the light of life": Joh 8:

- f. "Awake thou that sleepest, and arise from the dead, and Christ shall give thee light": Eph 5:
- g. That light was the life of men: so is this spiritual life; it not only discovereth the object, but helpeth the faculty, filleth the soul with life and strength.
- h. It is lux exhilarans, a comforting, refreshing, cheering light; and that in two respects.
 1. Because it presents us with excellent grounds of comfort.
 2. Because it is a soul satisfying light. --Condensed from Manton.

Verse 130. -- *It giveth understanding.* If all the books in the world were assembled together, the Bible would as much take the lead in disciplining the understanding as in directing the soul. It will not make astronomers, chemists, or linguists; but there is a great difference between strengthening the mind and storing it with information. --Henry Melvill.

Verse 130. -- *It giveth understanding to the simple.* There are none so knowing that God cannot blind; none so blind and ignorant whose mind and heart his Spirit cannot open. He who, by his incubation upon the waters at the creation, hatched that rude mass into the beautiful form we now see, and out of that dark chaos made the glorious heavens, and garnished them with so many orient stars, can move upon thy dark soul and enlighten it, though it be as void of knowledge as the evening of the world's first day was of light. The schoolmaster sometimes sends home the child, and bids his father to put him to another trade, because not able, with all his art, to make a scholar of him; but if the Spirit of God be master, thou shalt learn, though a dunce: "The entrance of thy word giveth light, it giveth understanding to the simple.": No sooner is the soul entered into the Spirit's school, than he becomes a proficient. --William Gurnall.

Verse 130. -- *To the simple.* He does not say, "giveth understanding" to the wise and prudent, to learned men, and to those skilled in letters; but to the "simple." -- Wolfgang Musculus.

Verse 130. -- *To the simple.* This is one great characteristic of the word of God, -- however incomprehensible to the carnal mind, it is adapted to every grade of enlightened intelligence. --W. Wilson.

Verse 130. -- *The simple.* The word is used sometimes in a good sense, and sometimes in a bad sense. It is used in a good sense, First, for the sincere and plain hearted: "The Lord preserveth the simple: I was brought low, and he helped me": Psalms 116:6. "For our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our conscience, that in simplicity and godly sincerity, not with fleshly wisdom, but by the grace of God, we have had our conversation in the world, and more abundantly toward you": 2 Corinthians 1:12. Secondly, for those that do not oppose the presumption of carnal wisdom to the pure light of the word: so we must all be simple, or fools, that we may be wise: "If any man among you seemeth to be wise in this world, let him become a fool, that he may be wise" (1 Corinthians 3:18); that is, in simplicity of heart submitting to God's conduct, and believing what he hath revealed. --Thomas Manton

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 130. --

1. The essential light of the word.
2. The dawn of it in the soul.
3. The great benefit of its advancing day.

Verse 130. --

1. The source of divine light to man: "Thy words."
2. Its force. It forces an entrance into the heart.
3. Its direction: "unto the simple."
4. Its effect: "it giveth understanding." --G.R.

Verse 130. -- A Bible Society Sermon.

1. Evidence from history and from personal experience that God's word has imparted the light of civilization, liberty, holiness.
2. Argument drawn from hence for the further spread of the word of God. -- G.A.D.

Verse 130. -- The Self evidencing Virtue of God's Word.

1. Prove it. "Entrance of thy word giveth light." If this be true, God's word is light for only light can give light. But light is self evidencing; it needs nothing to show its presence and its value but itself; so the word of God, show its own truth and divinity to the believer.

- a. His conscience it; in its convictions of sin; in its peace through the stoning blood.

(b) heart proves it; in its outgoings of love to the God, the Christ, and righteousness revealed.

(c) His experience in affliction and temptation it; in the solace and in the strength given by the word.

1. Answer an objection. "If God's word were self evidencing as light is, then everyone would acknowledge it to be truth." Answer, No; for the law holds good universal experience, that the "entrance" only of light gives light. Light cannot enter a blind man.

- a. The Scriptures teach that men by nature blind.

(b) If all men did perceive, by merely reading and hearing word, that it was light and truth, paradoxical as it may seem, they would not be truth.

(c) Hence the want of universal acknowledgment is an objection, but a confirmation.

1. Show its importance.

(a) It the believer independent of church authority for his

faith.

(b) He need trouble to examine books of evidence; his faith is valid enough them.

(c) He who receives the word into his soul shall be satisfied of truth and value. --J.F.

EXPOSITION

Verse 131. I opened my mouth, and panted. So animated was his desire that he looked into the animal world to find a picture of it. He was filled with an intense longing, and was not ashamed to describe it by a most expressive, natural, and yet singular symbol. Like a stag that has been hunted in the chase, and is hard pressed, and therefore pants for breath, so did the Psalmist pant for the entrance of God's word into his soul. Nothing else could content him. All that the world could yield him left him still panting with open mouth.

For I longed for thy commandments. Longed to know them, longed to obey them, longed to be conformed to their spirit, longed to teach them to others. He was a servant of God, and his industrious mind longed to receive orders; he was a learner in the school of grace, and his eager spirit longed to be taught of the Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 131. -- *I opened my mouth*, and panted. By this manner of speech, David expresses, as Basil thinks, *animi propensionem*, that the inclination of his soul was after God's word. For, this opened mouth, Ambrose thinks, is *os interioris hominis*, the mouth of the inward man, which in effect is his heart; and the, speech notes *vehementem animi intensionem*, a vehement intension of his spirit, saith Euthymius. Yet shall it not be amiss to consider here how the mind of the godly earnestly affected moves the body also. The speech may be drawn from travellers, who being very desirous to attain to their proposed ends, enforce their strength thereunto; and finding a weakness in their body to answer their will, they pant and open their mouth, seeking refreshment from the air to renew their strength: or as Vatablus thinks, from men exceeding hungry and thirsty, who open their mouth as if they would draw in the whole air, and then pant and sigh within themselves when they find no full refreshment by it. So he expresses it: "My heart burns with so ardent a longing for thy commandments, that I am forced ever and anon to gasp by reason of my painful breathing."

However it be, it lets us see how the hearing, reading, or meditating of God's word wakened in David a most earnest affection to have the light, joy, grace, and comfort thereof communicated to his own heart. For in the godly, knowledge of good increaseth desires; and it cannot be expressed how vehemently their souls long to feel that power and comfort which they know is in the word; and how sore they are grieved and troubled when they find it not.

And happy were we, if we could meet the Lord with this like affection; that when he opens his mouth, we could also open our heart to hear, as David here doth. Christus aperit os, ut daret allis spiritum; David aperuit ut acciperet; offering his heart to receive the spirit of grace, when God openeth his mouth in his word to give it. For it is his promise to us all -- "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it." Let us turn it into a prayer, that the Lord, who opened the heart of Lydia, would open our heart to receive grace when he offers by his word to give it. --William Cowper.

Verse 131. -- *I opened my mouth, and panted*, etc, There are two ways in which these words may be understood. They may be considered as expressing the very earnest longing of the Psalmist for greater acquaintance with God in spiritual things; and then in saying, "I opened my mouth, and panted," he merely asserts the vehemence of his desire. Or you may separate the clauses: you may regard the first as the utterance of a man utterly dissatisfied with the earth and earthly things, and the second as the expression of a consciousness that God, and God only, could meet the longings of his soul. "I opened my mouth, and panted. "Out of breath, with chasing shadows, and hunting after baubles, I sit down exhausted, as far off as ever from the happiness which has been earnestly but fruitlessly sought. Whither, then, shall I turn? Thy commandments, O Lord, and these alone, can satisfy the desires of an immortal being like myself; and on these, therefore, henceforward shall my longings be turned. --Henry Melvill.

Verse 131. -- *I opened my mouth, and panted*. A metaphor taken from men scorched and sweltered with heat, or from those that have run themselves out of breath in following the thing which they would overtake. The former metaphor expressed the vehemency of his love; the other the earnestness of his pursuit: he was like a man gasping for breath, and sucking in the cool air. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 131. -- *I longed for thy commandments*. This is a desire which God will satisfy. "Open thy mouth wide, and I will fill it": [Psalms 81:10](#). --Thomas Manton.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 131. -- Panting for holiness. A rare hunger; the evidence of much grace, and the pledge of glory.

EXPOSITION

Verse 132. Look thou upon me. A godly man cannot long be without prayer. During the previous verses he had been expressing his love to God's word, but here he is upon his knees again. This prayer is specially short, but exceedingly sententious, "Look thou upon me." While he stood with open mouth panting for the commandments, he besought the Lord to look upon him, and let his condition and his unexpressed longings plead for him. He desires to be known of God, and daily observed by him. He wishes also to be favoured with the divine smile which is included in the word --

"look." If a look from us to God has saving efficacy in it, what may we not expect from a look from God to us.

And be merciful unto me. Christ's look at Peter was a look of mercy, and all the looks of the heavenly Father are of the same kind. If he looked in stern justice his eyes would not endure us, but looking in mercy he spares and blesses us. If God looks and sees us panting, he will not fail to be merciful to us.

As thou usest to do unto those that love thy name. Look on me as thou lookest on those who love thee; be merciful to me as thou art accustomed to be towards those who truly serve thee. There is a use and wont which God observes towards them that love him, and David craved that he might experience it. He would not have the Lord deal either better or worse with him than he was accustomed to deal with his saints -- worse would not save him, better could not be. In effect he prays, "I am thy servant; treat me as you treat thy servants. I am thy child; deal with me as with a son." Especially is it clear from the context that he desired such an entering in of the word, and such a clear understanding of it as God usually gives to his own, according to the promise, "All thy children shall be taught of the Lord."

Reader, do you love the name of the Lord? Is his character most honourable in your sight? Most dear to your heart? This is a sure mark of grace, for no soul ever loved the Lord except as the result of love received from the Lord himself.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 132. -- *Look thou upon me*, and be merciful unto me, etc. "Look upon me" stripped by thieves of my virtues, and then wounded with sins, and "be merciful unto me," showing compassion on me, taking care of me in the inn of the Church universal, that I fall not again among thieves, nor be harmed by the wolves which howl about this fold, but dare not enter in. "Look upon me," no longer worthy to be called thy son, and "be merciful unto me," not as the jealous elder brother would treat me, but let me join the glad song and banquet of them that love thy name. Look upon me the publican, standing afar off in thy temple the Church, and be merciful unto me, not after the Pharisee's judgment, but "as thou usest to do unto them that love thy name," which is the gracious God. Look on me as on weeping Peter, and be merciful unto me as thou wast to him, who so loved thy name as by his triple confession of love to wash out his threefold denial, saying, "Lord, thou knowest that I love thee." "Look upon me," as on the sinful woman, penitent and weeping, and be merciful unto me, not according to the judgment of the Pharisee who murmured at her, as Judas who was indignant at her, but forgiving me as thou didst her, "because she loved much," telling me also, "Thy faith hath saved thee, go in peace." - -Neale and Littledale.

Verse 132. -- *Look thou upon me*. Lord! since our looks to thee are often so slight, so cold, so distant, that no impression is made upon our hearts, do thou condescend continually to look upon us with

mercy and with power. Vouchsafe us such a look, as may bring us to ourselves and touch us with tenderness and contrition in the remembrance of that sin, unbelief, and disobedience, which pierced the hands, the feet, the heart of our dearest Lord and Saviour. Comp. [Luke 22:61](#). --Charles Bridges.

Verse 132. -- *As thou usest to do*, etc. David would not lose any privilege that God hath by promise settled on his children. Do with me, saith he, "as thou usest to do." This is no more than family fare, what you promise to do for all that love thee; and let me not go worse clad than the rest of my brethren. --William Gurnall.

Verse 132. -- *As thou usest to do unto those*, etc. We should be content if God deals with us as he has always dealt with his people. While he could not be satisfied with anything less than their portion, David asks for nothing better; he implores no singular dispensation in his favour, no deviation from the accustomed methods of his grace...It is always a good proof that your convictions and desires are from the operation of the Spirit when you are willing to conform to God's order. What is this order? It is to dispense his blessings connectedly. It is never to justify without sanctifying; never to give a title to heaven without a meetness for it. Now the man that is divinely wrought upon will not expect nor desire the one without the other. Therefore he will not expect the blessing of God without obedience; because it is always God's way to connect the comforts of the Holy Ghost with the fear of the Lord; and if his children transgress his laws, to visit their transgressions with a rod. Therefore he will neither expect nor desire his blessing without exertion; for it has always been God's way to crown only those that run the race that is set before them, and fight the good fight of faith. Therefore he will not expect nor desire the Divine blessing without prayer; for it has always been God's way to make his people sensible of their wants, and to give an answer to prayer. Therefore he will not expect nor desire to reach heaven without difficulties; for his people have always had to deny themselves, and take up their cross. If they have not been chosen in the furnace of affliction, they have been purified. God had one Son without sin, but he never had one without sorrow: "he scourgeth every son whom he receiveth." "Yes," says the suppliant before us, "secure me their everlasting portion, and I am willing to drink of the cup they drank of, and to be baptized with the baptism they were baptized with. I want no new, no by path to glory. I am content to keep the King's high road. Be merciful unto me, as thou usest to do unto those that love thy name. I ask no more." --William Jay, 1769-1853.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 132. --

1. Look.
2. Love.
3. Use and wont.

Verse 132. -- Fellowship with the righteous.

1. There are some who love God's name.

2. His mercy is the source of all the goodness they experience.
3. The Lord has been always accustomed to deal mercifully with them.
4. His mercy towards them should encourage us to implore mercy for ourselves.
5. We should be anxious to secure the mercy that is peculiar to them.
6. We should be content if God deals with us as he has always dealt with his people. -- W. Jay.

Verse 132. -- Divine use and wont.

1. God is accustomed to look upon and be merciful toward his people.
2. We are stirred up to specially desire such merciful dealings in time of affliction.
3. Love to God qualifies us for these loving looks and merciful dealings. -- C.A.D.

Verse 132. -- Notice, --

1. The mark of true believers: "Those that love thy name."
2. God's custom of dealing with them: "Be merciful as thou usest to do."
3. Their individual and earnest solicitude: "Look thou upon me." --J.F.

EXPOSITION

Verse 133. Order my steps in thy word. This is one of the Lord's customary mercies to his chosen, -- "He keepeth the feet of his saints." By his grace he enables us to put our feet step by step in the very place which his word ordains. This prayer seeks a very choice favour, namely, that every distinct act, every step, might be arranged and governed by the will of God. This does not stop short of perfect holiness, neither will the believer's desires be satisfied with anything beneath that blessed consummation.

And let not any iniquity have dominion over me. This is the negative side of the blessing. We ask to do all that is right, and to fall under the power of nothing that is wrong. God is our sovereign, and we would have every thought in subjection to his sway. Believers have no choice, darling sins to which they would be willing to bow. They pant for perfect liberty from the power of evil, and being conscious that they cannot obtain it of themselves, they cry unto God for it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUIANT SAYINGS

Verse 133. -- *Order my steps in thy word.* As before he sought mercy, so now he seeks grace. There are many that seek mercy to forgive sin, who seek not grace to deliver them from the power of sin: this is to abuse God's mercy, and turn his grace into wantonness. He that prayeth for mercy to forgive the guilt of sin only, seeks not that by sin he should not offend God; but that he may sin and not hurt himself: but he who craves deliverance also from the commanding power and deceit of sin, seeks not only a benefit to himself, but grace also to please and serve the Lord his God. The first is but a lover of himself; the second is a lover of God, more than of himself. And truly he never knew what it was to seek mercy for sin past, who with it also earnestly sought not grace to keep him from

sin in time to come. These benefits cannot be divided: he who hath not the second whosoever he flatter himself may be assured that he hath not gotten the first. -- William Cowper.

Verse 133. -- *Order my steps in thy word.* It is written of Boleslaus, one of the kings of Poland, that he still carries about him the picture of his father, and when he was to do any great work or set upon any design extraordinary, he would look on the picture and pray that he might do nothing unworthy of such a father's name. Thus it is that the Scriptures are the picture of God's will, therein drawn out to the very life. Before a man enter upon or engage himself in any business whatsoever, let him look there, and read there what is to be done; what to be undone; and what God commands, let that be done; what he forbids, let that be undone; let the balance of the sanctuary weigh all, the oracles of God decide all, the rule of God's word be the square of all, and his glory the ultimate of all intendments whatsoever. --From Spencer's "Things New and Old."

Verse 133. -- *Order my steps.* !bh hachen, make them firm; let me not walk with a halting or unsteady step. --Adam Clarke.

Verse 133. -- *Order my steps,* etc. The people of God would not only have their path right, but their steps ordered; as not their general course wrong (as those who walk in the way of everlasting perdition), so not a step awry; they would not miss the way to heaven, either in whole or in part. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 133. -- *My steps.* Speaking of the steps of the Temple, Bunyan says, "These steps, whether cedar, gold, or stone, yet that which added to their adornment, was the wonderment of a Queen. And whatever they were made of, to be sure, they were a shadow of those steps, which we should take to, and in the house of God. Steps of God, Psalms 75:13. Steps ordered by him, Psalms 37:23 Steps ordered in his word, Ps 64:133. Steps of faith, Romans 4:12. Steps of the spirit, 2 Corinthians 7:18. Steps of truth, 3 John 1:4. Steps washed with butter, Job 29:6. Steps taken before, or in the presence of God. Steps butted and bounded by a divine rule. These are steps indeed." --John Bunyan, in "Solomon's Temple Spiritualized."

Verse 133. -- *Let not any iniquity,* etc. True obedience to God is inconsistent with the dominion of any one lust, or corrupt affection. I say, though a man out of some slender and insufficient touch of religion upon his heart, may go right for a while, and do many things gladly; yet that corruption which is indulged, and under the power of which a man lieth, will at length draw him off from God; and therefore no one sin shall have dominion over us. When doth sin reign, or have dominion over us? When we do not endeavour to mortify it, and to cut off the provisions that may feed that lust. Chrysostom's observation is, the apostle does not say, let it not tyrannize over you, but, let it not reign over you; that is, when you suffer it to have a quiet reign in your hearts. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 133. -- *Let not any iniquity have dominion over me.* I had rather be a prisoner to man all my life than be a bondage to sin one day. He says not, Let not this and the other man rule over me; but "let

not sin have dominion over mo." Well said! There is hope in such a man's condition as long as it is so.
--Michael Bruce, 1666.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 133. --

1. A holy life is no work of chance, it is a masterpiece of order -- the order of conformity to the prescribed rule; there is arithmetical and geometrical order; the proportional order; the order of relation; an order of period: holiness, as to its order, is seasonable, suitable.
2. The rule of this order: "in thy word."
3. The director chosen. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 878: "A Well ordered Life."

Verse 133. --

1. Order in outward life desired.
2. Order according to the divine idea.
3. Order in the government within.

Verse 133. --

1. Help needed.
(a) To avoid sin.
(b) To be holy.
 1. Help sought.
(a) From below: "thy word."
(b) From above: "order," etc., and "let not," etc. --G.R.

Verse 133. -- Sin's sway in the soul.

1. Fervently deprecated.
(a) Realization of the horrors of its rule.
(b) Recognition of the better power.
(c) Thorough exclusion sought.
 1. Wisely combated.
(a) Practicalness as well as prayerfulness.
(b) Regard had to little "steps."
 1. Steps to be governed by divine rule.
2. System not trusted apart from God. --W.B.H.

Verse 133. -- Notice, --

1. The right path for human feet: "In thy word."
2. The needed help to control the steps: "Order my steps."
3. The perverting power of a dominant sin: "Let not any," etc. --J.F.

EXPOSITION

Verse 134. Deliver me from the oppression of man. David had tasted all the bitterness of this great evil. It had made him an exile from his country, and banished him from the sanctuary of the Lord: therefore he pleads to be saved from it. It is said that oppression makes a wise man mad, and no doubt it has made many a righteous man sinful. Oppression is in itself wicked, and it drives men to wickedness. We little know how much of our virtue is due to our liberty; if we had been in bonds under haughty tyrants we might have yielded to them, and instead of being confessors we might now have been apostates. He who taught us to pray, "Lead us not into temptation," will sanction this prayer, which is of much the same tenor, since to be oppressed is to be tempted.

So will I keep thy statutes. When the stress of oppression was taken off he would go his own way, and that way would be the way of the Lord. Although we ought not to yield to the threatenings of men, yet many do so; the wife is sometimes compelled by the oppression of her husband to act against her conscience: children and servants, and even whole nations have been brought into the same difficulty. Their sins will be largely laid at the oppressor's door, and it usually pleases God ere long to overthrow these powers and dominions which compel men to do evil. The worst of it is that some persons, when the pressure is taken off from them, follow after unrighteousness of their own accord. These give evidence of being sinners in grain. As for the righteous, it happens to them as it did to the apostles of old, "Being let go, they went to their own company. "When saints are freed from the tyrant they joyfully pay homage to their king.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 134. -- *Deliver me from the oppression of man.*

1. "Man" by way of distinction. There is the oppression and tyranny of the Devil and sin; but the Psalmist doth not mean that now: *Heminum non daemonum*, saith Hugo.
2. "Man" by way of aggravation. *Homo homini lupus*: no creatures so ravenous and destructive to one another as man. It is a shame that one man should oppress another. Beasts do not usually devour those of the same kind; but, usually, a man's enemies are those of his own household: [Matthew 10:36](#). The nearer we are in bonds of alliance, the greater the hatred.
3. "Man" by way of diminution. And to lessen the fear of this evil, this term Adam is given them, to show their weakness in comparison of God. Thou art God; but they that are so ready and forward to oppress and injure us are but men; thou canst easily overrule their power and break the yoke. I think this consideration chiefest, because of other places. "Who art thou, that thou shouldest be afraid of a man that shall die, and of the son of man which shall be made as grass; and forgettest the Lord thy maker, that hath stretched forth the heavens, and laid the foundations of the earth; and hast feared continually every day because of the fury of the oppressor, as if he were ready to destroy? and where is the fury of the oppressor?" [Isaiah](#)

41:12-13. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 134. -- *From the oppression of man.* Some render it, "from the oppression of Adam;" as Jarchi observes; and Arama interprets it of the sin of Adam, and as a prayer to be delivered or redeemed from it; as the Lord's people are by the blood of Christ. -- John Gill.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 134. -- What sins may be produced by oppression. What obedience ought to come from those who are set free.

Verse 134. --

1. The course to be pursued: "thy precepts."
2. The opposition to that course: "the oppression of men."

(a) Human opinions.

(b) Human examples.

1. Human sympathies.
2. Interests.
3. Persecutions.
4. The resistance to that opposition: "Deliver me, so will I," etc. --G.R.

Verse 134. -- Hindrances removed.

1. The impeding influence of persecution.
2. The prayer of the persecuted one.
3. The conduct of the delivered one (Luke 1:74,75). --G.A.D.

Verse 134. --

1. How some men oppress their fellows. By the laws they make -- as statesmen. By the books they write -- as authors. By the tyranny they exercise -- as masters. By the lives they live -- as professors. By the sermons they deliver -- as ministers!
2. How the prayer of the oppressed may be answered. By the gift of wise and good statesmen. By increase of sound literature. By the conversion or removal of hard masters. By a baptism of the Spirit on the church. --W.W.

EXPOSITION

Verse 135. Make thy face to shine upon thy servant. Oppressors frown, but do thou smile. They darken my life, but do thou shine upon me, and all will be bright. The Psalmist again declares that he is God's servant, and he seeks for no favour from others, but only from his own Lord and Master. And teach me thy statutes. This is the favour which he considers to be the shining of the face of God upon him. If the Lord will be exceeding gracious, and make him his favourite, he will ask no higher blessing than still to be taught the royal statutes. See how he craves after holiness; this is the

choicest of all gems in his esteem. As we say among men that a good education is a great fortune, so to be taught of the Lord is a gift of special grace. The most favoured believer needs teaching; even when he walks in the light of God's countenance he has still to be taught the divine statutes or he will transgress.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 135. -- *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.* The face of God shines upon us, when, in his providence, we are guided and upheld; also when we are made to share in the good things of his providence, and when we are placed in a position wherein we can do much good. Much more does the face of God shine upon us, when we are favoured with tokens of his gracious favour; for then we grow under the consciousness of a loving God, with rich supplies of his grace and Spirit. --John Stephen.

Verse 135. -- *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.* Oftentimes the wrongful dealings of men, of others, and of ourselves, like a cloud of smoke arising from the earth and obscuring the face of the sun, hide from us for a while the light, of the countenance of God: but he soon clears it all away, and looks down upon us in loving mercy as before, lighting for us the path of obedience, and brightening our way unto himself. --"Plain Commentary," 1859.

Verse 135. -- *Make thy face to shine upon thy servant.* The believer's incessant cry is, Let me see "the King's face." This is a blessing worth praying for. It is his heart's desire, his present privilege, and what is infinitely better, his sure, everlasting prospect -- "They shall see his face." Revelation 22:4. --Charles Bridges.

Verse 135. -- *Make thy face to shine...* and teach me. Blessed is the man whom eternal Truth teacheth, not by obscure figures and transient sounds, but by direct and full communication. The perceptions of our senses are narrow and dull, and our reason on those perceptions frequently misleads us. He whom the eternal Word condescends to teach is disengaged at once from the labyrinth of human opinions. For "of one word are all things"; and all things without voice or language speak of him alone: he is that divine principle which speaketh in our hearts, and without which there can be neither just apprehension nor rectitude of judgment.

O God, who art the truth, make me one with thee in everlasting life! I am often weary of reading, and weary of hearing; in thee alone is the sum of my desire! Let all teachers be silent, let the whole creation be dumb before thee, and do thou only speak unto my soul!

Thy ministers can pronounce the words, but cannot impart the spirit; they may entertain the fancy with the charms of eloquence, but if thou art silent they do not inflame the heart. They administer the letter, but thou openest the sense; they utter the mystery, but you reveal its meaning; they point out the way of life, but you bestow strength to walk in it; they water, but thou givest the increase. Therefore do thou, O Lord, my God, Eternal Truth! speak to my soul! lest, being outwardly warmed,

but not inwardly quickened, I die, and be found unfruitful. "Speak, Lord, for thy servant heareth."
"Thou only hast the words of eternal life." --Thomas a Kempis, 1380-1471.

Verse 135. -- *Make thy face to shine teach me*, etc. God hath many ways of teaching; he teaches by book, he teaches by his fingers, he teaches by his rod; but his most comfortable and effectual teaching is by the light of his eye: "O send out thy light and thy truth; let them lead me: let them bring me unto thy holy hilt:" Psalms 42:3. --Richard Alleine (1611-1681), in "Heaven Opened."

Verse 135. -- *Make thy face to shine... teach me thy statutes*. God's children, when they beg comfort, also beg grace to serve him acceptably. For by teaching God's statutes is not meant barely a giving speculative knowledge of God's will; for so David here; "Make thy face to shine"; and "Teach me thy statutes." --Thomas Manton.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 135. --

1. A choice position: "thy servant."
2. A choice delight: "thy face to shine."
3. A choice privilege: "teach me thy statutes."

Verse 135. --

1. God in the word: "Thy word."
2. God for the word: "Teach me," etc.
3. God with the word: "Make thy face," etc. --G.R.

Verse 135. -- Sunshine.

1. The light in which we can best learn our lessons -- God's favour shown in pardon, justification, adoption, assurance, etc.
2. The lessons we should learn in the light -- grace is productive of holiness. -- C.A.D.

Verse 135. --

1. A rich historic promise (Numbers 6:25). Its sublime origin and associations.
2. The new prayer born of it.

(a) Looks up for the face Divine; the same in its majestic sweetness that has watched generations decay since the word was first spoken.

(b) Asks to know its shining. Light of fatherhood, etc.

1. The old prayer repeated: "Teach me thy statutes." Last time in the psalm.

(a) Our need of teaching -- oft repeated prayer.

(b) The intimate connection between obedience and the shining of God's face. --W.B.H.

EXPOSITION

Verse 136. Rivers of waters run down mine eyes, because they keep not thy law. He wept in sympathy with God to see the holy law despised and broken. He wept in pity for men who were thus drawing down upon themselves the fiery wrath of God. His grief was such that he could scarcely give it vent; his tears were not mere drops of sorrow, but torrents of woe. In this he became like the Lord Jesus, who beheld the city, and wept over it; and like unto Jehovah himself, who hath no pleasure in the death of him that dieth, but that he turn unto him and live. The experience of this verse indicates a great advance upon anything we have had before: the psalm and the Psalmist are both growing. That man is a ripe believer who sorrows because of the sins of others. In [Psalms 119:120](#) his flesh trembled at the presence of God, and here it seems to melt and flow away in floods of tears. None are so affected by heavenly things as those who are much in the study of the word, and are thereby taught the truth and essence of things. Carnal men are afraid of brute force, and weep over losses and crosses; but spiritual men feel a holy fear of the Lord himself, and most of all lament when they see dishonour cast upon his holy name.

"Lord, let me weep for nought but sin,
And after none but thee,
And then I would, O that I might!
A constant weeper be."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 136. -- *Rivers of waters run down my eyes.* Most of the easterners shed tears much more copiously than the people of Europe. The psalmist said rivers of waters ran down his eyes; and though the language is beautifully figurative, I have no doubt it was also literally true. I have myself seen Arabs shed tears like streams. --John Gadsby.

Verse 136. -- *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,* etc. Either because mine eyes keep not thy law, so some. The eye is the inlet and outlet of a great deal of sin, and therefore it ought to be a weeping eye. Or rather, they, i.e., those about me: [Psalms 119:139](#). Note, the sins of sinners are the sorrows of saints. We must mourn for that which we cannot mend. - -Matthew Henry.

Verse 136. -- *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,* etc. David's afflictions drew not so many tears from him as the sins of others; not his banishment by his son, as the breach of God's law by the wicked. Nothing went so to his heart as the dishonour of God, whose glory shining in his word and ordinances, is dearer to the godly than their lives. Elijah desired to die when he saw God so dishonoured by Ahab and Jezebel. The eye is for two things, sight and tears: if we see God dishonoured, presently our eyes should be filled with tears. --William Greenhill, 1591-1677.

Verse 136. -- *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes,* etc. Godly men are affected with deep sorrow for the sins of the ungodly.

Let us consider the nature of this affection.

1. It is not a stoical apathy, and affected carelessness; much less a delightful partaking with sinful practices.
2. Not a proud setting off of their own goodness, with marking the sin of others as the Pharisee did in the gospel.
3. Not the derision and mocking of the folly of men, with that "laughing philosopher": it comes nearer to the temper of the other who wept always for it.
4. It is not a bitter, bilious anger, breaking forth into railings and reproaches, nor an upbraiding insultation.
5. Nor is it a vindictive desire of punishment, venting itself in curses and imprecations, which is the rash temper of many, but especially of the vulgar sort. The disciples' motion to Christ was far different from that way, and yet he says to them, "We know not of what spirit ye are." They thought they had been of Elijah's spirit, but he told them they were mistaken, and did not know of what a spirit they were in that motion. Thus heady zeal often mistakes and flatters itself. We find not here a desire of fire to come down from heaven upon the breakers of the law, but such a grief as would rather bring water to quench it, if it were falling on them. "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes." --Robert Leighton.

Verse 136. -- *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes*, etc. The Lord requireth this mourning bitterly for other men's sins to keep our hearts the more tender and upright; it is an act God useth to make us more careful of our own souls, to be troubled at the sins of others, at sin in a third person. It keepeth us at a great distance from temptation. This is like quenching of fire in a neighbour's house: before it comes near thee, thou runnest with thy bucket. There is no way to keep us free from the infection, so much as mourning. The soul will never agree to do that which it grieved itself to see another do. And, as it keepeth us upright, so also humble, fearful of Divine judgment, tender lest we ourselves offend, and draw down the wrath of God. He that shrugs when he seeth a snake creeping upon another, will much more be afraid when it cometh near to himself. In our own sins we have the advantage of conscience scourging the soul with remorse and shame; in bewailing the sins of others, we have only the reasons of duty and obedience. They that fight abroad out of love to valour and exploits, will certainly fight at home out of love to their own safety. -- Thomas Manton.

Verse 136. -- *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes*, etc. Thus uniformly is the character of God's people represented -- not merely as those who are free from -- but as "those that sigh and cry for -- all the abominations that are done it, the midst of the land": [Ezekiel 9:4](#) And who does not see what an enlarged sphere still presents itself on every side for the unrestrained exercise of Christian compassion? The appalling spectacle of a world apostatized from God, of multitudes sporting with everlasting destruction -- as if the God of heaven were "a man that he should lie" is surely to force

"rivers of waters" from the hearts of those that are concerned his honour. What a mass of sin ascends as a cloud before the Lord, a single heart! Add the aggregate of a village -- a town -- a country -- a world! every day -- every hour -- every moment. Well might the "waters rise to an overflowing tide, ready to burst its barriers." --Charles Bridges.

Verse 136. -- *Rivers of waters run down mine eyes*, because they keep not law. -- The vices of the religious are the shame of religion: the sight this hath made the stoutest champions of Christ melt into tears. David was one of those great worthies of the world, not matchable in his time yet he weeps. Did he tear in pieces a bear like a kid? Rescue a lamb will the death of a lion? Foil a mighty giant, that had dared the whole of God? Did he like a whirlwind, bear and beat down his enemies bel him; and now, does he, like a child or a woman, fall weeping? Yes, had heard the name of God blasphemed, seen his holy rites profaned, his statutes vilipended, and violence offered to the pure chastity of that virgin, religion; this resolved that valiant heart into tears: "Rivers of waters run down mine eyes." --Thomas Adams.

Verse 136. -- *My soul frequently spent itself in such breathings after conformity to the law of God as the one hundred and nineteenth Psalm is with throughout: "O that my ways were directed to keep thy My heart breaketh through the longing it hath to thy commands at times; incline my heart that I may keep them alway unto the end,"* the like. This appeared further in a fixed dislike of the least inconformity: to the law, either in myself or others. Now; albeit I was always affected with my own or others' breaches, yet this was my burden; I always that rivers of tears might run down mine eyes, because I, or transgressors, kept not God's law. --Thomas Halyburton, 1674- 1712.

Verse 136. -- *If we grieve not for others*, their sin may become [Ezekiel 4:8](#) [1 Corinthians 5:2](#). -- William Nicholson.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 136. -- Abundant sorrow for abounding sin. Other men's sins the saint's own sorrows. He thinks of the good God provoked, of the sinners themselves debased, of their death, and their perdition.

Verse 136.--

1. Occasion of his grief: "they keep not thy law."
2. Extent of his grief: "rivers," etc. See examples in Jeremiah, Ezra, Paul, Christ himself.
3. Effect of his grief. To warn, teach, invite, and exhort them -- as in his psalms. -- G.R.

Verse 136. -- Sacred tears.

1. The world sinning.
2. The church weeping.
3. It is time the world began to weep for itself. --C.A.D.

Verse 136.

I weep, because,

1. Of the dishonour done to the Law giver.
2. Of the injury done to the law breaker.
3. Of the wrong done to the law abiding.

"That kingly prophet, that wept so plentifully for his own offences (Psalms 6:6), had yet floods of tears left to bewail his people's" (Psalms 119:136). --Thomas Adams.

"Benedetti, a Franciscan monk, author of the Stabat Mater, one day was found weeping, and when asked the reason of his tears, he exclaimed, I weep because Love goes about unloved." --W.H.J.P.

EXPOSITION

This passage deals with the perfect righteousness of Jehovah and his word, and expresses the struggles of a holy soul in reference to that righteousness. The initial letter with which every verse commences in the Hebrew is "P", and the keyword to us is PURITY.

Verse 137. Righteous art thou, O LORD. The Psalmist has not often used the name of Jehovah in this vast composition. The whole psalm shows him to have been a deeply religious man, thoroughly familiar with the things of God; and such persons never use the holy name of God carelessly, nor do they even use it at all frequently in comparison with the thoughtless and the ungodly. Familiarity begets reverence in this case. Here he uses the sacred name in worship. He praises God by ascribing to him perfect righteousness. God is always right, and he is always actively light, that is, righteous. This quality is bound up in our very idea of God. We cannot imagine an unrighteous God. And upright are thy judgments. Here he extols God's word, or recorded judgments, as being right, even as their Author is righteous. That which conics from the Righteous God is itself righteous. Jehovah both saith and doth that which is right, and that alone. This is a great stay to the soul in time of trouble. When we are most sorely afflicted, and cannot see the reason for the dispensation, we may fall back upon this most sure and certain fact, that God is righteous, and his dealings with us are righteous too. It should be our glory to sing this brave confession when all things around us appear to suggest the contrary. This is the richest adoration -- this which rises from the lips of faith when carnal reason mutters about undue severity, and the like.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

S. Jerome, whom most of the medievalists follow, explains Tsaddi as meaning justice or righteousness, which, however, is mrc, tsedek But he is so far right that there is a play in this strophe on the sound of the initial letter, as in the case of Gemol; for the very first word, righteous, is mrc, tsaddik, and the whole scope of the strophe is the strong grasp which even the young and inexperienced soul can have of righteousness amidst the troubles of the world. --Neale and Littledale.

All these verses begin with Tzaddi, the eighteenth letter of the Hebrew alphabet; Psalms 119:137,142,144, with some form of the word which we render righteous, or righteousness; each of the remainder with a wholly different word. --William S. Plumer.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 137. -- *Righteous art thou, O LORD, etc.* Here David, sore troubled with grief for the wickedness of his enemies, yea, tempted greatly to impatience and distrust, by looking to their prosperous estate, notwithstanding their so gross impiety, doth now show unto us a three fold ground of comfort, which in this dangerous temptation upheld him. The first is, a consideration of that which God is in himself; namely, just and righteous: the second, a consideration of the equity of his word; the third, a view of his constant truth, declared in his working and doing according to his word. When we find ourselves tempted to distrust by looking to the prosperity of the wicked, let us look up to God, and consider his nature, his word, his works, and we shall find comfort.

Righteous art thou. This is the first ground of comfort -- a meditation of the righteousness of God's nature; he alters not with times, he changes not with persons, he is, alway and unto all, one and the same righteous and holy God. Righteousness is essential to him, it is himself; and he can no more defraud the godly of their promised comforts, not let the wicked go unpunished in their sins, than he can deny himself to be God, which is impossible. --William Cowper.

Verse 137. -- *Righteous art thou, O LORD, etc.* Essentially, originally, and of himself; naturally, immutably and universally, in all his ways and works of nature and grace; in his thoughts, purposes, counsels, and decrees; in all the dispensations of his providence; in redemption, in the justification of a sinner, in the pardon of sin, and in the gift of eternal life through Christ. "And upright are thy judgments." They are according to the rules of justice and equity. He refers to the precepts of the word, the doctrines of the gospel, as well as the judgments of God inflicted on wicked men, and all the providential dealings of God with his people, and also the final judgment. --John Gill.

Verse 137. -- *Righteous art thou, O LORD, etc.* Here is much to keep the children of God in awe. The Lord is a righteous God: though they have found mercy and taken sanctuary in his grace, the Lord is impartial in his justice. God that did not spare the angels when they sinned, nor his Son when he was a sinner by imputation, will not spare you, though you are the dearly beloved of his soul: 11:31. The sinful courses of God's children occasion bitterness enough; they never venture upon sin, but with great Joss. If Paul give way to a little pride, God will humble him. If any give way to sin, their pilgrimage will be made uncomfortable. Eli falls into negligence and indulgence, then is the ark of God taken, his two sons are slain in battle, his daughter-in-law dies, he himself breaks his neck. Oh! the wonderful tragedies that sin works in the houses of the children of God! David, when he intermeddled with forbidden fruit, was driven from his palace, his concubines defiled, his own son slain; a great many calamities did light upon him. Therefore the children of God have cause to fear;

for the Lord is a just God, and they will find it so. Here upon earth he hath reserved liberty to visit their iniquity with rods, and their transgression with scourges. I must press you to imitate God's righteousness: "If ye know that he is righteous, ye know that every one that doeth righteousness is born of him": 1Jo 2:29. You have a righteous God; and this part of his character you should copy out.

-- Thomas Manton.

Verse 137. -- *David's great care*, when he was under the afflicting hand of God, was to clear the Lord of injustice. Oh! Lord, saith he, there is not the least show, spot, stain, blemish, or mixture of injustice, in all the afflictions thou hast brought upon me. I desire to take shame to myself, and to set to my seal, that the Lord is righteous, and that there is no injustice, no cruelty, nor no extremity in all that the Lord hath brought upon me. He sweetly and readily subscribes unto the righteousness of God in those sharp and smart afflictions that God exercised him with. "Righteous art thou, O LORD, and upright are thy judgments." God's judgments are always just; he never afflicts but in faithfulness. His will is the rule of justice; and therefore a gracious soul dares not cavil nor question his proceedings.

--Thomas Brooks.

Verse 137. -- *The hundred and thirty-seventh verse*, like the twenty-fifth, is associated with the sorrows of an Imperial penitent (Gibbon, *Decline and Fall*, ch. 46). When the deposed and captive Emperor Maurice was led out for execution by the usurper Phocas, his five sons were previously murdered one by one in his presence; and at each fatal blow he patiently exclaimed, "Righteous art thou, O Lord, and upright are thy judgments." -- Neale and Littledale.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Outlines Upon Keywords of the Psalm, By Pastor C. A. Davis.

Verse 137-144. -- The righteousness of God and his word. ([Psalms 119:137-138](#)). Indignation at the forgetfulness of the enemies ([Psalms 119:139](#)) The purity of the word ([Psalms 119:140-141](#)). This righteousness of God and his testimonies is everlasting ([Psalms 119:142-144](#)).

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 137-138. -- Solemn contemplation.

1. The contemplation of the deep and awful display of the divine character is good for the soul.
2. It will lead to a conviction of the righteousness of God's character and administration.
3. It will result in loyal submission. --C.A.D.

Verse 137. -- A consideration of divine righteousness. Convinces us of sin, reconciles us to trying providence, excites a desire to imitate, arouses to reverent adoration.

Verse 137. -- God is righteous.

1. In his commands.
2. In his threatenings.
3. In his chastisement.

4. In his judgments.
5. In his promises. --G.R.

EXPOSITION

Verse 138. Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful. All that which God hath testified in his word is right and truthful. It is righteous, and may be relied upon for the present; it is faithful, and may be trusted in for the future. About every portion of the inspired testimonies there is a divine authority, they are issued and published by God's command, and they bear the impress of the royal style which carries omnipotence about it. Not only the precepts but the promises also are commanded of the Lord, and so are all the teachings of Scripture. It is not left to our choice whether we will accept them or no; they are issued by royal command, and are not to be questioned. Their characteristic is that they are like the Lord who has proclaimed them, they are the essence of justice and the soul of truth. God's word is righteous and cannot be impeached; it is faithful and cannot be questioned it is true from the beginning, and it will be true unto the end.

Dwell upon that "sweet word" -- "very faithful." What a mercy that we have a God to deal with who is scrupulously faithful, true to all the items and details of his promises, punctual to time, steadfast during all time. Well may we risk all upon a word which is "ever faithful, ever sure."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 138. -- *Thy testimonies that thou hast commanded are righteous and very faithful.* The force of this expression is much feebler than that of the original, which literally may be rendered, "Thou hast commanded righteousness thy testimonies, and truth exceedingly." "So the Septuagint hath it. Righteousness and truth were his testimonies; the testimonies were one with his righteousness and truth. The English translation gives the quality of the testimonies; the Hebrew gives that which is commanded; as if we might say, Thou hast enjoined righteousness to be thy testimonies, and truth exceedingly." -- John Stephen.

Verse 138. -- *Thy testimonies.* The word of God is called his testimony, both because it testifies his will, which he will have us to do; as also because it testifies unto men truly what shall become of them, whether good or evil. Men by nature are curious to know their end, rather than careful to mend their life; and for this cause seek answers where they never get good: but if they would know, let them go to the word and testimony; they need not to seek any other oracle. If the word of God testify good things unto them, they have cause to rejoice; if otherwise it witnesseth evil unto them, let them haste to prevent it, or else it will assuredly overtake them. --William Cowper.

Verse 138. -- *Righteous and very faithful.* Literally, "faithfulness exceedingly." Harsh and severe as they may seem, they are all thoroughly for man's highest good. -- William Kay.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 138. -- Very faithful. Based on a faithful covenant; confirmed by faithful promises; carried out by a faithful Redeemer; enjoyed hitherto; relied on for the future. "Though we believe not, yet he abideth faithful."

EXPOSITION

Verse 139. In the last two verses David spoke concerning his God and his law; here he speaks of himself, and says,

My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten thy words: this was no doubt occasioned by his having so clear a sense of the admirable character of God's word. His zeal was like a fire burning within his soul. The sight of man's forgetfulness of God acted as a fierce blast to excite the fire to a more vehement flame, and it blazed until it was ready to consume him. David could not bear that men should forget God's words. He was ready to forget himself, yea, to, consume himself, because these men forgot God. The ungodly were David's enemies: his enemies, because they hated him for his godliness; his enemies, because he abhorred them for their ungodliness. These men had gone so far in iniquity that they not only violated and neglected the commands of God, but they appeared actually to have forgotten them. This put David into a great heat; he burned with indignation. How dare they trample on sacred things! How could they utterly ignore the commands of God himself! He was astonished, and filled with holy anger.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 139. -- *My zeal hath consumed me.* "Zeal" is a high degree of love; and when the object of that love is ill treated, it vents itself in a mixture of grief and indignation, which are sufficient to wear and "consume" the heart. This will be the case where men rightly conceive of that dishonour which is continually done to God by creatures whom he hath made and redeemed. But never could the verse be uttered, with such fulness of truth and propriety, by any one, as by the Son of God, who had such a sense of his Father's glory, and of man's sin, as no person else ever had. And, accordingly, when his zeal had exerted itself in purging the temple, St. John tells us, "his disciples remembered that it was written, The zeal thine house hath eaten me up." The place where it is so written Ps 69:9, and the passage is exactly parallel to this before us. --Horne.

Verse 139. -- *My zeal hath consumed me, etc.* Zeal is the heat or tension of the affections; it is a holy warmth, whereby our love and an are drawn out to the utmost for God, and his glory. Now, our love to and his ways, and our hatred of wickedness, should be increased, because ungodly men. Cloudy and dark colours in a table, make those that are and lively to appear more beautiful; others' sin should make God and godliness more amiable in thine eyes. Thy heart should take fire by striking on such cold flints. David by a holy antiperistasis, did kindle from of coldness: "My zeal hath consumed me, because mine enemies have forgotten words." Cold blasts make a fire to flame the higher, and

burn the hotter --George Swinnock.

Verse 139. -- *My zeal hath consumed me.* The fire of zeal, like the fire which consumed Solomon's sacrifice, cometh down from heaven; and zealots are not those salamanders that always live in the fire of hatred contention; but seraphs, burning with the spiritual fire of divine And there true zeal inflames the desires and affections of the soul. If it be true zeal, then tract of time, multitude of discouragements, falseness of deserting the cause, strength of oppositions, will not tire out a man's s Zeal makes men resolute, difficulties are but whetstones to their fortitude steels men's spirits with an undaunted resolution. This was the zeal burned in the disciples (Luke 24), that consumed David here, and up the very marrow of Christ: John 2:17. --Abraham Wright.

Verse 139. -- *My zeal hath consumed me.* There are divers kinds of there is a zeal of the world, there is a zeal of the flesh, there is a zeal of religion, there is a zeal of heresy, and there is a zeal of the true God. First, we see the zeal of the world maketh men to labour day night to get a transitory thing. The zeal of the flesh torments me minds early and late for a momentary pleasure. The zeal of heresy maketh travel and compass sea and land, for the maintaining and increasing of opinion. Thus we see every man is eaten up with some kind of zeal. The drunkard is consumed with drunkenness, the whoremonger is spent with his whoredom, the heretic is eaten with heresies. Oh, how ought this to ashamed, who are so little eaten, spent, and consumed with the zeal of word! And so much the rather, because godly zeal leaveth in us advantage and a recompence, which the worldly and carnally zealous have not. For when they have spent all the strength of their bodies, powers of their mind, they have no gain or comfort left, but torment conscience; and when they are outwardly spent, they are inwardly never better: whereas the godly being concerned for a good thing, and eaten with the zeal of God's glory, have this notable privilege and profit, howsoever their outward man perisheth and decayeth, yet their inward is still refreshed and nourished to everlasting life. Oh, what a benefit to be eaten up with the love and zeal of a good thing! --Richard Greenham.

Verse 139. -- *Have forgotten thy words.* A proper phrase to set forth in the bosom of the visible church who do not wholly deny and reject word and rule of Scripture, but yet live on as though they had it: they do not observe it; as if God had never spoken any such thing, given them any such rule. They that reject and condemn such things as word enforces, surely do not remember to do them. --Thomas Manton.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 139. -- Zeal.

1. Consuming self.
2. Inflamed by that which would naturally quench it.
3. Fed upon God's words.

Verse 139. -- Zeal.

1. Flourishing in an unpromising atmosphere.
2. Attaining an astonishing growth.
3. Accomplishing a blessed work -- the consumption of self. --C.A.D.

Verse 139. --

1. The object of his zeal: "Thy words."
2. The occasion of his zeal: "Mine enemies," etc.
3. The fervour of his zeal: "My zeal hath consumed me." --G.R.

EXPOSITION

Verse 140. Thy word is very pure. It is truth distilled, holiness in its quintessence. In the word of God there is no admixture of error or sin. It is pure in its sense, pure in its language, pure in its spirit, pure in its influence, and all this to the very highest degree -- "very pure." "Therefore thy servant loveth it," which is a proof that he himself was pure in heart, for only those who are pure love God's word because of its purity. His heart was knit to the word because of its glorious holiness and truth. He admired it, delighted in it, sought to practise it, and longed to come under its purifying power.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 140. -- *Thy word is very pure.* In the original, "tried, purified, like gold in the furnace," absolutely perfect, without the dross vanity and fallibility, which runs through human writings. The more we try the promises, the surer we shall find them. Pure gold is so fixed, Boerhaave, informs us of an ounce of it set in the eye of a glass furnace for two months, without losing a single grain. --George Horne.

Verse 140. -- *Thy word is very pure; therefore, etc.* The word of God is not only "pure," free from all base admixture, but it is a purifier; it cleanses from sin and guilt every heart with which into comes into contact. "Now ye are clean," said Jesus Christ to his disciples, "by the word which I have spoken unto you": [John 15:3](#). It is this its pure quality combined with its tendency to purify every nature that yields to its holy influence, that endears it to every child of God. Here it is that he finds those views of the divine character, those promises, those precepts, those representations of the deformity of sin, of the beauty of holiness, which lead him, above all things, to seek conformity to the divine image. A child of God in his best moments does not wish the word of God brought down to a level with his own imperfect character, but desires rather that his character may be gradually raised to a conformity to that blessed word. Because it is altogether pure, and because it tends to convey to those who make it their constant study a measure of its own purity, the child of God loves it, and delights to meditate in it day and night. --John Morison.

Verse 140. -- *Thy word is very pure.* Before I knew the word of God in spirit and in truth, for its great antiquity, its interesting narratives, its impartial biography, its pure morality, its sublime poetry, in a

word, for its beautiful and wonderful variety, I preferred it to all other books; but since I have entered into its spirit, like the Psalmist, I love it above all things for its purity; and desire, whatever else I read, it may tend to increase my knowledge of the Bible, and strengthen my affection for its divine and holy truths. --Sir William Jones, 1746-1794.

Verse 140. -- *Thy word.* Let us refresh our minds and our memories with some of the Scripture adjuncts connected with "the word," and realize, in some degree at least, the manifold relations which it bears both to God and our souls. It is called "the word of Christ," because much of it was given by him, and it all bears testimony to him...It is called "the word of his grace," because the glorious theme on which it loves to expatiate is grace, and especially grace as it is seen in Christ's dying love for sinful men. It is called *ololoj tou staurou*, "the word of the cross" (1 Corinthians 1:18), because in the crucifixion of the divine Redeemer we see eternal mercy in its brightest lustre. It is called "the word of the gospel," because it brings glad tidings of great joy to all nations. It is called "the word of the kingdom," because it holds out to all believers the hope of an everlasting kingdom of righteousness and peace. It is called "the word of salvation," because the purpose for which it was given is the salvation of sinners. It is called "the word of truth," because, as Chillingworth says, it has God for its author, salvation for its end, and truth without mixture of error for its contents. And we will only add, it is called "the word of life," because it reveals to a sinful, perishing world the doctrines of life and immortality. -- IV. Graham, in "A Commentary on the First Epistle of John," 1857.

Verse 140. -- *Therefore thy servant loveth it.* Love in God is the fountain of all his benefits extended to us; and love in man is the fountain of all our service and obedience to God. He loved us first to do us good; and hereof it comes that we have grace to love him next to do him service. Love is such a duty that the want thereof cannot be excused in any; for the poorest both may and should love God: yet without it all the rest thou canst do in his service is nothing; nay, not if thou shouldst give thy goods to the poor, and offer thy body to be burned. Small sacrifices, flowing from faith and love, are welcome to him, where greater without these are but abomination to him. Proofs of both we have in the widow's mite and Cain's rich oblation; whereof the one was rejected, the other received. Happy are we though we cannot say, "We have done as God commands," if out of a good heart we can say, -- "We love to do what he commands." --William Cowper.

Verse 140. -- *Therefore thy servant loveth it.* Of all our grounds and reasons of love to the word of God, the most noble and excellent is to love the word for its purity. This showeth indeed that we are made partakers of the Divine nature: 2 Peter 1:4. For I play you mark, when we hate evil as evil, and love good as good, we have the same love and hatred that God hath. When once we come to love things because they are pure, it is a sign that we have the same love that God hath. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 140. -- *Thy servant loveth it.* Otherwise, indeed, the Psalmist would not have been the Lord's

servant at all. But he glories in the title because he delights in the pure service. --John Stephen.

Verse 140-141. -- *God's own utterance is indeed without spot*, and therefore not to be carped at; it is pure, fire proved, noblest metal, therefore he loves it, and does not, though young and lightly esteemed, care for the remonstrances of his proud opponents, who are older and more learned than himself. --Franz Delitzsch.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 140. --

1. An awakened sinner adoring the holy law.
2. A saint loving it because the pure love the pure.
3. A saint among sinners loving the law all the more for its contrast.

Verse 140. --

1. The crystal stream.
 - (a) Flows from under the throne.
 - (b) Mirrors heaven.
 - (c) Undeified through the ages.
 - (d) Nourishes holiness as it flows.
 1. The enraptured pilgrim.
 - (a) Keeping by its brink.
 - (b) Delighted with its lucid depths.
 1. Pleased with its mirrored revelations -- self, heaven, God.
 2. Cleansed and refreshed by its waters. --W.B.H.

Verse 140. --

1. The purity of God's Word.
 - (a) It proceeds from a perfectly pure source: "Thy word."
 - (b) It reveals a purity otherwise unknown.
 - (c) It treats impure subjects with absolute purity.
 - (d) It inculcates the most perfect purity.
 - (e) It produces such purity in those who are subject to its power. --
 1. The love which its purity inspires in gracious souls.
 - (a) They love it because, while it reveals their natural impurity, it shows them how to escape from it.
 - (b) They love it because it conforms them to its own purity.
 - (c) They love it because to a pure heart the purity of the word is one of its chief commendations. --

1. The evidences of this love to the pure word.

(a) Desire to possess it in its purity.

(b) Subjection to its spirit and teachings.

(c) Zeal for its honour and diffusion. --W.H.J.P.

EXPOSITION

Verse 141. I am small and despised: yet do I not forget thy precepts. That fault of forgetfulness which he condemned in others (Psalms 119:139) could not be charged upon himself. His enemies made no account of him, regarded him as a man without power or ability, and therefore looked down upon him. He appears to accept the situation and humbly take the lowest room, but he carries God's word with him. How many a man has been driven to do some ill action in order to reply to the contempt of his enemies: to make himself conspicuous he has either spoken or acted in a manner which he could not justify. The beauty of the Psalmist's piety was that it was calm and well balanced, and as he was not carried away by flattery, so was he not overcome by shame. If small, he the more jealously attended to the smaller duties; and if despised, he was the more in earnest to keep the despised commandments of God.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 141. -- *I am small and despised*, or, I have been. Some versions render it young; as if it had respect to the time of his anointing by Samuel, when he was overlooked and despised in his father's family (1 Samuel 16:11 17:28); but the word here used is not expressive of age, but of state, condition, and circumstances; and the meaning is, that he was little in his own esteem, and in the esteem of men, and was despised; and that on account of religion, in which he was a type of Christ (Psalms 24:6 Isaiah 53:3), and which is the common lot of good men, who are treated by the world as the filth of it, and the offscouring of all things. --John Gill.

Verse 141. -- *I am small*. They that love God may be reduced to a mean, low, and afflicted condition; the Lord seeth it meet for divers reasons:

1. That they may know their happiness is not in this world, and so they sore long for heaven, and delight in heavenly things.
2. It is necessary to cut off the provisions of the flesh and the fuel of their lusts. A rank soil breeds weeds; and when we sail with a full stream we are apt to be carried away with it.
3. That they may be more sensible of his displeasure against their sins and scandalous carriage by which they have dishonoured him, and provoked the pure eyes of his glory.
4. That they may learn to live upon the promises, and learn to exercise suffering graces; especially dependence upon God, who can support us without a temporal, visible interest.

5. That God may convince the enemies that there is a people that do sincerely serve him, and not for carnal, selfish ends: Job 1:6. That his glory may be more seen in their deliverance; and therefore, before God doth appear for his children, he bringeth them very low. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 141. -- *Small*. This applies to David in his early days of trouble and persecution. It is difficult to find any other individual to whom it is so suitable. --James G. Murphy.

Verse 141. -- *A notable example to the shame of them*, that perhaps will serve and praise God in their prosperity, and when they are increased; but let affliction or want come, and then they have little heart to do it. --Abraham Wright.

Verse 141. -- *Yet do not I forget thy precepts*. God observeth what we do in our trouble: "If we have forgotten the name of our God, or stretched out our hands to a strange god: shall not God search this out? for he knoweth the secrets of the heart": Psalms 44:20-21. If we slacken our service to God, or fall off to any degree of apostasy, the Judge of hearts knoweth all: God knoweth whether we would have depraved and corrupt doctrine, worship, or ordinances; or whether we will faithfully adhere to him, to his word, and worship, and ordinances, whatever it cost us.

In our poor and despicable condition we see more cause to love the word than we did before; because we experience supports and comforts which we have thereby: "Knowing that tribulation worketh patience," etc. (Romans 5:3); "For as the sufferings of Christ abound in us, so our consolation also aboundeth by Christ": 2 Corinthians 1:5. God hath special consolations for his afflicted and despised people, and makes their consolation by Christ to run parallel with, and keep pace with, their sufferings for Christ. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 141. -- *Yet do not I forget thy precepts*. We see by experience that our affection leaves anything from the time it goes out of our remembrance. We cease to love when we cease to remember; but earnest love ever renews remembrance of that which is beloved. The first step of defection is to forget what God hath commanded, and what we are obliged in duty to do to him; and upon this easily follows the offending of God by our transgression. Such beasts as did not chew their cud, under the law were accounted unclean, and not meet to be sacrificed unto God: that was but a figure, signifying unto us that a man who hath received good things from God, and doth not think upon them, cannot feel the sweetness of them, and so cannot be thankful to God. --William Cowper.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 141-144. -- A mournful song and a joyful refrain. Stanza 1: "I am small and despised." Refrain: The everlasting righteousness of God. Stanza 2: "Trouble and anguish have seized me." Refrain: The everlasting righteousness of God. --C.A.D.

Verse 141. -- Here is --

1. David pious, and yet poor. He was a man after God's own heart, and yet "small and despised"

in his own account and in account of many others.

2. David poor and yet pious; "small and despised" for his strict and serious godliness; yet his conscience can witness for him, that he "did not forget God's precepts." --M. Henry.

Verse 141. --

1. The source of man's littleness is in himself.
2. The source of his greatness is in the Divine word. Hence the greatest philosopher is a small man compared with the most uneducated whose delight is in the law of God, and who meditates, etc. --G.R.

Verse 141. --

1. A little scholar.
2. A quick learner.
3. A firm reminder.

Verse 141. -- Unknown, yet well known.

1. The estimate formed of the believer by the world.
2. The estimate formed of the believer by himself.
3. The profession made by the believer to God.
4. On a review, a revised estimate of the believer: 1 Corinthians 1:27 James 4:5. --C.A.D.

EXPOSITION

Verse 142. Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness. Having in a previous verse ascribed righteousness to God, he now goes on to declare that that righteousness is unchanging and endures from age to age. This is the joy and glory of the saints, that what God is he always will be, and his mode of procedure towards the sons of men is immutable: having kept his promise, and dealt out justice among his people, he will do so world without end. Both the righteousnesses and the unrighteousnesses of men come to an end, but the righteousness of God is without end.

And thy law is the truth. As God is love, so his law is the truth, the very essence of truth, truth applied to ethics, truth in action, truth upon the judgment seat. We hear great disputes about, "What is truth?" The holy Scriptures are the only answer to that question. Note, that they are not only true, but the truth itself. We may not say of them that they contain the truth, but that they are the truth: "thy law is the truth." There is nothing false about the law or preceptory part of Scripture. Those who are obedient thereto shall find that they are walking in a way consistent with fact, while those who act contrary thereto are walking in a vain show.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 142. -- *Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.* Here the law of God is honoured by the additional encomium, that it is everlasting righteousness and truth; as if it had been said, that all

other rules of life, with whatever attractions they may appear to be recommended, are but a shadow, which quickly vanishes away. The Psalmist, no doubt, indirectly contrasts the doctrine of the law with all the human precepts which were ever delivered, that he may bring all the faithful in subjection to it, since it is the school of perfect wisdom. There may be more of plausibility in the refined and subtle disquisitions of men; but there is in them nothing firm or solid at bottom, as there is in God's law. This firmness of the divine law he proves in the following verse from one instance -- the continual comfort he found in it when grievously harassed with temptations. And the true test of the profit we have reaped from it is, when we oppose to all the distresses of whatever kind which may straiten us, the consolation derived from the word of God, that thereby all sadness may be effaced from our minds. David here expresses something more than he did in the preceding verse; for there he only said that he reverently served God, although from his rough and hard treatment he might seem to lose his labour; but now when distressed and tormented, he affirms that he finds in the law of God the most soothing delight, which mitigates all griefs, and not only tempers their bitterness, but also seasons them with a certain sweetness. Assuredly when this taste does not exist to afford us delight, nothing is more natural than for us to be swallowed up of sorrow. --John Calvin.

Verse 142. -- *Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness.* Not only righteous at the first giving out, but righteous in all ages and times; and should we slight this rule that will hold for ever? In the world, new lords, new laws; men vary and change their designs and purposes; privileges granted today may be repealed tomorrow; but this word will hold true for ever. Our justification by Christ is irrevocable; that part of righteousness is everlasting. Be sure you are justified now upon terms of the gospel, and you shall be justified for ever: your forgiveness is an everlasting forgiveness, and your peace is an everlasting peace: "I will remember their sin no more": [Jeremiah 31:34](#). So the other righteousness of sanctification, it is for ever; approve yourselves to God now, and you will approve yourselves at the day of judgment. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 142. -- *Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness,* etc. The original is better expressed thus, "Thy righteousness is righteousness everlastingly, and thy law is truth." So the Septuagint. The English translation expresses the perpetuity of the righteousness, the original expresses also the character of it...God's righteousness is essentially and eternally righteousness. The expressions are absolute; there is only this righteousness, and only this truth. --John Stephen.

Verse 142. -- *Thy law is the truth.*

1. It is the chief truth. There is some truth in the laws of men and the writings of men, even of heathens; but they are but sorry fragments and scraps of truth, that have escaped since the fall.
2. It is the only truth; that is, the only revelation of the mind of God that you can build upon. It is the rule of truth.

3. It is the pure truth. In it there is nothing but the truth, without the mixture of falsehood; every part is true as truth itself. It is true in the promises, threatenings, doctrines, histories, precepts, prohibitions.
4. It is the whole truth. It containeth all things necessary for the salvation of those that yield up themselves to be instructed by it. --Thomas Manton.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 142. -- Righteousness, immutability, and truth combined in the revelation of God.

EXPOSITION

Verse 143. Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me. This affliction may have arisen from his circumstances, or from the cruelty of his enemies, or from his own internal conflicts, but certain it is that he was the subject of much distress, a distress which apprehended him, and carried him away a captive to its power. His griefs, like fierce dogs, had taken hold upon him; he felt their teeth. He had double trouble: trouble without and anguish within, as the apostle Paul put it, "without were rightings and within were fears."

Yet thy commandments are my delights. Thus he became a riddle; troubled, and yet delighted; in anguish, and yet in pleasure. The child of God can understand this enigma, for well he knows that while he is cast down on account of what he sees within himself he is all the more lifted up by what he sees in the word. He is delighted with the commandments, although he is troubled because he cannot perfectly obey them. He finds abundant light in the commandments, and by the influence of that light he discovers and mourns over his own darkness. Only the man who is acquainted with the struggles of the spiritual life will understand the expression before us. Let the reader herein find a balance in which to weigh himself. Does he find even when he is begin with sorrow that it is a delightful thing to do the will of the Lord? Does he find more joy in being sanctified than sorrow in being chastised? Then the spot of God's children is upon him.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 143. -- *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me: yet thy commandments are my delights.*

This is strange, that in the midst of anguish David had delight: but indeed the sweetness of God's word is best perceived under the bitterness of the cross. The joy of Christ and the joy of the world cannot consist together. A heart delighted with worldly joy cannot feel the consolations of the Spirit; the one of these destroys the other: but in sanctified trouble, the comforts of God's word are felt and perceived in a most sensible manner. Many a time hath David protested this delight of his in the word of God; and truly it is a great argument of godliness, when men come not only to reverence it, but to love it, and delight in it. Let this be considered by those unhappy men who hear it of custom, and count it but a weariness. --Abraham Wright.

Verse 143. -- *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me*, or "found me," etc. We need not take pains, as many do, "to find trouble and anguish;" for they will, one day, "find us." In that day the revelations of God must be to us instead of all worldly "delights" and pleasures, which will then have forsaken us; and how forlorn and desolate will be our state if we should have no other delights, no other pleasures, to succeed them, and to accompany us into eternity. Let our study be then in the Scriptures, if we expect our comfort in them in time to come. --George Horne.

Verse 143. -- *Trouble and anguish have taken hold on me*. You may conceive a bold figure here, as if Trouble and Anguish were being sent out against the helpless sons of men. These, like enemies, were going round. Instead of seizing upon the wicked, they had found the righteous man. So it was by the ordering of God. I suppose many of us have remarked, that the believer is never long at ease. He is in the world; he is in the flesh; there is indwelling sin; there are enemies around; there is the great enemy; besides all this, the Lord, for wise purposes, hides his face. Then the believer is in trouble and anguish. --John Stephen.

Verse 143. -- *Have taken hold on me*. Hebrew, found me. Like dogs tracking out a wild beast hiding or fleeing. --A.R. Fausset.

Verse 143. -- *Thy commandments are my delights*. Delight in moral things (saith Aquinas) is the rule by which we may judge of men's goodness or badness. Delectatio est quies voluntatis in bono. Men are good and bad as the objects of their delight are: they are good who delight in good things, and they are evil who delight in evil things. --Thomas Manton.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 143. -- Mingled emotions.

Verse 143. --

1. The dark cloud. Trouble, etc.
2. His silver lining. Yet, etc.

Verse 143. --

1. The Saint cast into prison.

(a) The jailers: "Trouble and anguish."

(b) Their proceeding: "take hold" and make him fast.

1. Songs in the night.

(a) Blessed theme: "thy commandments."

(b) Ecstatic melodies: "delights."

1. Let the prisoners hear them.

(a) Pain held, sin held, despair held.

(b) It is matter and melody to open prisons. --W.B.H.

Verse 143. -- Consider, --

1. The excellency of the word, in that it gives delight when trouble and anguish oppress.
2. The great kindness of God in so framing his word that it can give delight at such a time, and under such circumstances.
3. The disposition of the believer to resort to the word for delight, when others give themselves over to vain grief and despondency.
4. The blessed position of the believer, in that he need never be without joy. --J.F.

EXPOSITION

Verse 144. The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting. First he had said that God's testimonies were righteous, then that they were everlasting, and now that their righteousness is everlasting. Thus he gives us a larger and more detailed account of the word of God the longer he is engaged in writing upon it. The more we say in praise of holy writ, the more we may say and the more we can say. God's testimonies to man cannot be assailed, they are righteous from beginning to end; and though ungodly men have opposed the divine justice, especially in the plan of salvation, they have always failed to establish any charge against the Most High. Long as the earth shall stand, long as there shall be a single intelligent creature in the universe, it will be confessed that God's plans of mercy are in all respects marvellous proofs of his love of justice: even that he may be gracious Jehovah will not be unjust.

Give me understanding, and I shall live. This is a prayer which he is constantly praying, that God will give him understanding. Here he evidently considers that such a gift is essential to his lifting. To live without understanding is not to live the life of a man, but to be dead while we live. Only as we know and apprehend the things of God can we be said to enter into life. The more the Lord teaches us to admire the eternal rightness of his word, and the more he quickens us to the love of such lightness, the happier and the better we shall be. As we love life, and seek many days that we may see good, it behooves us to seek immortality in the everlasting word which liveth and abideth for ever, and to seek good in that renewal of our entire nature which begins with the enlightenment of the understanding and passes on to the regeneration of the entire man. Here is our need of the Holy Spirit, the Lord and giver of life, and the guide of all the quickened ones, who shall lead us into all truth. O for the visitations of his grace at this good hour!

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 144. -- *The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting.* Thy moral law was not made for one people, or for one particular time; it is as imperishable as thy nature, and of endless obligation. It is that law by which all the children of Adam shall be judged. "Give me understanding." To know and practise it. "And I shall live." Shall glorify thee, and live eternally; not for the merit of having done it, but because thou didst fulfil the work of the law in my heart, having saved me from condemnation by

it. --Adam Clarke.

Verse 144. -- *Give me understanding*, and I shall live. I read it in connection with the preceding clause; for although David desires to have his mind enlightened by God, yet he does not conceive of any other way by which he was to obtain an enlightened understanding than by his profiting aright in the study of the law. Further, he here teaches that men cannot, properly speaking, be said to live when they are destitute of the light of heavenly wisdom; and as the end for which men are created is not that, like swine or asses, they may stuff their bellies, but that they may exercise themselves in the knowledge and service of God, when they turn away from such employment their life is worse than a thousand deaths. David therefore protests that for him to live was not merely to be fed with meat and drink, and to enjoy earthly comforts, but to aspire after a better life, which he could not do save under the guidance of faith. This is a very necessary warning; for although it is universally acknowledged that man is born with this distinction, that he excels the lower animals in intelligence, yet the great bulk of mankind, as if with deliberate purpose, stifle whatever light God pours into their understandings. I indeed admit that all men desire to be sharp witted; but how few aspire to heaven, and consider that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom. Since, then, meditation upon the celestial life is buried by earthly care, men do nothing else than plunge into the grave, so that while living to the world, they die to God. Under the term life, however, the prophet denotes the utmost he could wish. Lord, as if he had said, although I am already dead, yet if thou art pleased to illumine my mind with the knowledge of heavenly truth, this grace alone will be sufficient to revive me. --John Calvin.

Verse 144. -- *Give me understanding*, and I shall live. The saving knowledge of God's testimonies is the only way to live. There is a threefold life.

1. Life natural.
2. Life spiritual, and,
3. Life eternal. In all these considerations may the point be made good.

First. Life is taken for the life of nature, or the life of the body, or life temporal, called "this life" in Scripture: 1 Corinthians 15:19; 1 Timothy 4:8. Life is better preserved in a way of obedience than by evil doing; that provoketh God to cast us off, and exposes us to dangers. It is not in the power of the world to make us live or die a day sooner or longer than God pleaseth. If God will make us happy, they cannot make us miserable: therefore, "Give me understanding, and I shall live"; that is, lead a comfortable and happy life for the present. Prevent sin, and you prevent danger. Obedience is the best way to preserve life temporal: as great a paradox as it seems to the world, it is a Scripture truth, "Keep my commandments, and live" (Proverbs 4:4); and, "Take fast hold of instruction; let her not go: keep her; for she is thy life" (verse 13); and, "Length of days is in her right hand; and in her left hand riches and honour" (Proverbs 3:16); and, "She is a tree of life" (verse 18). The knowledge and

practice of the word is the only means to live comfortably and happily here, as well as for ever hereafter.

Secondly. Life spiritual; that is twofold, the life of justification, and the life of sanctification.

1. The life of justification: "The free gift came upon all men unto justification of life": [Romans 5:18](#). He is dead, not only on whom the hangman hath done his work, but also he on whom the judge hath passed sentence, and the law pronounces him dead. In this sense we were all dead, and justification is called justification to life; there is no living in this sense without knowledge: "By his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many": [Isaiah 43:11](#). We live by faith, and faith cometh by hearing, and hearing doeth no good unless the Lord giveth understanding; as meats nourish not unless received and digested.
2. The life of sanctification: "And you hath he quickened, who were dead in trespasses and sins": Eph 2:. And men live not properly till they live the life of grace; they live a false, counterfeit life, not a blessed, happy, certain, and true life. Now, this life is begun and carried on by saying knowledge: "The new man which is renewed in knowledge": [Colossians 3:10](#). Again, men are said to be "alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them": [Ephesians 4:18](#). They that are ignorant are dead in sin: life spiritual cometh by knowledge. Hence begins the change of the inward man, and thenceforth we live. "Give me understanding," ut vere in te vivare, that the true life began in me may grow and increase daily, but never be quenched by sin.

Thirdly. Life everlasting, or our blessed estate in heaven. So it is Said of the saints departed, they all live unto God: [Luke 20:38](#). And this is called the water of life, the tree of life, the crown of life; properly this is life. What is the present life in comparison of everlasting life? The present life, it is "mors vitalis", a living death; or "mortalis vita", a dying life, a kind of death; it is always in flux, like a stream: it runneth from us as fast as it cometh to us: "He fleeth also as a shadow, and continueth not": [John 14:2](#). We die as fast as we live: it differeth but as the point from the line where it terminates. It is not one and the same, no permanent thing; it is like the shadow of a star in a flowing stream. Its contentments are base and low, called "the life of thine hand": [Isaiah 57:10](#). It is patched up of several creatures, fain to ransack the storehouses of nature to support a ruinous fabric. And compare it with the life of grace here, it doth not exempt us from sin, nor miseries. Our capacities are narrow. We are full of fears, and doubts, and dangers; but in the life of glory we shall neither sin nor sorrow any more. This is meant here: "The righteousness of thy testimonies is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live"; it is chiefly meant of the life of glory. This is the fruit of saving knowledge, when we so know God and Christ as to come to God by him. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 144. -- *I shall live.* I shall be kept from those sins which deserve and bring death. -- Matthew Pool.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 144. -- Everlasting righteousness revealed in the word, and producing everlasting life in believers.

Verse 144. --

1. Eternal truths.
2. Eternal life dependent upon them.
3. A cry from amid these everlasting hills. --W.B.H.

Verse 144. (last clause). --

1. Consider the prayer in its simplicity.
 - (a) It is suitable for the awakened sinner.
 - (b) For the Christian struggling against temptation.
 - (c) For the suffering believer.
 - (d) For the worker
 - (e) For aspiring minds in the church of God.
 - (f) For expiring saints.
 1. The prayer more fully opened up.
 - (a) Here is want confessed.
 - (b) The prayer is evidently put upon the footing of free grace: "Give."
 1. Lay bare the argument in the prayer.
 2. The word of God, when practically and experimentally understood, is a pledge of life.
 3. The word of God is the incorruptible "seed" which liveth and abideth for ever.
 4. It is the food of life.
 5. It is the very flower and crown and glory of true life.
 6. It is righteous.
 7. It is everlasting. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1572: "Alive."

EXPOSITION

This section is given up to memories of prayer. The Psalmist describes the time and the manner of his devotions, and pleads with God for deliverance from his troubles. He who has been with God in the closet will find God with him in the furnace. If we have cried we shall be answered. Delayed answers may drive us to importunity; but we need not fear the ultimate result, since God's promises are not uncertain, but are founded for ever. The whole passage shows us: How he prayed (Psalms 119:145). What he prayed for (Ps 119:146). When he prayed (Psalms 119:147). How long he prayed (Psalms 119:148). What he pleaded (Psalms 119:149). What happened (Psalms 119:150). How he

was rescued ([Psalms 119:151](#)). What was his witness as to the whole matter ([Psalms 119:152](#)).

Verse 145. -- I cried with my whole heart. His prayer was a sincere, plaintive, painful, natural utterance, as of a creature in pain. We cannot tell whether at all times he used his voice when he thus cried; but we are informed of something which is of much greater consequence, he cried with his heart. Heart cries are the essence of prayer. He mentions the unity of his heart in this holy engagement. His whole soul pleaded with God, his entire affections, his united desires all went out towards the living God. It is well when a man can say as much as this of his prayers: it is to be feared that many never cried to God with their whole heart in all their lives. There may be no beauty of elocution about such prayers, no length of expression, no depth of doctrine, nor accuracy of diction; but if the whole heart be in them they will find their way to the heart of God.

Hear me, O Lord. He desires of Jehovah that his cries may not die upon the air, but that God may have respect to them. True supplicants are not satisfied with the exercise itself, they have an end and object in praying, and they look out for it. If God does not hear prayer we pray in vain. The term "hear" is often used in Scripture to express attention and consideration. In one sense God hears every sound that is made on earth, and every desire of every heart; but David meant much more; he desired a kindly, sympathetic hearing, such as a physician gives to his patient when he tells him his pitiful story. He asked that the Lord would draw near, and listen with friendly ear to the voice of his complaint, with the view of pitying him and helping him. Observe, that his whole hearted prayer goes to the Lord alone; he has no second hope or help. "Hear me, O Lord," is the full range of his petition and expectation.

I will keep thy statutes. He could not expect the Lord to hear him if he did not hear the Lord, neither would it be true that he prayed with his whole heart unless it was manifest that he laboured with all his might to be obedient to the divine will. His object in seeking deliverance was that he might be free to fulfil his religion and carry out every ordinance of the Lord. He would be a free man that he might be at liberty to serve the Lord. Note well that a holy resolution goes well with an importunate supplication: David is determined to be holy, his whole heart goes with that resolve as well as with his prayers. He will keep God's statutes in his memory, in his affections, and in his actions. He will not wilfully neglect or violate any one of the divine laws.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

Verse 145. -- *I cried with my whole heart.* As a man cries most loudly when he cries with all his mouth opened; so a man prays most effectually when he prays with his whole heart. Neither doth this speech declare only the fervency of his affection; but it imports also that it was a great thing which he sought from God. And thou, when thou prayest, pray for great things; for things enduring, not for things perishing: pray not for silver, it is but rust; nor for gold, it is but metal; nor for possessions, they are but earth. Such prayer ascends not to God. He is a great God, and esteems himself dishonoured

when great things with great affection are not sought from him. --William Cowper.

Verse 145. -- *I cried with my whole heart.* In all your closet duties God looks first and most to your hearts: "My son, give me thine heart": [Proverbs 23:26](#). It is not a piece, it is not a corner of the heart, that will satisfy the Maker of the heart; the heart is a treasure, a bed of spices, a royal throne wherein he delights. God looks not at the elegancy of your prayers, to see how neat they are; nor yet at the geometry of your prayers, to see how long they are; nor yet at the arithmetic of your prayers, to see how many they are; nor yet at the music of your prayers, nor yet at the sweetness of your voice, nor yet at the logic of your prayers; but at the sincerity of your prayers, how hearty they are. There is no prayer acknowledged, approved, accepted, recorded, or rewarded by God, but that wherein the heart is sincerely and wholly. The true mother would not have the child divided. God loves a broken and a contrite heart, so he loathes a divided heart: [Psalms 51:17](#); [James 1:8](#). God neither loves halting nor halving; he will be served truly and totally. The royal law is, "Thou shalt love and serve the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul." Among the heathens, when the beasts were cut up for sacrifice, the first thing the priest looked upon was the heart, and if the heart was naught, the sacrifice was rejected. Verily, God rejects all those sacrifices wherein the heart is not. Prayer without the heart is but as sounding brass or a tinkling cymbal. Prayer is only lovely and weighty, as the heart is in it, and no otherwise. It is not the lifting up of the voice, nor the wringing of the hands, nor the beating of the breasts, nor an affected tone, nor studied motions, nor seraphical expressions, but the stirrings of the heart, that God looks at in prayer. God hears no more than the heart speaks. If the heart be dumb, God will certainly be deaf. No prayer takes with God, but that which is the travail of the heart. --Thomas Brooks.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Outlines Upon Keywords of the Psalm, By Pastor C. A. Davis.

Verse 145-152. -- The believer's cry. The reiterated cry ([Psalms 119:145-148](#)) An appeal for audience ([Psalms 119:149](#)). The nearness of the enemy ([Psalms 119:150](#)). But, in response to the cry, God is also near ([Psalms 119:151](#)).

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 145-148. -- The cry.

1. Whence it came: from my heart.
2. Whither it went: to the Lord.
3. When it was heard: at dawn and dark.
4. What it sought: hearing, salvation.
5. What it promised: obedience.
6. How it was sustained: by hope in God's word. --C.A.D.

Verse 145,146. --The souls cry.

1. The depth from which it rose.
2. The height it reached.

Verse 145,146. -- Childlike prayer.

1. In its ring: "I cried."
2. In its directness: "to thee."
3. In its outburst: "whole heart."
4. In its outcries: "hear me"; "save me."
5. In its promise of better behaviour: "I will keep thy statutes." --W.B.H.

Verse 145. --

1. The model of prayer: "I cried with my whole heart."
2. The object of prayer: "Hear me, O Lord."
3. The accompaniment of prayer: "I will keep thy statutes."

EXPOSITION

Verse 146. -- I cried unto thee. Again he mentions that his prayer was unto God alone. The sentence imports that he prayed vehemently, and very often; and that it had become one of the greatest facts of his life that he cried unto God. "Save me." This was his prayer; very short, but very full. He needed saving, none but the Lord could save him, to him he cried, "Save me" from the dangers which surround me, from the enemies that pursue me, from the temptations which beset me, from the sins which accuse me. He did not multiply words, and men never do so when they are in downright earnest. He did not multiply objects, and men seldom do so when they are intent upon the one thing needful: "save me" was his one and only prayer.

And I shall keep thy testimonies. This was his great object in desiring salvation, that he might be able to continue in a blameless life of obedience to God, that he might be able to believe the witness of God, and also to become himself a witness for God. It is a great thing when men seek salvation for so high an end. He did not ask to be delivered that he might sin with impunity; his cry was to be delivered from sin itself. He had vowed to keep the statutes or laws, here he resolves to keep the testimonies or doctrines, and so to be sound of head as well as clean of hand. Salvation brings all these good things in its train. David had no idea of a salvation which would allow him to live in sin, or abide in error: he knew right well that there is no saving a man while he abides in disobedience and ignorance.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 146. -- *I cried unto thee.* The distressed soul expresses itself in strong cries and tears. Of old they cried unto the Lord, and he heard them in their distress. So Israel at the Red Sea. The men of the Reformation thus expressed themselves in earnest prayer, and found relief. Luther at the Diet of

Worms, when remanded for another day, spent the long night in the loud utterance of prayer, that he might appear for his Lord before an august earthly assembly. Our reading of the covenanting times will remind us of many instances of the same. We may think of John Welch, going into his garden night after night, in a night covering, and crying to the Lord to grant him Scotland. The expression of prayer, however, is manifold as the frame of the spirit. Intense feeling will beget strong cries in prayer; but prayer that is uttered under realizing views of our gracious God will be mild, and often delivered as it were in whispers. So was Alexander Peden accustomed to pray, as if he had been engaged in calm converse with a friend... But when the feeling is intense, when wrath lies heavy upon us, when danger is apprehended as near, when the Lord is conceived to be at a distance, or when there is eager desire after immediate attainment -- in all these cases there will be the strong cries. Such seems to have been the state of the Psalmist's mind when he poured forth the expressive utterance of this part. -- John Stephen.

Verse 146. -- *Brief as are the petitions*, the whole compass of language could not make them more comprehensive. "Hear me." The soul is in earnest, the whole heart is engaged in the "cry." "Save me" -- includes a sinner's whole need -- pardon, acceptance, access, holiness, strength, comfort, heaven, -- all in one word -- Christ. The way of access is not indeed mentioned in these short ejaculations. But it is always implied in every moment's approach and address to the throne of grace. "Hear me" in the name of my all prevailing Advocate. "Save me" through him, whose name is Jesus the Saviour. --Charles Bridges.

Verse 146. -- *I cried unto thee.* A crying prayer pierces the depths of heaven. We read not a word that Moses spake, but God was moved by his cry. Exodus 14:15. It means not an obstreperous noise, but melting moans of heart. Yet sometimes the sore and pinching necessities and distresses of spirit extort even vocal cries not unpleasant to the inclined ears of God. "I cried unto God with my voice," says David, "and he heard me out of his holy hill": Psalms 3:4. And this encourages to a fresh onset: "Hearken unto the voice of my cry, my King, and my God": Psalms 5:2. "Give ear unto my cry: hold not thy peace at my tears": Psalms 39:12. Another time he makes the cave echo with his cries. "I cried, I cried. Attend unto my cry, for I am brought very low." --Samuel Lee (1625-1691), in "The Morning Exercises."

Verse 146. -- *I cried unto thee; save me.* In our troubles, we must have recourse to God, and sue to him by prayer and supplication for help and deliverance in due time; because he is the author of our trouble. In mercies and afflictions, our business lieth not with men, but God; by humble dealing with him we stop wrath at the fountain head: he that bindeth us must loose us; he is at the upper end of causes, and whoever be the instruments of our trouble, and how malicious soever, God is the party with whom we are to make our peace; for he hath the absolute disposal of all creatures, and will have us to acknowledge the dominion of his providence and our dependence upon him. In treaties of

peace between two warring parties, the address is not made to private soldiers, but to their chief: "The Lord hath taken away," saith Job; "When he giveth quietness, who then can make trouble?" Job 34:29. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 146. -- *Save me*, and I shall keep the testimonies. The servants of God regard life itself as chiefly desirable on account of the opportunity which it affords for serving God: "Save me, that I may keep thy testimonies," is the prayer of the believer in the day of trouble and conflict. "To me to live," says he, "is Christ, and to die is gain." How unlike is this to the wicked! Their whole desire in the day of trouble is expended on the wish to escape calamity; they have no desire to be delivered from sin, no wish to be conformed to God! --John Morison.

Verse 146. -- *Save me*. From my sins, my corruptions, my temptations, all the hindrances that lie in my way, that I may "keep thy testimonies." We must cry for salvation, not that we may have the ease and comfort of it, but that we may have an opportunity of serving God the more cheerfully. --Matthew Henry.

Verse 146. -- *God hears us*, that we should hear him. --Thomas Manton.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 146. --

1. Prayer remembered.
2. Prayer continued: "Save me."
3. Prayer yielding fruit: "I shall keep," etc.

Verse 146. -- Salvation.

1. A likely path to it -- prayer: cry on.
2. The proper place for it: "unto thee"; not man, not the heart.
3. A sound view of it: "keep thy testimonies." Not to escape hell, or gain heaven, but to please and love God. --W.B.H.

EXPOSITION

Verse 147. -- I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried. He was up before the sun, and began his pleadings before the dew began to leave the grass. Whatever is worth doing is worth doing speedily. This is the third time that he mentions that he cried. He cried, and cried, and cried again. His supplications had become so frequent, fervent, and intense, that he might hardly be said to be doing anything else from morning to night but crying unto his God. So strong was his desire after salvation that he could not rest in his bed; so eagerly did he seek it that at the first possible moment he was on his knees.

I hoped in thy word. Hope is a very powerful means of strengthening us in prayer. Who would pray if he had no hope that God would hear him? Who would not pray when he has a good hope of a

blessed issue to his entreaties? His hope was fixed upon God's word, and this is a sure anchorage, because God is true, and in no case has he ever run back from his promise, or altered the thing that has gone forth from his mouth. He who is diligent in prayer will never be destitute of hope. Observe that as the early bird gets the worm, so the early prayer is soon refreshed with hope.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUIANT SAYINGS

Verse 147. -- *I prevented the dawning of the morning.* The manner of speech is to be marked. He saith he prevented the morning watch, thereby declaring that he lived, as it were, in a strife with time, careful that it should not overrun him. He knew that time posts away, and in running by wearieth man to dust and ashes. But David pressed to get before it, by doing some good in it, before that it should spur away from him. And this care which David had of every day, alas, how may it make them ashamed who have no care of a whole life! He was afraid to lose a day; they take no thought to lose months and years without doing good in them: yea, having spent the three ages of their life in vanity and licentiousness, scarce will they consecrate their old and decrepit age to the Lord. -- William Cowper.

Verse 147. -- *I prevented the dawning of the morning,* etc. Those that make a business of prayer will use great vigilance and diligence therein. I say, that make a business of prayer; others that use it as a compliment and customary formality, will not be thus affected; they do it as a thing by-the-by, or a work that might well be spared, and do not look upon it as a necessary duty; but if a man's heart be in it, he will be early at work, and follow it close, morning and night: his business is to maintain communion with God, his desires will not let him sleep, and he gets up early to be calling upon God. "But unto thee have I cried, O Lord: and in the morning shall my prayer prevent thee." [Psalms 88:13](#). Thus will good men even break their sleep to give themselves to prayer, and calling upon the name of God. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 147. -- *I prevented the dawning of the morning.* It is a grievous thing if the rays of the rising sun find thee lazy and ashamed in thy bed, and the bright light strike on eyes still weighed down with slumbering sloth. Knowest thou not, O man, that thou owest the daily firstfruits of thy heart and voice to God? Thou hast a daily harvest, a daily revenue. The Lord Jesus remained all night in prayer, not that he needed its help, but putting an example before thee to imitate. He spent the night in prayer for thee, that thou mightest learn how to ask for thyself. Give him again, therefore what he paid for thee. -- Ambrose.

Verse 147. -- *I prevented the dawning of the morning.* David was a good husband, up, early at it: at night he was late at this duty: "At midnight will I rise to give thanks unto thee": [Psalms 119:62](#). This surely was his meaning when he said he should dwell in the house of the Lord for ever; he would be ever in the house of prayer... I wish that when I first open my eyes in the morning, I may then, in soul ejaculatory prayer, open my heart to my God, that at night prayer may make my bed soft, and lay my

pillow easy; that in the daytime prayer may perfume my clothes, sweeten my food, oil the wheels of my particular vocation, keep me company upon all occasions, and gild over all my natural, civil, and religious actions. I wish that, after I have poured out my prayer in the name of Christ, according to the will of God, having sowed my seed, I may expect a crop, looking earnestly for the springing of it up, and believing assuredly that I shall reap in time if I faint not. --George Swinnock.

Verse 147. -- *I prevented the dawning of the morning.* Early prayers are undisturbed by the agitating cares of life, and resemble the sweet melody of those birds which sing loudest and sweetest when fewest cars are open to listen to them. O my soul, canst thou say that thou hast thus "prevented the dawning of the morning" in thy approaches to God? Has the desire of communion with heaven raised thee from thy slumbers, shaken off thy sloth, and carried thee to thy knees? --John Morison.

Verse 147. -- *And cried.* Here is a repetition of the same prayer, "I cried"; yea, again I cried, and a third time, "I prevented the dawning of the morning, and cried." We use to knock at a door thrice, and then depart. Our Lord Jesus "prayed the third time, saying the same words" (Matthew 26:44), "Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me." So the apostle Paul: "For this thing I besought the Lord thrice, that it might depart from me": 2Co 12:8. So, "And he stretched himself upon the child three times, and cried unto the Lord, and said, O Lord my God, I pray thee, let this child's soul come into him again": 1Ki 17:21. This, it seemeth, was the time in which they expected an answer in weighty cases; and yet I will not confine it to that number; for here we are to reiterate our petitions for one and the same thing as often as occasion requireth, till it be granted. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 147. -- *Poets have delighted to sing of the morning as "Mother of the Dews,"* "sowing the earth with orient pearl"; and many of the saints rising up from their beds at the first blush of dawn have found the poetry of nature to be the reality of grace as they have felt the dews of heaven refreshing their spirit. Hence morning exercises have ever been dear to the enlightened, heaven-cloying souls, and it has been their rule, never to see the face of man till they have first seen the face of God. The breath of morn redolent of the smell of flowers is incense offered by earth to her Creator, and living men should never let the dead earth excel them; truly living men tuning their hearts for song, like the birds, salute the radiant mercy which reveals itself in the east. The first fresh hour of every morning should be dedicated to the Lord whose mercy gladdens it with golden light. The eye of day openeth its lids, and in so doing opens the eyes of hosts of heaven-protected slumberers; it is fitting that those eyes should first look up to the great Father of Lights, the fount and source of all the good upon which the sunlight gleams. It augurs for us a day of grace when we begin betimes with God; the sanctifying influence of the season spent upon the mount operates upon each succeeding hour. Morning devotion anchors the soul so that it will not very readily drift far away from God during the day; it perfumes the heart so that it smells fragrant with piety until nightfall; it girds up the soul's garments so that it is less apt to stumble, and feeds all its rowers so that it is not permitted to faint. The morning is

the gate of the day, and should be well guarded with prayer. It is one end of the thread on which the day's actions are strung, and should be well knotted with devotion. If we felt more the majesty of life we should be more careful of its mornings. He who rushes from his bed to his business and waiteth not to worship, is as foolish as though he had not put on his clothes, or cleansed his face, and as unwise as though he dashed into battle without arms or armour. Be it ours to bathe in the softly flowing river of communion with God, before the heat of the wilderness and the burden of the way begin to oppress us. --C.H.S.

Verse 147. -- *I hoped in thy word.* Even if there should not be actual enjoyment, at least let us honour God by the spirit of expectancy. --Charles Bridges.

Verse 147,148. -- *The student of theology and the minister of the word should begin the day with prayer,* and this chiefly to seek from God, that he may rightly understand the word of God, and be able to teach others. -- Solomon Gesner Brethren, note this! -- C.H.S.

Verse 147,148. -- See here:

1. That David was an early riser, which perhaps contributed to his eminency. He was none of those that say, "Yet a little sleep."
2. That he began the day with God; the first thing he did in the morning, before he admitted any business, was to pray; when his mind was most fresh and in the best frame. If our first thoughts in the morning be of God, it will help to keep us in his fear all the day long.
3. That his mind was so full of God and the cares and delights of his religion, that a little sleep served his turn, even in "the night watches," when he awaked from his first sleep, he would rather meditate and pray, than turn him and go to sleep again. He esteemed the words of God's mouth more than his necessary repose, which we can as ill want as our food: Job 23:12.
4. That he would redeem time for religious exercises; he was full of business all day, but that will excuse no man from secret devotion; it is better to take time from sleep, as David did, than not find time for prayer. And this is our comfort when we pray in the night, that we can never come unseasonably to the throne of grace, if we may have access to it at all hours. Baal may be asleep, but Israel's God never slumbers, nor are there any hours in which he may not be spoken with. --Matthew Henry.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 147,148. --

1. The heavenly Companions: prayer and meditation. Inseparable. Mutually helpful.
2. Their favourite seasons: times of stillness; night; the hour before day.
3. Their volume and night lamp: "Thy word;" "Hope." Or --
 - a. A grand plea: "Thy lovingkindness." Who can match it? Who can measure it? Who can mar it?

b) An insignificant pleader: "my voice." What can "my voice" ever say to keep step with "thy loving kindness"? Asking too much out of the question.

c) A clever petition ("according to thy judgment"); requesting life; stolen from God's mouth. God's lovingkindness is matched by God's own promise.

W. B. H.

Verse 147. Observe in this David's diligence.

1. That it was a personal, closet, or secret prayer; "I cried"; I alone, with thee in secret.
2. That it was an early morning prayer: "I prevented the dawning of the morning."
3. That it was a vehement and earnest prayer; for it is expressed by crying. -- T. Manton

Verse 147 -- Early rising commended.

1. A fit time for prayer.
2. For reading the word.
3. For indulging the emotions excited by it: "I hoped in they word."

EXPOSITION

Verse 148. -- Mine eyes prevent the night watches. Or rather, the watches. Before the watchman cried the hour, he was crying to God. He did not need to be informed as to how the hours were flying, for every hour his heart was flying towards heaven. He began the day with prayer, and he continued in prayer through the watches of the day, and the watches of the night. The soldiers changed guard, but David did not change his holy occupation. Specially, however, at night did he keep his eyes open, and drive away sleep, that he might maintain communion with his God. He worshipped on from watch to watch as travellers journey from stage to stage.

That I might meditate in thy word. This had become meat and drink to him. Meditation was the food of his hope, and the solace of his sorrow: the one theme upon which his thoughts ran was that blessed "word" which he continually mentions, and in which his heart rejoices. He preferred study to slumber; and he learned to forego his necessary sleep for much more necessary devotion. It is instructive to find meditation so constantly connected with fervent prayer: it is the fuel which sustains the flame. How rare an article is it in these days.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUIANT SAYINGS

Verse 148. -- *Mine eyes prevent the night watches*, that I might meditate in thy word. You will all admit that this is the language of an ardent, earnest, and painstaking student. David represents himself as "rising early, and late taking rest," on purpose that he might employ himself in the study of God's word. "He meditates in this word," the expression implying close and patient thought; as if there were much in the word which was not to be detected by a cursory glance, and which required the strictest application both of the head and the heart.

The Bible is a book in which we may continually meditate, and yet not exhaust its contents. When David expressed himself in the language of our text, Holy Writ -- the word of God -- was of course a far smaller volume than it now is, though, even now, the Bible is far from a large book. Yet David could not, so to speak, get to the end of the book. He might have been studying the book for years, -- nay, we are sure that he had been, -- and yet, as though he were just entering on a new course of reading, with volume upon volume to peruse, he must rise before day to prosecute the study. "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word."

The same remark may be made upon precepts which enjoin continued study of the Bible. Is there material for that study? Unless there be, the precepts will become out of place; the Scriptural student will have exhausted the Scriptures; and what is he to do then? He can no longer obey the precepts, and the precepts will prove that they cannot have been made for perpetuity -- for the men of all ages and all conditions...

Here is a servant of God, who, from his youth upward, has been diligent in the study of the Bible. Year after year he has devoted to that study, and yet the Bible is but a single volume, and that not a large volume. "Well, then," you might be inclined to say, "the study must surely by this time have exhausted the book! There can be nothing new for him to bring out; nothing which he has not investigated and fathomed." Ah, how you mistake the Bible! What a much larger book it must be than it seems! In place of having exhausted it, the royal student speaks as though there were more work before him than he knew how to compass. "Mine eyes prevent the night watches, that I might meditate in thy word." -- Henry Melvill.

Verse 148. -- "*Mine eyes prevent the night watches.*" The Hebrew word means a watch -- a part of the night, so called from military watches, or a dividing of the night to keep guard. The idea of the Psalmist here is, that he anticipated these regular divisions of the night in order that he might engage in devotion. Instead of waiting for their return, he arose for prayer before they recurred; so much did his heart delight in the service of God. The language would seem to be that of one who was accustomed to pray in these successive "watches" of the night; the early, the middle, and the dawn. This may illustrate what occurs in the life of all who love God. They will have regular seasons of devotion, but they will often anticipate those seasons. They will be in a state of mind which prompts them to pray; when nothing will meet their state of mind but prayer; and when they cannot wait for the regular and ordinary season of devotion; like a hungry man, who cannot wait for the usual and regular hour of his meals. The meaning of the phrase, "Mine eyes prevent," is that he awoke before the usual time for devotion. --Albert Barnes.

Verse 148. -- *Mine eyes prevent the night watches*, etc. His former purpose is yet continued, declaring his indefatigable perseverance in prayer. Oh, that we could learn of him to use our time well! At evening he lay down with prayers and tears; at midnight he rose to give thanks; he got up

before the morning light to call upon the Lord. This is to imitate the life of angels, who ever are delighted to behold the face of God, singing always a new song without wearying. This is to begin our heaven upon earth: Oh, that we could always remember it! --William Cowper.

Verse 148. -- *Night watches.* The Jews, like the Greeks and Romans, divided the night into military watches instead of hours, each watch representing the period for which sentinels or pickets remained on duty. The proper Jewish reckoning recognized only three such watches, entitled the first, "or beginning of the watches" (Lamentations 2:19), "the middle watch" (Judges 7:19), and "the morning watch" (Exodus 14:24; 1 Samuel 11:11). These would last respectively from sunset to 10 p.m.; from 10 p.m. to 2 a.m.; and from 2 a.m. to sunrise. It has been contended by Lightfoot that the Jews really reckoned four watches, three only of which were in the dead of the night, the fourth being in the morning. This, however, is rendered improbable by the use of the term "middle," and is opposed to Rabbinical authority. Subsequently to establishment of Roman supremacy, the number of watches was increased four which was described either according to their numerical order, as the case of the "fourth watch" (Matthew 14:25), or by the terms "midnight, cock crowing, and morning" (Mark 13:35). These terminated at 9 p.m., midnight, 3 a.m., and 6 a.m. Conformably to this, the guard of soldiers was divided into four relays (Acts 12:4), showing that the Roman regime was followed in Herod's army. Watchmen appear to have patrolled the streets of the Jewish towns (Song of Solomon 3:3 5:7; Psalms 127:1) where for "maketh" we should substitute "watcheth"; Psalms 130:6. --William Latham Beyan, in Smith's Dictionary of the Bible, 1863.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 148. -- The Inexhaustibleness of the Bible. A sermon by Henry Melvill, at "The Golden Lecture." 1850.

Verse 148. -- Meditation. Appropriate time, and fruitful subject.

Verse 148. -- Meditation in the word well worth self denial and care on the part of the Christian.

1. Without meditation reading is a waste of time and an indignity offered to the word.
2. Meditation with prayer, but not prayer without meditation, will discover the sense of the word, when all other means fail; and it has this advantage, that the meaning sinks into the mind.
3. Meditation extracts sweetness from the promises, and nourishment from the whole truth.
4. Meditation makes a wise teacher and an efficient worker of one who has little natural skill or learning.
5. Meditation subjects the soul to the sanctifying power of the word.
6. Meditation is an invitation to the Holy Spirit to bless the soul, for he is closely associated with the truth, and delights to see the truth honoured. --J.F.

EXPOSITION

Verse 149. -- Hear my voice according unto thy lovingkindness. Men find it very helpful to use their voices in prayer; it is difficult long to maintain the intensity of devotion unless we hear ourselves speak; hence David at length broke through his silence, arose from his quiet meditations, and began crying with voice as well as heart unto the Lord his God. Note, that he does not plead his own descriings, nor for a moment appeal for payment of a debt on account of merit; he takes the free-grace way, and puts it, "according unto thy lovingkindness." When God hears prayer according to his lovingkindness he overlooks all the imperfections of the prayer, he forgets the sinfulness of the offerer, and in pitying love he grants the desire though the suppliant be unworthy. It is according to God's lovingkindness to answer speedily, to answer frequently, to answer abundantly, yea, exceeding abundantly above all that we ask or even think. Lovingkindness is one of the sweetest words in our language. Kindness has much in it that is most precious, but loving kindness is doubly dear; it is the cream of kindness.

O Lord, quicken me according to thy judgment. This is another of David's wise and ardent prayers. He first cried, "Save me;" then, "Hear me;" and now, "Quicken me." This is often the very best way of delivering us from trouble, -- to give us more life that we may escape from death; and to add more strength to that life that we may not be overloaded with its burdens. Observe, that he asks to receive quickening according to God's judgment, that is, in such a way as should be consistent with infinite wisdom and prudence. God's methods of communicating greater vigour to our spiritual life are exceedingly wise; it would probably be in vain for us to attempt to understand them; and it will be our wisdom to wish to receive grace, not according to our notion of how it should come to us, but according to God's heavenly method of bestowing it. It is his prerogative to make alive as well as to kill, and that sovereign act is best left to his infallible judgment. Hath he not already given us to have life more and more abundantly? "Wherein he hath abounded toward us in all wisdom and prudence."

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 149. -- Prayer -- hearing the result of love; prayer -- answering ruled by wisdom.

Verse 149. -- Quickenings.

1. A prayer of unquestionable necessity: "quicken me."
2. Twin pleas of irresistible power: "thy lovingkindness:" "thy judgment." -- C.A.D.

Verse 149. -- The two accordings.

1. The "according," to which a believer hopes to be heard by God: "Hear my voice according unto thy loving kindness."
 - a. The believer is fully aware of his own unworthiness, and the imperfections of his prayers, therefore he would have God to accept him and interpret them after the rule of his own lovingkindness.

(b) Nor does he hope in vain; God's loving kindness

overlooks the imperfections, and supplies the omissions.

(c) What a blessed thing it is, that while the Holy Spirit helps our infirmities, the groanings that cannot be uttered are read in their true meaning by divine lovingkindness!

1. The "according" to which he expects to be answered by God: "Quicken me according to thy judgment." "Judgment" here may mean the revealed word. Then --

a. He expects to be answered certainly.

(b) He expects to be answered wisely.

(c) He expects to be answered fully, as all his needs require.

(d) He expects that every answer should quicken spiritual life, making him holy.

--J.F.

EXPOSITION

Verse 150. They draw nigh that follow after mischief. He could hear their footfalls close behind him. They are not following him for his benefit, but for his hurt, and therefore the sound of their approach is to be dreaded. They are not prosecuting a good object, but persecuting a good man. As if they had not enough mischief in their own hearts, they are hunting after more. He sees them going a steeple chase over hedge and ditch in order to bring mischief to himself, and he points them out to God, and entreats the Lord to fix his eyes upon them, and deal with them to their confusion. They were already upon him, and he was almost in their grip, and therefore he cries the more earnestly.

They are far from thy law. A mischievous life cannot be an obedient one. Before these men could become persecutors of David they were obliged to get away from the restraints of God's law. They could not hate a saint and yet love the law. Those who keep God's law neither do harm to themselves nor to others. Sin is the greatest mischief in the world. David mentions this to the Lord in prayer, feeling some kind of comfort in the fact that those who hated him hated God also, and found it needful to get away from God before they could be free to act their cruel part towards himself. When we know that our enemies are God's enemies, and ours because they are his, we may well take comfort to ourselves.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 150. -- *They are far from thy law.* Truly it should greatly all the godly, to remember that such as are their enemies are God's also. Since they are far from the obedience of God's law, what marvel be also far from the duty of love which they owe us? It may content want that comfort in men which

otherwise we might and would have, we consider that God wants his glory in them. Let this sustain us see that godless men are enemies unto us. --William Cowper.

Verse 150. -- *If we can get a carnal pillow and bolster under our we sleep and dream many a golden dream of ease and safety.* Now, God, who is jealous of our trust, will not let us alone, and therefore will put us upon sharp trials. It is not faith, but sense, we live upon before; faith, if we can depend upon God when "they draw near that follow mischief:" "I will not be afraid of ten thousands of people, that have set themselves against me round about": Psalms 3:6. A danger at distance is but imagined, it worketh otherwise when it is at hand. Christ himself had other thoughts of approaching danger than danger at a distance: "Now is my soul troubled": John 12:27. This vessel of pure water was troubled though he discovered no dross. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 150,151. -- *Our spiritual enemies*, like David's earthly persecuters are ever present and active. The devouring "lion," or the insinuating "serpent" is "nigh to follow after mischief"; and so much the more dangerous, as his approaches are invisible. Nigh also is a tempting, ensnaring world; and nearer still, a lurking world of sin within, separating us from communion with our God. But in turning habitually and immediately to our stronghold, we can enjoy the confidence-- "Thou art near, O Lord." Though "the High and Lofty One, whose name is Holy" -- though the just and terrible God, yet art thou made nigh to thy people, and they to thee, "by the blood of the cross." And thou dost manifest thy presence to them in "the Son of thy love." --Charles Bridges.

Verse 150,151. -- *They are "nigh" to persecute and destroy me; thou art nigh, O Lord, to help me.* --J.J. Stewart Perowne.

Verse 150,151. -- *They draw nigh.* ... "Thou art near." From the meditation of his enemies' malice he returns again to the meditation of God's mercy; and so it is expedient for us to do, lest the number and greatness and maliciousness of our enemies make us to faint when we look unto them. It is good that we should cast our eyes upward to the Lord; then shall we see that they are not so near to hurt us as the Lord our God is near to help us; and that there is no evil in them which we have cause to fear, but we shall find in our God a contrary good sufficient to preserve us. Otherwise we could not endure, if when Satan and his instruments come near to pursue us, the Lord were not near to protect us. -- William Cowper.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 150,151. -- Against mischief makers.

1. They press as near as they can to, harm us.
2. They get far from right to get more liberty to injure us.
3. The Lord is nearer than they.
4. God's truth is our shield and sword.

Verse 150,151. -- Foes near: the Friend nearer.

1. The believer viewing with alarm the approach of his foes: "They draw near."
2. The believer recollecting with comfort the presence of his friend: "Thou art near:" Ge 15:1; 2 Kings 6:14-17. --C.A.D.

Verse 150,151. -- Two beleaguering hosts.

1. The host of evil: NEAR --
 - (a) Demons, godless men, spiritual foes of world and heart.
 - (b) Mischief in their van.
 - (c) Law and truth left far behind.
 - (d) Seeking to narrow their lines.
 - (e) Thus are all saints beset.
 1. The host of God: NEARER -- Jehovah, his angels, and battalions of truths holy and immortal: "Thou and all thy commandments."
 - a. Entrenched in the reason: "are truth."
 - (b) Camped in the heart's pavilion: "near."
 - (c) Forming impregnable lines within those of the foe.
- W.B.H.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 150. -- Consider --

1. Whether the description here given does not apply, more or less, to all unbelievers in Christ: "They that follow after mischief."
 - a. Some men undoubtedly and of set purpose do follow after mischief; they make themselves the tempters of others, and delight in it.
 - (b) Others, who do not delight in it, yet cannot help the mischievous effect of their example.
 - (c) The very morality of many unbelievers enables them to carry the pernicious influence of their unbelief Where the immorally wicked cannot come.
 - (d) Even regular attendants at public worship may by their indecision encourage others in delay.
 1. The dangerous position of all to whom the description, in any measure, belongs: "They are far from thy law."
 - a. They are so, in that they are unbelievers; for "this is his commandment, that we shall believe," etc.
 - (b) They are so, in that they are a cause of evil to

others; for we are commanded to love and do good.

(c) To be far from God's law is to be nigh unto God's righteous wrath.

(d) For the sake of others, as well as their own, men should believe in Christ, and through faith become sanctified.

--J.F.

EXPOSITION

Verse 151. Thou art near, O Lord. Near as the enemy might be, God was nearer: this is one of the choicest comforts of the persecuted child of God. The Lord is near to hear our cries, and to speedily afford us succour. He is near to chase away our enemies, and to give us rest and peace.

And all thy commandments are truth. God neither commands a lie, nor lies in his commands. Virtue is truth in action, and this is what God commands. Sin is falsehood in action, and this is what God forbids. If all God's commands are truth, then the true man will be glad to keep near to them, and therein he will find the true God near him. This sentence will be the persecuted man's protection from the false hearts that seek to do him mischief: God is near and God is true, therefore his people are safe. If at any time we fall into danger through keeping the commands of God we need not suppose that we have acted unwisely: we may, on the contrary, be quite sure that we are in the right way; for God's precepts are right and true. It is for this very reason that wicked men assail us: they hate the truth, and therefore hate those who do the truth. Their opposition may be our consolation; while God's presence upon our side is our glory and delight.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 151. -- *Thou art near*, O Lord. -- How sweetly and how often has this thought been brought home to some forsaken and forgotten one! "When my father and my mother forsake me, the Lord will take me up," was the comfort of one in that deep affliction. And in the first out breaking of the heart, how sweetly has the conviction come, like some whisper of peace, "I am with thee!" And I have no doubt that many and many a time in those hours of solitary prayer, when before the dawning of the morning, and before the night watches, or the Psalmist arose at midnight to commune with God, when no voice broke on the stillness, and every sound was hushed save the beating of his own heart, then had David heard the whisper of God's Holy Spirit, "I am near," "Fear not, I am with thee."

--Barton Bouchier.

Verse 151. -- *Thou art near*, O Lord. This was once man's greatest blessing, and source of sweetest consolation. It was the fairest flower which grew in Paradise; but sin withered it, the flower faded, it drooped, it died. Genesis 3:8 4:16. It must be so once more; the flower must once again bloom, again

it must revive; even upon earth must it blossom, or in heaven it will never put forth its fragrance.

Thou art near. Even in thy works of "creation", in the sun in his glory, in the moon in her softness, gleaming in the firmament, I see thee. In the balm of this fragrant air, in the light of this cheerful day, in the redolence of these shrubs around me, whose flowery tops, as they drink in the soft and gentle shower as it falls, seem to breathe forth a fresh perfume in gratitude to him who sends it. In the melody of these birds which fill the air with their Songs, thou, O Lord, art near. I perceive thee not with my bodily eyes, although by these I discern thy workmanship, and with the eye of the mind behold thee in thy works, a present God.

Thou art near. Even in the book of thy providence, dark and mysterious though it be, I see thee. There do I read thy wisdom, as developed in thy world, thy church, thy saints, thy servant before thee; the wisdom that guides, the wisdom that guards, the wisdom that bestows, the wisdom that encourages, the wisdom that corrects, that kills and makes alive. There do I read thy power, thy justice, thy faithfulness, thy holiness, thy love.

But it is in thy Son, thy beloved Son, that I most clearly and distinctly see thee as near. If in creation, if in providence, thou art near, in him thou art very near. O Lord. Near as a sin forgiving God. Romans 8:1. Near as a promise-keeping God. 2 Corinthians 1:20. Near as a prayer hearing God. John 16:20; Psalms 145:18. Near as a covenant keeping God. Hebrews 8:10. Near as a gracious, tender Father. John 20:17.

Thou art near, O Lord. O that I might live in the constant sense of thy nearness to me! How often, far too often, alas, do I seem quite to forget it!

Art thou near? Then may I realizingly remember, that by the blood of thy dear Son, and by that alone, have I been brought nigh (Ephesians 4:13); that it required nothing less than the stoop of Deity, and the sufferings and death of Iris perfect humanity, to remove those hindrances which interposed between a holy God and an unholy creature. Oh, to walk before thee with a grateful spirit, and with a broken, contrite heart!

Art thou near? Then may I walk as before thee, as seeing thee, in holy fear, in filial love, in simple faith, in child like confidence. Genesis 17:1. When sin would tempt and solicit indulgence, when the world presents some new allurements, when Satan would take advantage of constitution, society, circumstances, oh, that I may ever remember "Thou art near."

If my dearest comforts droop and die, if friends are cool, if the bonds once the firmest, the closest, the tenderest, are torn asunder and dissevered, yet may I still remember, "Thou art near, O Lord," and not afar off. And when the solemn moment shall come, when heart and flesh shall fail, when all earthly things are seen with a dying eye, when I hear thee say, "Thou must die, and not live," then, oh then may I remember, with all the composedness of faith, and all the liveliness of hope, and all the ardour of love, "Thou art near, O Lord." --James Harington Evans, 1785-1849.

Verse 151. -- *All thy commandments are truth.* His meaning is, -- Albeit, O Lord, the evil will of wicked men follows me because I follow thee; yet I know thy commandments are true, and that it is not possible that thou canst desert or fail thy servants who stand to the maintenance of thy word. Then, ye see, David's comfort in trouble was not in any presumptuous conceit of his own wisdom or strength, but in the truth of God's promises, which he was persuaded could not fail him. And here also he makes a secret opposition between the word of the Lord and the word of his enemies. Sometimes men command, but without reason; sometimes they threaten, but without effect. Herod's commanding, Rabshakeh's railing, Jezebel's proud boasting against Elijah, may prove this. But as to the Lord our God he is alway better than his word, and his servants shall find more in his performance hereafter than now they can perceive in his promise: like as his enemies should find more weight in his judgments than now they can apprehend in his threatenings. --William Cowper.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 151. (last clause). -- The commandments of the Lord are true in principle; they lead to true living, if carried out; they truly reward the obedient; they never lead to falsehood, nor cause to be deluded.

EXPOSITION

Verse 152. Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever. David found of old that God had founded them of old, and that they Would stand firm throughout all ages. It is a very blessed thing to be so early taught of God that we know substantial doctrines even from our youth. Those who think that David was a young man when he wrote this psalm will find it rather difficult to reconcile this verse with the theory; it is much more probable that he was now grown grey, and was looking back upon what he had known long before. He knew at the very first that the doctrines of God's word were settled before the world began, that they had never altered, and never could by any possibility be altered. He had begun by building on a rock, by seeing that God's testimonies were "founded", that is, grounded, laid as foundations, settled and established; and that with a view to all the ages that should come, during all the changes that should intervene. It was because David knew this that he had such confidence in prayer, and was so importunate in it. It is sweet to plead immutable promises with an immutable God. It was because of this that David learned to hope: a man cannot have much expectation from a changing friend, but he may well have confidence in a God who cannot change. It was because of this that he delighted in being near the Lord, for it is a most blessed thing to keep up close intercourse with a Friend who never varies. Let those who choose follow at the heels of the modern school and look for fresh light to break forth which will put the old light out of countenance; we are satisfied with the truth which is old as the hills and as fixed as the great mountains. Let "cultured intellects" invent another god, more gentle and

effeminate than the God of Abraham; we are well content to worship Jehovah, who is eternally the same. Things everlastingly established are the joy of established saints. Bubbles please boys, but men prize those things which are solid and substantial, with a foundation and a bottom to them which will bear the test of the ages.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 152. -- *This portion of our psalm endeth with the triumph of faith over all dangers and temptations.* "Concerning thy testimonies," the revelations of thy will, thy counsels for the salvation of thy servants, "I have known of old," by faith, and by my own experience, as well as that of others, "that thou hast founded them for ever"; they are unalterable and everlasting as the attributes of their great Author, and can never fail those who rely upon them, in time or in eternity. --George Horne.

Verse 152. -- *I have known of old.* It was not a late persuasion, or a thing that he was now to learn; he always knew it since he knew anything of God, that God had owned his word as the constant rule of his proceedings with creatures, in that God had so often made good his word to him, not only by present and late, but by old and ancient experiences. Well, then, David's persuasion of the truth and unchangeableness of the word was not a sudden humour, or a present fit, or a persuasion of a few days' standing; but he was confirmed in it by long experience. One or two experiences had been no trial of the truth of the word, they might seem but a good hit; but his word ever proveth true, not once or twice, but always; what we say "of old," the Septuagint reads kat adxas, "from the beginnings"; that is, either --

1. From my tender years. Timothy knew the Scriptures from a child (2 Timothy 3:15); so David very young was acquainted with God and his truth.
2. Or, from the first time that he began to be serious, or to mind the word in good earnest, or to be a student either in God's word or works, by comparing providences and promises, he found concerning his testimonies that "God had founded them for ever."
3. Lastly, "of old" may be what I have heard of all foregoing ages, their experience as well as mine: "Our fathers trusted in thee: they trusted, and thou didst deliver them. They cried unto thee, and were delivered: they trusted in thee, and were not confounded:" Psalms 22:4,5.
--Thomas Manton.

Verse 152. -- *Let us mark this eternal basis of "the testimonies of God."* The whole plan of redemption was emphatically "founded for ever": the Saviour was "foreordained before the foundation of the world." The people of God were "chosen in Christ before the world began." The great Author "declares the end from the beginning," and thus clears his dispensations from any charge of mutability or contingency. Every event in the church is fixed, permitted, and provided for -- not in the passing moment of time; but in the counsels of eternity. When, therefore, the testimonies set forth God's faithful engagements with his people of old, the recollection that they are "founded for

ever" gives us a present and unchangeable interest in them. And when we see that they are grounded upon the oath and promise of God -- the two "immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie" -- we may truly "have strong consolation" in venturing every hope for eternity upon this rock; nor need we be dismayed to see all our earthly dependencies -- "the world, and the lust, and the fashion of it -- passing away" before us. - -Charles Bridges.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 152. -- Knowledge of the word.

1. It is well to know it as God's own word.
2. As founded in truth.
3. As founded forever.
4. The earlier we know this the better.

EXPOSITION

In this section the Psalmist seems to draw still nearer to God in prayer, and to state his case and to invoke the divine help with more of boldness and expectation. It is a pleading passage, and the key word of it is, "Consider." With much boldness he pleads his intimate union with the Lord's cause as a reason why he should be aided. The special aid that he seeks is personal quickening, for which he cries to the Lord again and again.

Verse 153. -- Consider mine affliction, and deliver me. The writer has a good case, though it be a grievous one, and he is ready, yea anxious, to submit it to the divine arbitration. His matters are right, and he is ready to lay them before the supreme court. His manner is that of one who feels safe at the throne. Yet there is no impatience: he does not ask for hasty action, but for consideration. In effect he cries -- "Look into my grief, and see whether I do not need to be delivered. From my sorrowful condition judge as to the proper method and time for my rescue." The Psalmist desires two things, and these two things blended: first, a full consideration of his sorrow; secondly, deliverance; and, then, that this deliverance should come with a consideration of his affliction. It should be the desire of every gracious man who is in adversity that the Lord should look upon his need, and relieve it in such a way as shall be most for the divine glory, and for his own benefit. The words, "mine affliction," are picturesque; they seem to portion off a special spot of woe as the writer's own inheritance: he possesses it as no one else had ever done, and he begs the Lord to have that special spot under his eye: even as a husbandman looking over all his fields may yet take double care of a certain selected plot. His prayer is eminently practical, for he seeks to be delivered; that is, brought out of the trouble and preserved from sustaining any serious damage by it. For God to consider is to act in due season: men consider and do nothing; but such is never the case with our God.

For I do not forget thy law. His affliction was not sufficient, with all its bitterness, to drive out of his

mind the memory of God's law; nor could it lead him to act contrary to the divine command. He forgot prosperity, but he did not forget obedience. This is a good plea when it can be honestly urged. If we are kept faithful to God's law we may be sure that God will remain faithful to his promise. If we do not forget his law the Lord will not forget us. He will not long leave that man in trouble whose only fear in trouble is lest he should leave the way of right.

Verse 153. -- Consider mine affliction, and deliver me. God looks upon or considers man in various ways, and for different ends. To give him light; for "as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth" (John 9:1). To convert him; "He saw a man, named Matthew, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me" (Matthew 9:9). To restore him; "And the Lord turned, and looked upon Peter" (Luke 22:61). To deliver him; "I have surely seen the affliction of my people which are in Egypt" (Exodus 3:7). To advance him; "He hath regarded the low estate of his handmaiden" (Luke 1:48): and to reward him; "The Lord had respect unto Abel and to his offering" (Genesis 4:4). --Hugh de St. Victor (1098-1141), in Neale and Littledale.

Verse 153. -- Consider mine affliction, and deliver me. We must pray that God will help and deliver us, not after the device of our own brains, but after such wise as seemeth best unto his tender wisdom, or else that he will mitigate our pain, that our weakness may not utterly faint. Like as a sick person, although he doubt nothing of the faithfulness and tenderness of his physician, yet, for all that, desireth him to handle his wound as tenderly as possible, even so may we call upon God, that, if it be not against his honour and glory, he will vouchsafe to give some mitigation of the pain. --Otto Wermuellerus.

Verse 153. -- Consider mine affliction. These prayers of David are penned with such heavenly wisdom that they are convenient for the state of the whole church, and every member thereof. The church is the bush that burneth with fire, but cannot be consumed; every member thereof beareth a part of the cross of Christ; they are never without some affliction, for which they have need to pray with David, "Behold mine affliction."

We know that in afflictions it is some comfort to us to have our crosses known to those of whom we are assured that they love us: it mitigates our dolour when they mourn with us, albeit they be not able to help us. But the Christian hath a more solid comfort; to wit, that in all his troubles the Lord beholds him; like a king, rejoicing to see his own servant wrestle with the enemy. He looks on with a merciful eye, pitying the infirmity of his own, when he sees it; and with a powerful hand ready to help them. But because many a time the cloud of our corruption cometh between the Lord and us, and lets us not see his helping hand, nor his loving face looking upon us, we have need to pray at such times with David, "Behold mine affliction." --William Cowper.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verses 153-160. -- Divine consideration besought. "Consider my affliction" (Psalms 119:153); my

cause (Psalms 119:154); "for thy mercies' sake" (Psalms 119:156). Consider my persecutors (Ps 119:157-158), and my love to thy precepts (Psalms 119:160) and act accordingly.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 153-159. -- The two considers. The subjects, the prayers, the arguments.

Verse 153,154. -- Here --

1. David prays for succour in distress. "Is any afflicted? let him pray"; let him pray as David doth here.
 - a. He hath an eye to God's pity, and prays, "Consider mine affliction"; take it unto thy thoughts, and all the circumstances, and sit not by as one unconcerned. God is never unmindful of his people's afflictions, but he will have us to "put him in remembrance" (Isaiah 43:26), to spread our case before him, and then leave it to his compassionate consideration to do in it as in his wisdom he shall think fit, in his own time and way.
 - (b) He has an eye to God's power, and prays, "Deliver me," and again, "Deliver me." Consider my troubles and bring me out of them. God has promised deliverance (Psalms 1:15), and we may pray for it with submission to his will, and with regard to his glory, that we may serve him the better.
 - (c) He has an eye to God's righteousness, and prays, "Plead my cause": be thou my patron and advocate, and take me for thy client. David had a just cause, but his adversaries were many and mighty, and he was in danger of being run down by them: he therefore begs of God to clear his integrity, and silence their false accusations. If God do not plead his people's cause, who will? He is righteous, and they commit themselves to him, and therefore he will do it, and do it effectually: Isaiah 51:22; Jeremiah 1:34.
 - (d) He has an eye to God's grace, and prays, "Quicken me." Lord, I am weak, and unable to bear my troubles; my spirit is apt to droop and sink: Oh, that thou wouldst revive and comfort me, till the deliverance is wrought!
1. He pleads his dependence upon the word of God, and his devotedness to his conduct. "Quicken" and "deliver me according to thy word" of promise; "for I do not forget thy precepts." The closer we cleave to the word of God, both as our rule and as our stay, the more assurance we may have of deliverance in due time. --M. Henry.

Verse 153. -- The sick man's prayer.

1. The medicine remembered.
2. The physician sent for.

3. The physician considering the case.
4. The healing wrought.

--C.A.D.

Verse 153. --

1. Lord, do not forget my sorrow.
2. I do not forget thy law.

EXPOSITION

Verse 154. Plead my cause, and deliver me. In the last verse he had prayed, "Deliver me," and here he specifies one method in which that deliverance might be vouchsafed, namely, by the advocacy of his cause. In providence the Lord has many ways of clearing the slandered of the accusations brought against them. He can make it manifest to all that they have been belied, and in this way he can practically plead their cause. He can, moreover, raise up friends for the godly who will leave no stone unturned till their characters are cleared; or he can smite their enemies with such fearfulness of heart that they will be forced to confess their falsehood, and thus the righteous will be delivered without the striking of a blow. Alexander reads it, "Strive my strife, and redeem me" -- that is, stand in my stead, bear my burden, fight my fight, pay my price, and bring me out to liberty. When we feel ourselves dumb before the foe, here is a prayer made to our hand. What a comfort that if we sin we have an advocate, and if we do not sin the same pleader is engaged on our side.

Quicken me. We had this prayer in the last section, and we shall have it again and again in this. It is a desire which cannot be too often felt and expressed. As the soul is the centre of everything, so to be quickened is the central blessing. It means more love, more grace, more faith more courage, more strength, and if we get these we can hold up our heads before our adversaries. God alone can give this quickening; but to the Lord and giver of life the work is easy enough, and he delights to perform it.

According to thy word. David had found such a blessing among the promised things, or at least he perceived that it was according to the general tenor of God's word that tried believers should be quickened and brought up again from the dust of the earth; therefore he pleads the word, and desires the Lord to act to him according to the usual run of that word. What a mighty plea is this -- "according to thy word." No gun in all our arsenals can match it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 154. -- *Plead my cause*, and deliver me, etc. Albeit the godly under persecution have a good cause, yet they cannot plead it except God the Redeemer show himself as Advocate for them; therefore prayeth the Psalmist, "Plead my cause."

When God the Redeemer pleadeth a man's cause, he doth it to purpose and effectually: "Plead my

cause, and deliver me."

Except the Lord's clients shall find new influence from God from time to time in their troubles, they are but as dead men in their exercise; for, "Quicken me" imports this.

Till we find lively encouragement given to us in trouble we must adhere to the word of promise: "Quicken me according to thy word."

What the believer hath need of, that God hath not only a will to supply, but also an office to attend it, and power to effectuate it, as here he hath the office of an Advocate and of a powerful Redeemer also, wherein the believer may confidently give him daily employment, as he needeth: "Plead my cause, and deliver me: quicken me according to thy word." --David Dickson.

Verse 154. -- *Plead my cause*, and deliver me, etc. He now supposes himself to be arraigned before the tribunal of men, as he certainly was in their general charges against him; arraigned, too, in his helplessness, without a name, without state; in such way as one disowned would be arraigned. He prays the Lord to come in and plead his cause; so should he be redeemed; for this is the import of the original. As it were, he regards himself as one sold to corrupt judges, or at all events, as one that has lost his standing in society in the estimation of men. But if the Lord will come, and maintain the cause of his servant, his servant shall be redeemed indeed. There is good confidence in this prayer; the man of God is acquainted with the way of the Lord, and he makes his believing application. O how much do we need to know the Lord's righteous character in our seasons of great distress! Now the Lord pleads the cause of his own by the power of the truth; he pleads it also in his providences of divers kinds; he acts upon the hearts, and the hopes, and the fears of men; and in many wondrous ways he pleads his people's cause. He redeems his saints from all evil; and if not together from all evil in this world, certainly from all evil as concerns the world to come. --John Stephen.

Verse 154. -- *Plead my cause*, and deliver me, etc. In this verse are three requests, and all backed with one and the same argument. In the first, he intimates the right of his and that he was unjustly vexed by wicked cause, men; therefore, as burdened with their calumnies, he desireth God to undertake his defence: "Plead my cause." In the second, he represents the misery and helplessness of his condition; therefore, as oppressed by violence, he saith, "Deliver me;" or, as the words will bear, "Redeem me". In the third, his own weakness, and readiness to faint under this burden; therefore he saith, "Quicken me."

Or, in short, with respect to the injustice of his adversaries, "Plead my cause;" with respect to the misery of his own condition, "Deliver me;" with respect to the weakness and imbecility of his own heart, "Quicken me."

The reason and ground of asking, "According to thy word." This last clause must be applied to all the branches of the prayer: "Plead my cause," "according to thy word;" "deliver me," "according to thy word;" "quicken me," "according to thy word:" for God in his word engages for all: to be advocate,

Redeemer, and fountain of life. The word that David buildeth upon was found either in the general promises made to them that kept the law, or in some particular promise made to himself by the prophets of that time. -- Thomas Manton.

Verse 154. -- *Plead my cause*, and deliver me. A wicked woman once brought against Dr. Payson an accusation, under circumstances which seemed to render it impossible that he should escape. She was in the same packet, in which, many months before, he had gone to Boston. For a time, it seemed almost certain that his character would be ruined. He was cut off from all resource except the throne of grace. He felt that his only hope was in God; and to him he addressed his fervent prayer. He was heard by the Defender of the innocent. A "compunctious visiting" induced the wretched woman to confess that the whole was a malicious slander. --From Asa Cummings' Memoir of Edward Payson.

Verse 154. -- *Plead my cause*. I do not know that David meant, by calling upon God to plead his cause, anything more than that he should vindicate his innocence, and make it manifest to all, by delivering him out of the hand of all his enemies; but whether he had an ulterior reference or no, the word powerfully and sweetly recalls to every Christian heart him who was indeed to be the Advocate for poor sinners, even Jesus Christ the righteous, who is the propitiation for our sins. --Barton Bouchier.

Verse 154. -- *Plead my cause*. The children of this world are wiser in their generation than the children of God. Which made David here pray to God that he would plead his cause, and be his Advocate against all their lies. He trusted not to the equity of his own cause, but to the Lord. From whence we gather, that the cause why our oppressors prevail oft against us is, because we trust too much in our own wits, and lean too much upon our own inventions; opposing subtilty to subtilty, one evil device to another, matching and maintaining policy by policy, and not committing our cause to God. --Abraham Wright.

Verse 154. -- *Deliver*. Not as in [Psalms 119:153](#), but a word meaning to redeem, or to save by avenging. The corresponding participle is rendered redeemer, avenger, revenger, kinsman, near kinsman, next kinsman. --William S. Plumer.

Verse 154. -- *Quicken me*. Here, again, we are called to consider the bearing of the pious mind. Ever and anon, the great desire of the man of God is to advance in the divine life. He makes spiritual gain of everything. He seeks his goodly pearls out of strange conditions; the reason is, his heart is in these things. Deliverance from temporal evil, deliverance from spiritual evil, both were sought; but along with these, ever does the man of God take up the prayer to be quickened. Certainly we may understand him as seeking life. Such is the import of the phraseology; but in a man like David, the life he seeks must be the highest. He desires spiritual life above all things; he wants to get more into a blessed assimilation to God, that so he may enjoy the highest good. So pants the heaven born soul...Give the believer this, and this will set him above all the ills of life. And this and all good had

been promised in the word. So he prays, "Quicken me according to the word." He goes upon the word for everything; he cannot be self deceived there. Judge of yourselves, my brethren, by your spiritual aspirations. Nothing less will prove you to be of the Lord's redeemed. --John Stephen.

Verse 154, 156, 159. -- *Quicken me.* Pray to be quickened, as the Psalmist often does, and look unto Jesus, who is a quickening spirit: 1 Corinthians 15:45. "The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit." As he has given you life, so he is ready to give it more and more abundantly; this will make you to live to him, and to be unweariedly active for him. --Nathanael Vincent, in "A Present for such as have been Sick and Recovered," 1693.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Outlines Upon Keywords of the Psalm, By Pastor C. A. Davis.

Verse 154,156,159. -- The threefold quickening. A capital subject, if the contexts are carefully considered.

Verse 154. -- Intercession, deliverance, quickening, and all in faithfulness to the word.

Verse 154. -- A prayer.

1. For promised defence.
2. For promised deliverance.
3. For promised revival

--G.R.

Verse 154. -- The Advocate.

1. The soul hard pressed by the accuser -- in the conscience (1 John 3:20); before the world; at the throne of grace (Zechariah 3:1-10); at the bar of judgment.
2. The accused soul committing its case to the Advocate: 1 John 2:2; 2 Timothy 1:12.
3. How the case will go. He never lost one yet.

--C.A.D.

EXPOSITION

Verse 155. Salvation is far from the wicked. By their perseverance in evil they have almost put themselves out of the pale of hope. They talk about being saved, but they cannot have known anything of it or they would not remain wicked. Every step they have taken in the path of evil has removed them further from the kingdom of grace: they go from one degree of hardness to another till their hearts become as stone. When they fall into trouble it will be irremediable. Yet they talk big, as if they either needed no salvation or could save themselves whenever their fancy turned that way.

For they seek not thy statutes. They do not endeavour to be obedient, but quite the reverse; they seek themselves, they seek evil, and therefore they never find the way of peace and righteousness. When men have broken the statutes of the Lord their wisest course is by repentance to seek

forgiveness, and by faith to seek salvation: then salvation is near them, so near them that they shall not miss it; but when the wicked continue to seek after mischief, salvation is set further and further from them. Salvation and God's statutes go together: those who are saved by the King of grace love the statutes of the King of glory.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 155. -- *Salvation is far from the wicked.* The Lord is almighty to pardon; but he will not use it for thee an impenitent sinner. Thou hast not a friend on the bench, not an attribute in all God's name will speak for thee. Mercy itself will sit and vote with the rest of its fellow attributes for thy damnation. God is able to save and help in a time of need, but upon what acquaintance is it that thou art so bold with God, as to expect his saving arm to be stretched forth for thee? Though a man rise at midnight to let in a child that cries and knocks at his door, yet he will not take so much pains for a dog that lies howling there. This presents thy condition, sinner, sad enough, yet this is to tell thy story fairest; for that almighty power of God which is engaged for the believer's salvation, is as deeply obliged to bring thee to thy execution and damnation. What greater tie than an oath? God himself is under an oath to be the destruction of every impenitent soul. That oath which God swore in his wrath against the unbelieving Israelites, that they should not enter into his rest, concerns every unbeliever to the end of the world. In the name of God consider, were it but the oath of a man, or a company of men that, like those in the Acts, should swear to be the death of such an one, and thou wert the man, would it not fill thee with fear and trembling, night and day, and take away the quiet of thy life, till they were made thy friends? What then are their pillows stuffed with, who can sleep so soundly without any horror or amazement, though they be told that the almighty God is under an oath of damning them body and soul, without timely repentance? --William Gurnall.

Verse 155. -- *Salvation! What music is there in that word.* Music that never tires, but is always new, that always rouses yet always rests us! It holds in itself all that our hearts would say. It is sweet rigour to us in the morning, and in the evening it is contented peace. It is a song that is always singing itself deep down in the delighted soul. Angelic ears are ravished by it up in heaven; and our Eternal Father himself listens to it with adorable complacency. It is sweet even to him out of whose mind is the music of a thousand worlds. To be saved! What is it to be saved in the fullest and utmost meaning? Who can tell? Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard. It is a rescue, and from such a shipwreck! It is a rest, and in such an unimaginable home! It is to lie down for ever in the bosom of God, in an endless rapture of insatiable contentment. --Frederick William Faber, 1853.

Verse 155, 156. -- *Salvation is far from the wicked.* "Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD." When the godly do think and speak of the damnable condition of the wicked, they should not be senseless of their own ill deserving, nor of God's grace which hath made the difference between the wicked and them. --David Dickson.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 155. --

1. An awful distance.
2. A distance never decreased by seeking.
3. A distance increased by sinning.

Verse 155. --

1. When salvation is far off.
2. When it is near.

OR

1. When the word is far off salvation is far off.
2. When the word is near salvation is near.

--G.R.

Verse 155. -- How to avoid salvation.

1. Salvation is inseparable from conformity to God's law: Leviticus 18:5; Luke 5:25-28; Matthew 19:17.
2. Salvation is brought to lawbreakers by the Law giver condescending to become the Law keeper and the Law victim. Salvation is avoided by those who refuse to be conformed to the eternal law or will of God. They perish themselves: their own sin punishes them: necessity punishes them. --C.A.D.

Verse 155. -- A syllogism on salvation.

1. Salvation and obedience go together.

(a) Have a common centre -- God, his arm and his lips.

(b) A mutual relation: we are saved in order to obedience.

In obeying we are being saved. Without obedience there is no salvation.

(c) An identical aim -- our good and God's glory.

(d) Obedience and salvation are inseparable for ever.

1. The godless are far from obedience.

(a) Commands avoided.

(b) Submission excluded.

1. Therefore they are far from salvation. They will not have the one; they cannot have the other.

--W.B.H.

EXPOSITION

Verse 156. This verse is exceedingly like verse one hundred and forty nine, and yet it is no vain

repetition. There is such a difference in the main idea that the one verse stands out distinct from the other. In the first case he mentions his prayer, but leaves the method of its accomplishment with the wisdom or judgment of God; while here he pleads no prayer of his own, but simply the mercies of the Lord, and begs to be quickened by judgments rather than to be left to spiritual lethargy. We may take it for granted that an inspired author is never so short of thought as to be obliged to repeat himself: where we think we have the same idea in this psalm we are misled by our neglect of careful study. Each verse is a distinct pearl. Each blade of grass in this field has its own drop of heavenly dew.

Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD. Here the Psalmist pleads the largeness of God's mercy, the immensity of his tender love; yea, he speaks of mercies -- mercies many, mercies tender, mercies great; and with the glorious Jehovah he makes this a plea for his one leading prayer, the prayer for quickening. Quickening is a great and tender mercy; and it is many mercies in one. Shall one so really good permit his servant to die? Will not one so tender breathe new life into him? "Quicken me according to thy judgments." A measure of awakening comes with the judgments of God; they are startling and arousing; and hence the believer's quickening thereby. David would have every severe stroke sanctified to his benefit, as well as every tender mercy. The first clause of this verse may run, "Many," or, "manifold are thy compassions, O Jehovah." This he remembers in connection with the "many persecutors" of whom he will speak in the next verse. By all these many mercies he pleads for enlivening grace, and thus he has many strings to his bow. We shall never be short of arguments if we draw them from God himself, and urge both his mercies and his judgments as reasons for our quickening.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 156. -- *Great are thy tender mercies, O LORD.* Two epithets he ascribes to God's mercies; first, he calls them "great," and then he calls them "tender" mercies. They are great in many respects: for continuance, they endure for ever; for largeness, they reach unto the heavens, and are higher than they; yea, they are above all the works of God. And this is for the comfort of poor sinners, whose sins are many and great: let them not despair; his mercies are greater and more; for since they are greater than all his works, how much more greater than thou and all thy sinful works!...The other epithet he gives them is, that they are "tender" mercies; because the Lord is easy to be entreated; for he is slow unto wrath, but ready to show mercy: S. James saith that the wisdom which is from above is "gentle, peaceable, easy to be entreated." If his grace in his children make them gentle and easy to be entreated, what shall we think of himself? Since he will have such pity in us poor creatures, that seventy times seven times in the day he will have us to forgive the offences of our brethren; Oh, what pity and compassion abound in himself! Thus we see our comfort is increased; that as his mercies are great, so are they tender; easily obtained, where they are earnestly craved. --William Cowper.

Verse 156. -- *The Psalmist,* when speaking of the wretched condition of "the wicked," is naturally led

to adore the mercies of the Lord which had "made him to differ." For indeed to this source alone must we trace the distinction between us and them. -- Charles Bridges.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 156. --

1. A great need.
2. Laid before a great Lord.
3. Great favours pleaded.
4. A great mercy sought: "quicken me."

Verse 156. -- Just, and the Quickener.

1. Spiritual life is the gift of God's mercy.
2. Its continuance depends on the exercise of God's power.
3. We may therefore plead for quickening on the ground of God's justice. -- C.A.D.

Verse 156. -- The saint,

1. Lost in admiration.

(a) Of God's tender mercies.

(b) He cries out at their greatness. They are numerous.

Greatly tender. Great and tender; (exquisite combination!).

1. Filled with animation. The child of his admiration.

(a) The arrow like prayer: "Quicken me:" To be like, to be true to, such a God.

(b) The bow in the hand: "according to thy judgments." --W.B.H.

Verse 156. --

1. The tenderness of God's greatness.
2. The greatness of God's tenderness.
3. The stimulus to life found in his great and tender presence.

EXPOSITION

Verse 157. Many are my persecutors and mine enemies. Those who actually assail me, or who secretly abhor me, are many. He sets this over against the many tender mercies of God. It seems a strange thing that a truly godly man, as David was, should have many enemies; but it is inevitable. The disciple cannot be loved where his Master is hated. The seed of the serpent must oppose the seed of the woman: it is their nature.

Yet do I not decline from thy testimonies. He did not deviate from the truth of God, but proceeded in the straight way, however many adversaries might endeavour to block up his path. Some men have been led astray by one enemy, but here is a saint who held on his way in the teeth of many

persecutors. There is enough in the testimonies of God to recompense us for pushing forward against all the hosts that may combine against us. So long as they cannot drive or draw us into a spiritual decline our foes have done us no great harm, and they have accomplished nothing by their malice. If we do not decline they are defeated. If they cannot make us sin they have missed their mark. Faithfulness to the truth is victory over our enemies.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 157. -- *Persecutors.* A participle from the verb rendered pursue, chase. "Enemies," as in verse 139, the authors of my distress. Until men are hunted and hounded by many enemies, who for the time have power, and are withal fierce and to some extent unscrupulous, they can have but a faint conception of the anguish of the prophet when he experienced the evils noted in this verse. Yet they did not move him from his constancy and integrity. --William S. Plurner.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 157. --

1. A word of multitude: "many."
2. A tendency of dread, viz., a tendency to decline.
3. A note of consolation: "yet do I not decline,"

EXPOSITION

Verse 158. I beheld the transgressors. I saw the traitors; I understood their character, their object, their way, and their end. I could not help seeing them, for they pushed themselves into my way. As I was obliged to see them I fixed my eyes on them, to learn what I could from them.

And was grieved. I was sorry to see such sinners. I was sick of them, disgusted with them, I could not endure them. I found no pleasure in them, they were a sad sight to me, however fine their clothing or witty their chattering. Even when they were most mirthful a sight of them made my heart heavy; I could not tolerate either them or their doings.

Because they kept not thy word. My grief was occasioned more by their sin against God than by their enmity against myself. I could bear their evil treatment of my words, but not their neglect of thy word.

Thy word is so precious to me that those who will not keep it move me to indignation; I cannot keep the company of those who keep not God's word. That they should have no love for me is a trifle; but to despise the teaching of the Lord is abominable.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 158. -- *I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved.* Celerinus in Cyprian's Epistles, acquaints a friend with his great grief for the apostasy of a woman through fear of persecution; which afflicted him so much, that at the feast of Easter (the Queen of feasts in the primitive church) he wept night and day, and resolved never to know a moment's delight, till through the mercy of God she should be

recovered. --Charles Bridges.

Verse 158. -- *I beheld the transgressors*, and was grieved. Oh, if you have the hearts of Christians or of men in you, let them yearn towards your poor ignorant, ungodly neighbours. Alas, there is but a step betwixt them and death and hell: many hundred diseases are waiting ready to seize on them, and if they die unregenerate they are lost for ever. Have you hearts of rock, that cannot pity men in such a case as this? If you believe not the word of God, and the danger of sinners, why are you Christians yourselves? If you do believe it, why do you not bestir yourself to the helping of others? Do you not care who is damned, so you be saved? If so, you have sufficient cause to pity yourselves, for it is a frame of spirit utterly inconsistent with grace: should you not rather say, as the lepers of Samaria, is it not a day of glad tidings, and do we sit still and hold our peace 2 Kings 7:9. Hath God had so much mercy on you, and will you have no mercy on your poor neighbours? You need not go far to find objects for your pity: look but into your streets, or into the next house to you, and you will probably find some. Have you never an ignorant, an unregenerate neighbour that sets his heart on things below, and neglects eternity? What blessed place do you live in, where there is none such? If there be not some of them in thine own family, it is well; and yet art thou silent? Dost thou live close by them, or meet them in the streets, or labour with them, or travel with them, or sit and talk with them, and say nothing to them of their souls, or the life to come? If their houses were on fire, thou wouldst run and help them; and wilt thou not help them when their souls are almost at the fire of hell? If thou knewest but a remedy for their diseases thou wouldst tell it them, or else thou wouldst judge thyself guilty of their death. --Richard Baxter (1615--1691), in "The Saints' Everlasting Rest."

Verse 158. -- *Grieved*, because they kept not thy law. I never thought the world had been so wicked, when the Gospel began, as now I see it is; I rather hoped that every one would have leaped for joy to have found himself freed from the filth of the Pope, from his lamentable molestations of poor troubled consciences, and that through Christ they would by faith obtain the celestial treasure they sought after before with such vast cost and labour, though in vain. And especially I thought the bishops and universities would with joy of heart have received the true doctrines; but I have been lamentably deceived. Moses and Jeremiah, too, complained they had been deceived. --Martin Luther.

Verse 158. -- *Grieved*. The word that is here translated "grieved" is from "katat", that signifies to loathe, abhor, and contend. I beheld the transgressors, and I loathed them; I beheld the transgressors, and I abhorred them; I beheld the transgressors, and I contended with them; but not so much because they were mine enemies, as because they were thine. --Thomas Brooks.

Verse 158. -- *The day when I first met Colonel Gardiner at Leicester*, I happened to preach a lecture from Psalms 114:158: "I beheld the transgressors, and was grieved; because they kept not thy word." I was large in describing that mixture of indignation and grief, strongly expressed by the original word there, with which a good man looks on the varying transgressors of the divine law; and in tracing the

causes of that grief, as arising, from a regard to the divine honour, and the interest of a Redeemer, and a compassionate concern for the misery such offenders bring on themselves, and for the mischief they do to the world about them. I little thought how exactly I was drawing Colonel Gardiner's character under each of those heads; and I have often reflected upon it as a happy providence, which opened a much speedier way than I could have expected, to the breast of one of the most amiable and useful friends which I ever expect to find upon earth. We afterwards sung a hymn, which brought over again some of the leading thoughts in the sermon, and struck him so strongly, that on obtaining a copy of it, he committed it to his memory, and used to repeat it with so forcible an accent, as showed how much every line expressed of his very soul. In this view the reader will pardon my inserting it; especially as I know not when I may get time to publish a volume of these serious though artless compositions, which I sent him in manuscript some years ago, and to which I have since made very large additions: --

Arise, my tenderest thoughts, arise,
To torrents melt my streaming eyes;
And thou, my heart, with anguish feel
Those evils which thou canst not heal.
See human nature sunk in shame;
See scandals pour'd on Jesus' name;
The Father wounded through the Son;
The world abused, and souls undone.
See the short course of vain delight
Closing in everlasting night;
In flames that no abatement know,
Though briny tears for ever flow.
My God, I feel the mournful scene;
My bowels yearn o'er dying men,
And fain my pity would reclaim,
And snatch the firebrands from the flame.
But feeble my compassion proves,
And can but weep where most it loves;
Thy own all saving arm employ,
And turn these drops of grief to joy.

--Philip Doddridge, in "The Life of Colonel Gardiner."

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 158. -- A grievous sight.

1. Transgressors beyond God's bounds.
2. Bounds so kindly set: "thy word."
3. Transgressions so wantonly ungrateful, so terribly dangerous, so fatal.

Verse 158. -- Sorrow over sinners.

1. A sight we cannot avoid seeing.
2. A sorrow we ought not to avoid feeling. (See Lot: 2 Peter 2:7,8. Moses: Deuteronomy 9:18,19. Samuel: 1 Samuel 15:11 Jeremiah 9:1. Paul: Philemon 3:18. Christ: Luke 19:41).

□ A reason we will not avoid endorsing.

Verse 158. -- A righteous man cannot but be grieved at the sins of the wicked. He sees in them, --

1. The violation of the divine law which he loves.
2. Ungrateful rebellion against the God he worships.
3. Contempt for the gospel of salvation and the blood of Christ.
4. The dominion of Satan, the enemy of his God.
5. The degradation of souls which might have been sacred temples.
6. Prophetic signs of an awful, everlasting retribution.

--J.F.

EXPOSITION

Verse 159. Consider, or see, how I love thy precepts. A second time he asks for consideration. As he said before, "Consider mine affliction," so now he says, "Consider mine affection." He loved the precepts of God -- loved them unspeakably loved them so as to be grieved with those who did not love them. This is a sure test: many there are who have a warm side towards the promises, but as for the precepts, they cannot endure them. The Psalmist so loved everything that was good and excellent that he loved all God had commanded. The precepts are all of them wise and holy, therefore the man of God loved them extremely, loved to know them, to think of them, to reclaim them, and principally to practise them. He asked the Lord to remember and consider this, not upon the ground of merit, but that it should serve as an answer to the slanderous accusations which at this lime were the great, sting of his sorrow.

Quicken me, O LORD, according to thy lovingkindness. Here he comes back to his former prayer, "Quicken me" (ver. 154), "quicken me" (ver. 156). "Quicken me." He prays again the third time, using the same words. We may understand that David felt like one who was half stunned with the assaults of his foes, ready to faint under their incessant malice. What he wanted was revival, restoration, renewal; therefore he pleaded for more life. O thou who didst quicken me when I was dead, quicken me again that I may not return to the dead! Quicken me that I may outlive the blows of my enemies, the faintness of my faith, and the swooning of my sorrow. This time he does not say, "Quicken me

according to thy judgments," but, "Quicken me, O Lord, according to thy lovingkindness." This is the great gun which he brings up last to the conflict: it is his ultimate argument, if this succeed not he must fail. He has long been knocking at mercy's gate, and with this plea he strikes his heaviest blow. When he had fallen into great sin this was his plea, "Have mercy upon me, O God, according to thy lovingkindness," and now that he is in great trouble he flies to the same effectual reasoning. Because God is love he will give us life; because he is kind he will again kindle the heavenly flame within us.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUIANT SAYINGS

Verse 159. -- *Consider how I love thy precepts.* Search me. Behold the evidence of my attachment to thy law. This is the confident appeal of one who was conscious that he was truly attached to God; that he really loved his law. It is similar to the appeal of Peter to the Saviour ([John 21:17](#)), "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." A man who truly loves God may make this appeal without impropriety. He may be so confident, so certain, that he has true love for the character of God, that he may make a solemn appeal to him on the subject, as he might appeal to a friend, to his wife, to his son, to his daughter, with the utmost confidence that he loved them. A man ought to have such love for them, that he could affirm this without hesitation or doubt; a man ought to have such love for God, that he could, affirm this with equal confidence and propriety. -- Albert Barnes.

Verse 159. -- *Consider how I love thy precepts.* He saith not, consider how I perform thy precepts; but how I love them. The comfort of a Christian militant, in this body of sin, is rather in the sincerity and fervency of his affections than in the absolute perfection of his actions. He fails many times in his obedience to God's precepts, in regard of his action; but love in his affection still remains; so that both before the temptation to sin, and after it, there is a grief in his soul, that he should find in himself any corrupt will or desire, contrary to the holy will of the Lord his God; and this proves an invincible love in him to the precepts of God. --William Cowper.

Verse 159. -- *Consider, etc.* Translate (the Hebrew being the same as in verse 158) "Behold how I love thy precepts," as is evinced in that when "I beheld the transgressors I was grieved." He begs to God to behold this, not as meritorious of grace, but as a distinctive mark of a godly man. --A. R. Fausset.

Verse 159. -- *I love thy precepts: quicken me.* The love wherewith he loved God came from that love wherewith God first loved him. For by seeing the great love wherewith God loved him, he was moved and referred to love God again. So that his meaning is thus much: Thou seest, Lord, that I am an enemy to sin in myself, for I forget not thy law; thou seest that I am an enemy to sin in others, for I am grieved to see them transgress thy law; wherefore, O Lord, "quicken me," and let thy loving mercy whereby thou hast created me and redeemed me in Christ, whereby thou hast delivered me from so many troubles, and enriched me with so many and continual benefits, renew, revive, quicken, and restore me. --Richard Greenham.

Verse 159. -- *Quicken me.* Often as the Psalmist had repeated his prayer for quickening grace,* it was not a "vain repetition," or an empty sound. Each time was it enlivened with abundant faith, intense feeling of his necessity, and the vehemency of most ardent affection. If the consciousness of the faintness of our strength and the coldness of our affections should lead us to offer this petition a hundred times a day in this spirit, it would never fail of acceptance. --Charles Bridges.

* Nine times is the petition urged, verses 25, 37, 40, 88, 107, 149 154, 156, and 159.

Verse 159. -- *According to thy lovingkindness.* We need not desire to be quickened any further than God's lovingkindness will quicken us. --Matthew Henry.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 159. --

1. His own love avowed.
2. God's love pleaded.
3. Renewed life implored.

Verse 159. --

1. Attention invited: "Consider how."
2. Profession made: "I love thy precepts."
3. Petition offered: "quicken me," etc.
4. Plea suggested: "according to," etc.

--G.R.

Verse 159. -- My love and thy lovingkindness. The saint's love.

1. Avowed. "Thou knowest all things," etc.
2. Submitted. In humble insistence on its sincerity. In sense of its insufficiency. In prayer to God not to over look it.
3. Lost sight of in the sudden glory of God's lovingkindness. Where is my love now?
4. Recovered and humbly brought for quickening. Lord, I'll say no more about it: "Quicken me."
--W.B.H.

Verse 159. -- Quicken, me for love's sake.

1. A prayer for quickened life.
2. Awakened by love to the divine rule of life.
3. Enforced by the plea of that love.
4. Addressed to the God of love.

--C.A.D.

Verse 159. -- Consider, --

1. The holy unsatisfaction of the believer: "Quicken me," etc.

(a) A prayer frequently occurring in the psalm, and always

urged with great earnestness.

(b) Its importunity proves the possession of spiritual life; in fact, none but the living ones crave quickening.

(c) The most earnest feel the most acutely their indwelling sin, and appreciate most highly thorough sanctification.

(d) Thus, this is, perhaps, the only unsatisfaction perfectly pure in its character.

1. The assuring Divine attribute to which he can appeal: "According to thy lovingkindness."

a. An attribute, not only made known in tile word, but made manifest to us in our experience of its gentle dealing.

(b) An attribute that covers sin, and is touched with a feeling of our infirmities.

(c) An attribute that must be affected with the cry for quickening grace.

1. The consideration he ought to be able to lay before God: "Consider how I love thy precepts."

a. Because from the word he learnt of the lovingkindness, and through it received life.

(b) Without it the prayer cannot be genuine.

(c) It is a good reason for expecting more grace; for "whosoever hath, to him shall be given," etc.

--J.F.

EXPOSITION

Verse 160. The sweet singer finishes up this section in the same way as the last by dwelling upon the sureness of the truth of God. It will be well for the reader to note the likeness between [Psalms 119:144,152](#), and the present one.

Thy word is true. Whatever the transgressors may say, God is true, and his word is true. The ungodly are false, but God's word is true. They charge us with being false, but our solace is that God's true word will clear us.

From the beginning. God's word has been true from the first moment in which it was spoken, true throughout the whole of history, true to us from the instant in which we believed it, and true to us before we were true to it. Some read it, "Thy word is true from the head;" true as a whole, true from top to bottom. Experience had taught David this lesson, and experience is teaching us the same. The Scriptures are as true in Genesis as in Revelation, and the five books of: Moses are as inspired as the four Gospels.

And every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever. That which thou hast decided remains irreversible in every case. Against the decisions of the Lord no writ of error can be demanded, neither will there ever be a repealing of any of the acts of his sovereignty. There is not one single mistake either in the word of God or in the providential dealings of God. Neither in the book of revelation nor of providence will there be any need to put a single note of errata. The Lord has nothing to regret or to retract, nothing to amend or to reverse. All God's judgments, decrees, commands, and purposes are righteous, and as righteous things are lasting things, every one of them will outlive the stars. "Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." God's justice endureth for ever. This is a cheering thought, but there is a much sweeter one, which of old was the song of the priests in the temple; let it be ours, "His mercy endureth for ever."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUIANT SAYINGS

Verse 160. -- *Thy word is true from the beginning.* Literally, "The beginning of thy word is truth," in antithesis to the "enduring for ever," in the future, in the next clause. Cocceius and Hengstenberg take it, "The sum of thy word is true," as in Numbers 26:2 31:26. But the antithesis noticed above in the English version is thus lost; and the old versions support the English version. Also, if it were "the sum," the plural ought to follow, viz., "of thy words," not "word." --A. R. Fausset.

Verse 160. -- *Thy word is true from the beginning,* etc. As if he should say, I believe that thou wilt thus quicken me, because the very beginning of thy word is most just and true; and when thou didst first enter into covenant with me, I did find that thou didst not deceive me, not beguile me. And when by thy Spirit thou madest me believe thy covenant, thou meanest truth; and I know that as thou didst promise, thou wilt perform, for thou art no more liberal in promising than faithful and just in performing, and thy judgment will be as righteous as thy promise is true. I know that as soon as thou speakest, truth proceedeth from thee; and even so I know thou wilt defend and preserve me, that thy judgments may shine as righteous in thee. --Richard Greenham.

Verse 160. -- *Thy word is true from the beginning,* etc. God's commandment and promise is exceeding broad, reaching to all times. Was a word of command "the guide of thy youth"? I assure thee it will be as good a staff of thine age. A good promise is a good nurse, both to the young babe and to the decrepit old man. Your apothecaries' best cordials in time will lose their spirits, and sometimes the stronger they are, the sooner. But hath a promise cheered thee, say, twenty, thirty, forty years ago? Taste it but now afresh, and thou shalt find it as fresh, and as full of refreshment as ever. If it hath been thy greatest joy in thy joyful youth, I tell thee, it hath as much joy in it for thy sad old age. That may be said of God's word, which the prophet saith of God himself (Isaiah 46:4): "And even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry you." Doth not the Psalmist say as much here, "Thy word is true from the beginning"? It's well, it begins well. But will it last as well? Yes: he adds, "and every one of thy righteous judgments endureth for ever." Answerable to which is that

other expression (verse 152), "Concerning thy testimonies, I have known of old that thou hast founded them for ever." "For ever," and "founded for ever." O sweet expression! O grounded comfort! Brethren, get acquainted with God's word and promise as soon as you can, and maintain that acquaintance everlastingly; and your knowledge of it shall not either go before, or go beyond its truth. Know it as soon and as long as you will or can, and you shall never find it tripping or failing; but you may after long experience of God say of it, "I have known of old that thou hast founded it for ever."
--Anthony Tuckhey, 1599-- 1670.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 160. --

1. Early: "true from the beginning."
2. Late: "endureth for ever." Or, Truth and immutability the believer's Jachin and Boaz.

EXPOSITION

Verse 161. Princes have persecuted me without a cause. Such persons ought to have known better; they should have had sympathy with one of their own rank. A man expects a fair trial at the hand of his peers: it is ignoble to be prejudiced. Moreover, if honour be banished from all other breasts it should remain in the bosom of kings, and honour forbids the persecution of the innocent. Princes are appointed to protect the innocent and avenge the oppressed, and it is a shame when they themselves become the assailants of the righteous. It was a sad case when the man of God found himself attacked by the judges of the earth, for eminent position added weight and venom to their enmity. It was well that the sufferer could truthfully assert that this persecution was without cause. He had not broken their laws, he had not injured them, he had not even desired to see them injured, he had not been an advocate of rebellion or anarchy, he had neither openly nor secretly opposed their power, and therefore, while this made their oppression the more inexcusable, it took away a part of its sting, and helped the brave hearted servant of God to bear up.

But my heart standeth in awe of thy word. He might have been overcome by awe of the princes had it not been that a greater fear drove out the less, and he was swayed by awe of God's word. How little do crowns and sceptres become in the judgment of that man who perceives a more majestic royalty in the commands of his God. We are not likely to be disheartened by persecution, or driven by it into sin, if the word of God continually has supreme power over our minds.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 161. -- *Princes have persecuted me.* The evil is aggravated from the consideration that it is the very persons who ought to be as bucklers to defend us, who employ their strength in hurting us. Yea, when the afflicted are stricken by those in high places, they in a manner think that the hand of God is against them. There was also this peculiarity in the case of the prophet, that he had to encounter the

grandees of the chosen people -- men whom God had placed in such honourable stations, to the end they might be the pillars of the Church. --John Calvin.

Verse 161. -- *Without a cause.* I settle it as an established point with me, that the more diligently and faithfully I serve Christ, the greater reproach and the more injury I must expect. I have drank deep of the cup of slander and reproach of late, but I am in no wise discouraged; no, nor by, what is much harder to bear, the unsuccessfulness of my endeavours to mend this bad world. --Philip Doddridge.

Verse 161. -- *Without a cause.* We know what persecutions the body of Christ, that is, the holy Church, suffered from the kings of the earth. Let us therefore here also recognize the words of the Church: "Princes have persecuted me without a cause." For how had the Christians injured the kingdoms of the earth? Although their King promised them the kingdom of heaven, how, I ask, had they injured the kingdoms of earth? Did their King forbid his soldiers to pay and to render due service to the kings of the earth? Saith he not to the Jews who were striving to calumniate him, "Render therefore unto Caesar the things which are Caesar's; and unto God the things that are God's"? Matthew 22:21. Did he not even in his own person pay tribute from the mouth of a fish? Did not his forerunner, when the soldiers of this kingdom were seeking what they ought to do for their everlasting salvation, instead of replying, "Loose your belts, throw away your arms, desert your king, that ye may wage war for the Lord," answer, "Do violence to no man, neither accuse any falsely; and be content with wages?" Luke 3:14. Did not one of his soldiers, his most beloved your companion, say to his fellow soldiers, the provincials, so to speak, of Christ, "Let every soul be subject unto the higher powers"? and a little lower he addeth, "Render therefore to all their dues: tribute to whom tribute is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honour to whom honour. Owe no man anything, but to love one another." Ro 13:1,7,8. Does he not enjoin the Church to pray even for kings themselves? How, then, have the Christians offended against them? What due have they not rendered? In what have not Christians obeyed the monarchs of earth? The kings of the earth therefore have persecuted the Christians without a cause. --Augustine.

Verse 161. -- *But my heart standeth in awe of thy word.* If there remains any qualm of fear on thy heart, fear from the wrath of bloody men threatening thee for thy profession of the truth, then to a heart inflamed with the love of truth, labour to add a heart filled with the fear of that wrath which God hath in store for all that apostatize from the truth. When you chance to burn your finger, you hold it to the fire, which being a greater fire draws out the other. Thus, when thy thoughts are scorched, and thy heart scared with the fire of man's wrath, hold them a while to hell fire, which God hath prepared for the fearful (Revelation 21:8), and all that run away from truth's colours (Hebrews 10:39), and thou wilt lose the sense of the one for fear of the other. Ignosce imperator, saith the holy man, tu carcerem, Dens gehennam minatur; "Pardon me, O Emperor, if I obey not thy command; thou threatenest a prison, but God a hell." Observable is that of David: "Princes have persecuted me

without a cause: but my heart standeth in awe of thy word." He had no cause to fear them that had no cause to persecute him. One threatening out of the word, that sets the point of God's wrath to his heart, scares him more than the worst that the greatest on earth can do to him. Man's wrath, when hottest, is but a temperate climate to the wrath of the living God. They who have felt both have testified as much. Man's wrath cannot hinder the access of God's love to the creature, which hath made the saints sing in the fire, in spite of their enemies' teeth. But the creature under God's wrath is like one shut up in a close oven, no crevice is open to let any of the heat out, or any refreshing in to him. --William Gurnall.

Verse 161. -- *My heart standeth in awe of thy word.* There is an awe of the word, not that maketh us shy of it, but tender of violating it, or doing anything contrary to it. This is not the fruit of slavish fear, but of holy love; it is not afraid of the word, but delighteth in it, as it discovereth the mind of God to us; as in the next verse it is written, "I rejoice at thy word." This awe is called by a proper name, reverence, or godly fear; when we consider whose word it is, namely, the word of the Lord, who is our God, and hath a right to command what he pleaseth; to whose will and word we have already yielded obedience, and devoted ourselves to walk worthy of him in all well pleasing; who can find us out in all our failings, as knowing our very thoughts afar of ([Psalms 139:2](#)), and having all our ways before him, and being one of whom we read, -- "He is a holy God; he is a jealous God; he will not forgive your transgressions nor your sins" ([Joshua 24:19](#)), that is to say, if we impenitently continue in them. Considering these things we receive the word with that trembling of heart which God so much respects. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 161. -- *In awe of thy word.* I would advise you all, that come to the reading or hearing of this book, which is the word of God, the most precious jewel, and most holy relic that remaineth upon earth, that ye bring with you the fear of God, and that ye do it with all due reverence, and use your knowledge thereof, not to vain glory of frivolous disputation, but to the honour of God, increase of virtue, and edification both of yourselves and others. --Thomas Cranmer, 1489-1555.

Verse 161. -- *Awe of thy word.* They that tremble at the convictions of the word may triumph in the consolations of it. --Matthew Henry.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Outlines Upon Keywords of the Psalm, By Pastor C. A. Davis.

Verses 161-168. -- What the word is to the believer. The object of (ver. 161), joy (ver. 162), love (ver. 163), praise (ver. 164), the producer peace (ver. 165), and hope (ver. 166); therefore exceedingly loved (ver. 167), faithfully kept (ver. 168).

Verse 161,162. -- God's word, the object of godly fear and godly joy.

1. It makes the heart quake by its purity and power.
2. It makes the heart rejoice by its grace and truth.

--W.H.J.P.

Verse 161. --

1. Wrong without cause.
2. Right with abundant cause.

Verse 161. (second clause). -- Awe of God's word --its propriety, its hallowed influence, the evil of its absence.

Verse 161. -- Restrained by awe.

1. The causelessness of persecution.
2. The temptations to evil occasioned thereby -- to revenge: to apostasy.
3. The safeguard against falling: awe of God's word. 1 Samuel 24:6 Daniel 3:16-18 Acts 4:19
5:29 -- C.A.D.

EXPOSITION

Verse 162. I rejoice at thy word, as one that findeth great spoil. His awe did not prevent his joy; his fear of God was not of the kind which perfect love casts out, but of the sort which it nourishes. He trembled at the word of the Lord, and yet rejoiced at it. He compares his joy to that of one who has been long in battle, and has at last won the victory and is dividing the spoil. This usually falls to the lot of princes, and though David was not one with them in their persecutions, yet he had his victories, and his spoil was equal to their greatest gains. The profits made in searching the Scriptures were greater than the trophies of war. We too have to fight for divine truth; every doctrine costs us a battle, but when we gain a full understanding of it by personal struggles it becomes doubly precious to us. In these days godly men have a full share of battling for the word of God; may we have for our spoil a firmer hold upon the priceless word. Perhaps, however, the Psalmist may have rejoiced as one who comes upon hidden treasure for which he had not fought, in which case we find the analogy in the man of God who, while reading the Bible, makes grand and blessed discoveries of the grace of God laid up for him, -- discoveries which surprise him, for he looked not to find such a prize. Whether we come by the truth as finders or as warriors fighting for it, the heavenly treasure should be equally dear to us. With what quiet joy does the ploughman steal home with his golden find! How victors shout as they share the plunder! How glad should that man be who has discovered his portion in the promises of holy writ, and is able to enjoy it for himself, knowing by the witness of the Holy Spirit that it is all his own.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUIANT SAYINGS

Verse 162. -- *I rejoice at thy word*, as one that findeth great spoil. He never came to an ordinance but as a soldier to the spoil, after a great battle, as having a constant warfare with his corruptions that fought against his soul. Now he comes to see what God will say to him, and he will make himself a saver or gainer, and get a booty out of every commandment, promise, or threatening he hears. --John

Cotton (1585-1652), in "The way of life."

Verse 162. -- *I rejoice at thy word.* "Euripides," saith the orator, "hath in his well composed tragedies more sentiments than sayings;" and Thucydides hath so stuffed every syllable of his history with substance, that the one runs parallel along with the other; Lysias's works are so well couched that you cannot take out the least word but you take away the whole sense with it; and Phocion had a special faculty of speaking much in a few words. The Cretians, in Plato's time (however degenerated in St. Paul's), were more weighty than wordy; Timanthes was famous in this, that in his pictures more things were intended than deciphered; and of Homer it is said that none could ever peer him for poetry. Then how much more apt and apposite are these high praises to the book of God, rightly called the Bible or the book as if it were, as indeed it is, both for fitness of terms and fulness of truth, the only book to winch (as Luther saith) all the books in the world are but waste paper. It is called the word, by way of eminency, because it must be the butt and boundary of all our words; and the scripture, as the lord paramount above all other words or writings of men collected into volumes, there being, as the Rabbins say, a mountain of sense hanging upon every tittle of it, whence may be gathered flowers and phrases to polish our speeches with, even sound words, that have a healing property in them, far above all filed phrases of human elocution. --Thomas Adams.

Verse 162. -- *As one that findeth great spoil.* This expressive image may remind us of the inward conflict to be endured in acquiring the spoils of this precious word. It is so contrary to our natural taste and temper, that habitual self-denial and struggle with the indisposition of the heart can alone enable us to "find the spoil." But what "great spoil" is divided as the fruit of the conflict! How rich and abundant is the recompense of the "good soldier of Jesus Christ," who is determined through the power of the Spirit to "endure hardness," until he overcome the reluctance of his heart to this spiritual duty. He shall "rejoice in finding great spoil." Sometimes -- as the spoil with which the lepers enriched themselves in the Syrian camp -- it may be found unexpectedly. Sometimes we see the riches and treasures contained in a passage or doctrine, long before we can make it our own. And often when we gird ourselves to the conflict with indolence, and wanderings, under the weakness of our spiritual perceptions and the power of unbelief, many a prayer, and many a sigh is sent up for Divine aid, before we are crowned with victory, and are enabled, as the fruit of our conquest joyfully to appropriate the word to our present need and distress. --Charles Bridges.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 162. --

1. The treasure hid: "great spoil" hidden in the divine word.
2. The treasure found: "as one that findeth," etc.

(a) By reading.

(b) By meditation.

(c) By prayer.

1. The treasure enjoyed: "I rejoice," etc.

--G.R.

Verse 162. -- David's joy over God's word he compares to the joy of the warrior when he finds great spoil.

1. This great joy is sometimes aroused by the fact that there is a word of God.
 - a. The Scriptures are a revealing of God.

(b) The guide of our life.

(c) A sure pledge of mercy.

(d) The beginning of communion with God.

(e) The instrument of usefulness.

1. Frequently the joy of the believer in the word arises out of his having had to battle to obtain a grasp of it.
 - a. We have had to fight over certain doctrines before we could really come at them.

(b) The same may be said of the promises.

(c) Of the precepts.

(d) Of the threatenings.

(e) Even about the word which reveals Christ.

1. At times the joy of the believer lies in enjoying God's word without any fighting at all: "One that findeth."
2. There is a joy arising out of the very fact that Holy Scripture may be considered to be a spoil.
 - a. A spoil is the end of uncertainty.

(b) It is the weakening of the adversary for any future attacks.

(c) It gives a sense of victory.

(d) There is, in dividing the spoil, profit, pleasure, and honour.

(e) The spoiling of the enemy is a prophecy of rest. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1641: "Great Spoil."

EXPOSITION

Verse 163. I hate and abhor lying. A double expression for an inexpressible loathing. Falsehood in doctrine, in life, or in speech, falsehood in any form or shape, had become utterly detestable to the Psalmist. This was a remarkable state for an Oriental, for generally lying is the delight of Easterns,

and the only wrong they see in it is a want of skill in its exercise so that the liar is found out. David himself had made much progress when he had come to this. He does not, however, alone refer to falsehood in conversation; he evidently intends perversity in faith and teaching. He set down all opposition to the God of truth as lying, and then he turned his whole soul against it in the most intense form of indignation. Godly men should detest false doctrine even as they abhor a lie.

But thy law do I love, because it is all truth. His love was as ardent as his hate. True men love truth, and hate lying. It is well for us to know which way our hates and loves run, and we may do essential service to others by declaring what are their objects. Both love and hate are contagious, and when they are sanctified the wider their influence the better.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 163. -- *I hate and abhor lying*, etc. One sees here how the light on David's soul was increasing more and more unto the perfect day. In the earlier part of this psalm, David in the recollects of his own sin had prayed, "Remove from me the way of lying," and the Lord had indeed answered his prayer, for he now declares his utter loathing of every false way: "I hate and abhor lying." And we see, in some measure, the instrument by which the Holy Spirit wrought the change: "Thy law do I love"; nay, as he adds in a later verse, "I love them exceedingly." And so it ever must be, the heart must have some holier object of its affection to fill up the void, or there will be no security against a relapse into sin! might talk for ever on the sin, the disgrace, and the danger of lying, and though at the time and for a time my words might have some influence, yet, unless the heart be filled with the love of God and of God's law, the first temptation would prove too powerful. The Bible teaches us this in a variety of ways. God says to Israel, not only "cease to do evil," but, "learn to do well." And still more pointedly does the apostle, when he was warring against drunkenness, say, "Be not drunk with wine, wherein is excess, -- but be filled with the Spirit." --Barton Bouchier.

Verse 163. -- *I hate and abhor lying*. "Lying," according to Scripture usage, not only signifies speaking contrary to what one thinks, but also thinking contrary to the truth of things, and, particularly, the giving to other of that worship and glory which are due to the true God alone to think and act aside from God's truth. The men who persecuted that godly man thought of earthly prosperity and power as they should not have thought; they judged God's servant falsely, and they thought wickedly Of God himself. The man of God took a view of these things; he saw wickedness and the vileness of them, and he continued -- "Falsehood I hate and abhor: thy law do I love." From all the false and delusive ways of men, from all the pride and pomp that surround courts, from the sinful and pursuits of worldly men, as well as from the ostentatious idolatry heathen nations, he could turn with heart delight to the contemplation Jehovah, in that wonderful ritual which manifested the divine mercy in vicarious sacrifices, and observances, and festivals; and to that holy law which was given as man's rule of duty and grateful obedience, and these he loved as the manifestations of God's grace. --John

Stephen.

Verse 163. -- *I hate and abhor lying: not only "hate" it, nor simply I "abhor" it, but "hate and abhor,"* to strengthen and increase the sense, and make it more vehement. Where the enmity is not great against the sin, the matter may be compounded and taken up; but David will have nothing to do with it, for he saith, -- I loathe and abhor it, and hate it with a deadly hatred. Slight hatred of a sinful course is not sufficient to guard us against it. -- Thomas Manton.

Verse 163. -- *Sin seemeth to have its name from the Hebrew word "sana",* to hate, 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. None can hate it but those that love the law of God; for all hatred comes from love. A natural man may be angry with his sin, but hate it he cannot; nay, he may leave it, but not loathe it; if he did, he would loathe all sin as well as any one sin. --Abraham Wright.

Verse 163. -- *Lying.* All injustice is abominable: to do any sort of wrong is a heinous crime, but lying is that crime which, above all others, tendeth to the dissolution of society and disturbance of human life; which God therefore doth most loathe, and men have reason especially to detest. Of this the slanderer is most deeply guilty. "A witness of Belial scorneth judgment, and the month of the wicked devoureth iniquity," saith the wise man: [Proverbs 19:28](#). He is indeed, according to just estimation, guilty of all kinds of injury, breaking all the second table of commands respecting our neighbour. Most distinctly he beareth false witness against his neighbour: he doth covet his neighbour's goods, for 'tis constantly out of such an irregular desire, for his own presumed advantage, to dispossess his neighbour of some good, and transfer it on himself, that the slanderer uttereth his tale: he is also a thief and robber of his good name, a deflowerer and defiler of his reputation, an assassin and murderer of his honour. So doth he violate all the rules of justice, and perpetrates all sorts of wrong against his neighbour. --Isaac Barrow.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 163. -- Opposite poles of the Christian character.

1. Why I hate lying, because it comes from the devil ([Proverbs 8:44](#), [Acts 5:3](#)): it leads to the devil ([Revelation 11:8,22:15](#)): it is base, dangerous, degrading ([3:13](#)"> [4: 3:13](#)">[Proverbs 3:13](#)"> [4: 3:13](#)): it is hated by the Lord ([Proverbs 6:16,17](#), [7:22](#)).
2. Why I love the law. Because it emanates from God; is the reflection of his character; is the ideal of my character.
3. How I came thus to hate and love. By the grace of God: ver. 29.

--G.A.D.

Verse 163. --

1. Opposite things.
2. Opposite feelings.

EXPOSITION

Verse 164. Seven times a day do I praise thee because of thy righteous judgments. He laboured perfectly to praise his perfect God, and therefore fulfilled the perfect number of songs. Seven may also intend frequency. Frequently he lifted up his heart in thanksgiving to God for his divine teachings in the word, and for his divine actions in providence. With his voice he extolled the righteousness of the Judge of all the earth. As often as ever he thought of God's ways a song leaped to his lips. At the sight of the oppressive princes, and at the hearing of the abounding falsehood around him, he felt all the more bound to adore and magnify God, who in all things is truth and righteousness. When others rob us of our praise it should be a caution to us not to fall into the same conduct towards our God, who is so much more worthy of honour. If we praise God when we are persecuted our music will be all the sweeter to him because of our constancy in suffering. If we keep clear of all lying, our song will be the more acceptable because it comes out of pure lips. If we never flatter men we shall be the better condition for honouring the Lord. Do we praise God seven times a day? Do we praise him once in seven days?

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 164. -- *Seven times a day do I praise thee.* Affections of the soul cannot long be kept secret; if they be strong they will break forth in actions. The love of God is like a fire in the heart of man, which breaks forth, and manifests itself in the obedience of his commandments, and praising him for his benefits; and this is it which David now protests, that the love of God was not idle in his heart, but made him fervent and earnest in praising God, so that "seven times a day" he did praise God. For by this number the carefulness of holy devotion is expressed, and the fervency of his love. In praising God he could not be satisfied, saith Basil. --William Cowper.

Verse 164. -- *Seven times a day do I praise thee.* "As every grace," says Sibbes, "increaseth by exercise of itself, so doth the grace of prayer. By prayer we learn to pray." And thus it was with the Psalmist; he often times anticipated the dawning of the morning for his exercise of prayer; and at midnight frequently arose to pour out his soul in prayer; now he adds that "seven times in a day," or as we might express it, "at every touch and turn," he finds opportunity for and delight in praise. Oh for David's spirit and David's practice! --Barton Bouchier.

Verse 164. -- *Seven times a day do I praise thee.* A Christian ought to give himself up eminently to this duty without limits. --Walter Marshall.

Verse 164. -- *Seven times a day do I praise thee.* Not as if he had seven set hours for this duty every day, as the Papists would have it, to countenance their seven canonical hours, but rather a definite number is put for an indefinite, and so amounts to this, -- he did very often in a day praise God; his holy heart taking the hint of every providence to carry him to heaven on this errand of prayer and praise.

--William Gurnall.

Verse 164. -- *Seven times a day.* Some of the Jewish Rabbis affirm that David is here to be understood literally, observing, that the devout Hebrews Were accustomed to praise God twice in the morning, before reading the ten commandments, and once after; twice in the evening before reading the same portion of inspiration, and twice after; which makes up the number of seven times a day.

--James Anderson's note to Calvin in loc.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 164. -- Praise rendered. Frequently, statedly, heartily, intelligently.

Verse 164. -- Perpetual praise.

1. True praise is ever warranted.
2. True praise is ever welcome.
3. True praise is never weary. --C.A.D.

Verse 164. --

1. Some never praise thee; but, "seven times a day," etc.; for I delight to do so. "Thy righteous judgments" are a terror to them, a joy to me.
2. Some feebly and coldly praise thee, while, "seven times," etc. My warm devotion must frequently express itself in praise.
3. Some are content with occasionally praising thee, but, "seven times," etc. They think it enough to begin and end the day with praise, while all the day long I am in the spirit of praise.
4. Some soon cease to praise thee, but, "seven times," etc. Not seven times only, but "unto seventy times seven." Even without ceasing, will I praise thee.

--W.H.J.P.

EXPOSITION

Verse 165. Great peace have they which love thy law. What a charming verse is this! It dwells not with those who perfectly keep the law, for where should such men be found? but with those who love it, whose hearts and hands are made to square with its precepts and demands. These men are ever striving, with all their hearts, to walk in obedience to the law, and though they are often persecuted they have peace, yea, great peace; for they have learned the secret of the reconciling blood, they have felt the power of the comforting Spirit, and they stand before the Father as men accepted. The Lord has given them to feel his peace, which passed all understanding. They have many troubles, and are likely to be persecuted by the proud, but their usual condition is that of deep calm -- a peace too great for this little world to break.

And nothing shall offend them, or, "shall really injure them." "All things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose." It must needs be that offences

come, but these lovers of the law are peacemakers, and so they neither give nor take offence. That peace which is founded upon conformity to God's will is a living and lasting one, worth writing of with enthusiasm, as the Psalmist here does.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 165. -- *Great peace have they which love thy law.* Amidst the storms and tempests of the world, there is a perfect calm in the breasts of those, who not only do the will of God, but "love" to do it. They are at peace with God, by the blood of reconciliation; at peace with themselves, by the answer of a good conscience, and the subjection of those desires which war against the soul; at peace with all men, by the spirit of charity; and the whole creation is so at peace with them that all things work together for their good. No external troubles can rob them of this "great peace," no "offences" or stumbling blocks, which are thrown in their way by persecution, or temptation, by the malice of enemies, or by the apostasy of friends, by anything which they see, hear of, or feel, can detain, or divert them from their course. Heavenly love surmounts every obstacle, and runs with delight the way of God's commandments. --George Horne.

Verse 165. -- *Great peace have they which love thy law.* There have been Elis trembling for the ark of God, and Uzzahs putting out their hand in fear that it was going to fall; but in the midst of the deepest troubles through which the church has passed, and the fiercest storms that have raged about it, there have been true, faithful men of God who have never despaired. In every age there have been Luthers and Latimers, who have not only held fast their confidence, but whose peace has deepened with the roaring of the waves. The more they have been forsaken of men, the closer has been their communion with God. And with strong hold of him and of his promises, and hearts that could enter into the secret place of the Most High, although there has been everything without to agitate, threaten, and alarm, they have been guided into perfect peace. --James Martin, in, "The Christian Mirror, and other Sermons", 1878.

Verse 165. -- *Great peace have they which love thy law.* Clearness of conscience is a help to comfortable thoughts. Yet observe, that peace is not so much effected as preserved by a good conscience and conversation; for though joy in the Holy Ghost will make its nest nowhere but in a holy soul, yet the blood of Christ only can speak peace; "being justified by faith, we have peace:" Romans 5:1. An exact life will not make, but keep conscience quiet; an easy shoe does not heal a sore foot, but it keeps a sound one from hurt. Walking with God according to gospel rules hath peace entailed upon it, and that peace is such a treasure, as thereby, a Christian may have his rejoicing from himself. Galatians 6:4,16. His own heart sings him a merry tune, which the threats and reproaches of the world cannot silence. The treasure of comfort is not expended in affliction; death itself doth not exhaust but increase and advance it to an eternal triumph. O the excellency and necessity of it! Paul laid it up for a death-bed cordial: "Our rejoicing is this, the testimony of our

conscience:" 2 Corinthians 1:12. And Hezekiah dares hold it up to God, as well as cheer up himself with it on approaching death. A conscience good in point of integrity will be good also in point of tranquillity: "The righteous are bold as a lion": they have great peace that love and keep God's commandments: Proverbs 28:1 Psalms 119:165. And saith the apostle, "If our heart condemn us not, then have we confidence towards God" (1 John 3:2), and I may add also, towards men. Oh! what comfort and solace hath a clear conscience! A conscientious man hath something within to answer accusations without; he hath such a rich treasure as will not fail in greatest straits and hazards. I shall conclude this with a notable saying of Bernard: -- "The pleasures of a good conscience are the Paradise of souls, the joy of angels, a garden of delights, a field of blessing, the temple of Solomon, the court of God, the habitation of the Holy Spirit." --Oliver Heywood.

Verse 165. -- *Great peace*. Note that for "peace" the Hebrew word is *mylw*, *shalom*: it signifies not only "peace," but also perfection, wholeness, prosperity, tranquillity, healthfulness, safety, the completion and consummation, of every good thing; and so it is frequently taken by the Hebrews; hence in salutations, wishing one the other well, they say, *vi milw*, *shalom lekha*, i.e, "peace be with thee"; as if one should say, "may all things be prosperous with thee." --Thomas Le Blanc.

Verse 165. -- *They which love thy law*. To love a law may seem strange; but it is the only true divine life. To keep it because we are afraid of its penalties is only a form of fear or prudential consideration. To keep it to preserve a good name may be propriety and respectability. To keep it because it is best for society may be worldly self interest. To keep it because of physical health may be the policy of epicurean philosophy. To keep it because we love it is to show that it is already part of us -- has entered into the moral texture of our being. Sin then becomes distasteful, and temptations lose their power. -- W.M. Statham, quoted in "Atic toilette Commentary on the Psalms", 1879.

Verse 165. -- *And nothing shall offend them*. Hebrew, "they shall have no stumbling block." 1 John 4:10, "There is none occasion of stumbling in him" who abides in the light, which makes him to see and avoid such stumbling blocks. Wealth, tribulation, temptation, which are the occasion to many of falling (Isaiah 8:14,15; 3:20 7:19 14:3 4:7), are not so to him. --A.R. Faussett.

Verse 165. -- *Learn the true wisdom of those of you who are new creatures*, and who love God's holy law. All of you who are really brought to Christ are changed into his image, so that you love God's holy law. "I delight in the law of God after the inward man." "The statutes of the Lord are right, rejoicing the heart": Psalm 19. The world says: What a slave you are! you cannot have a little amusement on the Sabbath -- you cannot take a Sabbath walk, or join a Sabbath tea party; you cannot go to a dance or a theatre; you cannot enjoy the pleasures of sensual indulgence -- you are a slave. I answer: Christ had none of these pleasures. He did not want them: nor do we. He knew what was truly wise, and good, and happy, and he chose God's holy law. He was the freest of all beings, and yet he knew no sin. Only make me free as Christ is free -- this is all I ask. "Great peace have they

which love thy law: and nothing shall offend them." --Robert Murray M Cheyne, 1813-1843.

Verse 165. -- *Nothing shall offend them.* They that have this character of God's children, will not be stumbled at God's dispensations, let them be never so cross to their desires, because they have a God to fly unto in all their troubles, and a sure covenant to rest upon. Therefore the reproaches cast upon them, and on the way of God, do not scandalize them; for they have found God in that very way which others speak evil of; they are not so offended by anything that attends the way of God, as to dislike or forsake that way. Nevertheless we must take heed that we be not offended. --John Bunyan.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 165. --

1. Great love to a great law.
2. Great peace under great disquietude.
3. Great upholding from all stumblingblocks.

Verse 165. -- Perfect peace.

1. The law of God should be regarded with love.
2. Love to the law is productive of great peace. Peace with God through the blood of reconciliation: peace with self by good conscience and suppression of evil desires: peace with men by charity.
3. The peace which springs from love to the law is a security against stumbling: "nothing shall offend them;" neither the daily cross (Mark 5:21,22) nor the fiery trial (Mark 4:7); nor the humbling doctrine (John 6:60,66, etc.). --C.A.D

Verse 165.

1. The characters described -- "they which love thy law."
2. The blessing they enjoy: "great peace."
3. The evils they escape: "nothing shall offend them."

--G.R.

Verse 165. -- The peace and security of the godly.

1. Their peace. It arises from --
 - (a) Freedom from an accusing conscience.
 - (b) Conformity to the requirements of the law.
 - (c) Enjoyment of the privileges revealed in the law.
 - (d) Assurance of divine approval and benediction.
1. Their security.
 - (a) They are prepared for every duty.
 - (b) They are proof against every temptation.
 - (c) They are pledged to final perseverance.

(d) They have the promise of divine protection.

--W.H.J.P.

Verse 165. --

1. An honourable title: "They which love thy law."
2. A good possession: "Great peace have they."
3. A blessed immunity: "Nothing shall offend them."

--J.F.

EXPOSITION

Verse 166. Lord, I have hoped for thy salvation, and done thy commandments. Here we have salvation by grace, and the fruits thereof. All David's hope was fixed upon God, he looked to him alone for salvation; and then he endeavoured most earnestly to fulfil the commands of his law. Those who place least reliance upon good works are very frequently those who have the most of them; that same divine teaching which delivers us from confidence in our own doings leads us to abound in every good work to the glory of God. In times of trouble there are two things to be done, the first is to hope in God, and the second is to do that which is right. The first without the second would be mere presumption: the second without the first mere formalism. It is well if in looking back we can claim to have acted in the way which is commanded of the Lord. If we have acted rightly towards God we are sure that he will act kindly with us.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 166. -- *LORD*, I have hoped for thy salvation, etc. This is the true posture in which all the servants of God should desire to be found -- hoping in his mercy, and doing his commands. How easy were it to demonstrate the connection between the mental feeling here recognized, and the obedience with which it is here associated! It is the hope of salvation which is the great and pervading motive to holiness, and it is the consciousness of obedience to the will of God which strengthens our hope of interest in the divine mercy. --John Morison.

Verse 166. -- *Lord*, I have hoped for thy salvation. This saying he borrowed from good old Jacob. Genesis 49:18. --John Trapp.

Verse 166. -- *I have done thy commandments*. Set upon the practice of what you read. A student in physics doth not satisfy himself to read over a system or body of physics, but he falls upon practising physics: the life blood of religion lies in the practical part. Christians should be walking Bibles. Xenophon said, "Many read Lycurgus's laws, but few observe them." The word written is not only a rule of knowledge, but a rule of obedience; it is not only to mend our sight, but to mend our pace. David calls God's word "a lamp unto his feet" (Psalms 119:105). It was not only a light to his eyes to see by, but to his feet to walk by. By practice we trade with the talent of knowledge, and turn it to

profit. This is a blessed reading of Scripture, when we fly from the sins which the word forbids, and espouse the doctrines which the word commands. Reading without practice will be but a torch to light men to hell. --Thomas Watson.

Verse 166,167,168. -- *He that casts the commands behind his back is very presumptuous in applying the promises to himself.* That hope which is not accompanied with obedience will make a man ashamed. He that has learned the word of God knows that the law is not made void by faith, but established: Romans 3:31. Christ the church's Head and Prophet, in his sermon upon the mount shows the extent of the law, requiring purity in the heart and thoughts, as well as in the life and actions, and condemns them "who shall break the least of these commands and shall teach men so"; but "those that teach and do them," he owns as great in his kingdom: Matthew 5:19. The law spoken on Mount Sinai is established by the Legislator Christ in Mount Zion as a rule of righteousness. And they who are rightly instructed, "which walk according to this rule," will have both heart and conversation ordered according to its direction, and "peace and mercy will be upon them," and hereby they will show themselves to be indeed the Israel of God. --Nathanael Vincent.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 166. --

1. A hope which is not ashamed.
2. A life which is not ashamed.
3. A God of whom he is not ashamed.

Verse 166. -- A good hope through grace.

1. Salvation is God's gift: "thy salvation."
2. Is apprehended by hope: "I have hoped."
3. Is accompanied by obedience: "and done thy commandments." Hebrews 6:9.

--C.A.D.

EXPOSITION

Verse 167. My soul hath kept thy testimonies. My outward life has kept thy precepts, and my inward life -- my soul, has kept thy testimonies. God has borne testimony to many sacred truths, and these we hold fast as for life itself. The gracious man stores up the truth of God within his heart as a treasure exceedingly dear and precious -- he keeps it. His secret soul, his inmost self, becomes the guardian of these divine teachings which are his sole authority in soul matters.

And I love them exceedingly. This was why he kept them, and having kept them this was the result of the keeping. He did not merely store up revealed truth by way of duty, but because of a deep, unutterable affection for it. He felt that he could sooner die than give up any part of the revelation of God. The more we store our minds with heavenly truth, the more deeply shall we be in love with it:

the more we see the exceeding riches of the Bible the more will our love exceed measure, and exceed expression.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 167. -- *My soul hath kept thy testimonies; and I love them exceedingly.* Should he not have said, first, I have loved thy commandments, and so have kept them? Doubtless he did so; but he ran here in a holy and most heavenly circle, I have kept them and loved them, and loved them and kept them. If we love Christ, we shall also live the life of love in our measure, and his commandments will be most dear when himself is most precious. --Thomas Shepard, in "The Sound Believer", 1671.

Verse 167. -- *My soul.* It is a usual phrase among the Hebrews, when they would express their vehement affection to anything, to say, "My soul": as Psalms 103:1 104:1, "My soul, praise thou the Lord," and Luke

1. "My soul doth magnify the Lord." --Richard Greenham.

Verse 167. -- *I love them exceedingly.* It is only a reasonable return to God; for the Father loved me so exceedingly as not to spare his own Son, but to give him up for me; and the Son loved me so exceedingly that he gave himself to me, and gave me back to myself when I was lost in my sins, original and actual. --Gerhohus (1093-1169), in Neale and Littledale.

Verse 167,168. -- *Let not our consciousness of daily failures make us shrink from this strong expression of confidence.* It is alleged as an evidence of grace, not as a claim of merit, and therefore the most humble believer need not hesitate to adopt it as the expression of Christian sincerity before God. David aspired to no higher character than that of a poor sinner: but he was conscious of spirituality of obedience, "exceeding love" to the divine word, and an habitual walk under the eye of his God -- the evidences of a heart (often mentioned in the Old Testament)" perfect with him." --Charles Bridges.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 167. -- Past and present.

Verse 167. --

1. The more we keep God's testimonies the more we shall love them.
2. The more we love them the more we shall keep them.

--G.R.

Verse 167.

1. The jewels: "Thy testimonies."

(a) Rare; none like them.

(b) Rich; surpassing valuation.

(c) Beautifying those who wear them.

(d) Glittering with an internal and essential splendour, in

the darkness of this world.

(e) Realising in truth the old superstitions regarding precious stones having medicinal and magic virtues.

1. The cabinet: "My soul."

(a) Exactly made to receive the jewels.

(b) A wonderful piece of divine workmanship; but all ruined and marred unless applied to the use designed.

(c) The only receptacle out of which the genuine beauty of God's testimonies can so shine as to excite the admiration of beholders.

1. The lock that keeps all safe: "I love them exceedingly."

(a) Love is the strongest hold fast in the universe.

(b) It is needed, for ten thousand thieves prowl around to steal from us the treasure.

(c) A love "exceedingly" is a heavenly patent; no ingenuity can pick it; it is fire proof and burglar proof against hell itself.

--J.F.

EXPOSITION

Verse 168. I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies. Both the practical and the doctrinal parts of God's word he had stored up, and preserved, and followed. It is a blessed thing to see the two forms of the divine word, equally known, equally valued, equally confessed: there should be no picking and choosing as to the mind of God. We know those who endeavour to be careful as to the precepts, but who seem to think that the doctrines of the gospel are mere matters of opinion, which they may shape for themselves. This is not a perfect condition of things. We have known others again who are very rigid as to the doctrines, and painfully lax with reference to the precepts. This also is far from right. When the two are "kept" with equal earnestness then have we the perfect man.

For all my ways are before thee. Probably he means to say that this was the motive of his endeavouring to be right both in head and heart, because he knew that God saw him, and under the sense of the divine presence he was afraid to err. Or else he is thus appealing to God to bear witness to the truth of what he has said. In either case it is no small consolation to feel that our heavenly Father knows all about us, and that if princes speak against us, and worldlings fill their mouths with cruel lies, yet he can vindicate us, for there is nothing secret or hidden from him.

We are struck with the contrast between this verse, which is the last of its octave, and Psalms

119:176, which is similarly placed in the next octave. This is a protest of innocence, "I have kept thy precepts," and that a confession of sin, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." Both were sincere, both accurate. Experience makes many a paradox plain, and this is one. Before God we may be clear of open fault and yet at the same time mourn over a thousand heart wanderings which need his restoring hand.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 168. -- *I have kept thy precepts*, for all my ways are before thee. When men are some way off in a king's eye they will be comely in their carriage; but when they come into his presence chamber to speak with him they will be most careful. Because saints are always in God's sight, their constant deportment must be pious and seemly. -- George Swinnock.

Verse 168. -- *I have kept thy precepts*, etc. The Hebrew word yn[, shamar, that is here rendered "kept," signifies to keep carefully, diligently, studiously, exactly. It signifies to keep as men keep prisoners, and to keep as a watchman keeps the city or the garrison; yea, to keep as a man would keep his very life. But now mark what was the reason that David kept the precepts and the testimonies of the Lord so carefully, so sincerely, so diligently, so studiously, and so exactly. Why, the reason you have in the latter part of the verse, "for all my ways are before thee." O sirs! it is as necessary for him that would be eminent in holiness, to set the Lord always before him, as it is necessary for him to breathe. In that 31st of Job you have a very large narrative of that height and perfection of holiness that Job had attained to, and the great reason that he gives you, for this is in the 4th verse, "Doth not he see my way, and count all my steps?" The eye of God had so strong an influence upon his heart and life, that it wrought him up to a very high pitch of holiness. --Thomas Brooks.

Verse 168. -- *All my ways are before thee*. That God seeth the secrets of our heart, is a point terrible to the wicked but joyful to the godly. The wicked are sorry that their heart is so open: it is a boiling pot of all mischief, a furnace and forge house for evil. It grieveth them that man should hear and see their words and actions; but what a terror is this -- that their Judge, whom they hate, seeth their thought! If they could deny this, they would. But so many of them as are convinced and forced to acknowledge a God, are shaken betimes with this also -- that he is All seeing. Others proceed more summarily, and at once deny the Godhead in their heart, and so destroy this conscience of his All knowledge. But it is in vain: the more they harden their heart by this godless thought, the more fear is in them; while they choke and check their conscience that it crow not against them it checks them with foresight of fearful vengeance and for the present convinceth them of the omniscience of God, the more they press to suppress it. But the godly rejoice herein; it is to them a rule to square their thoughts by; they take no liberty of evil thinking, willing, wishing, or affecting, in their hearts. Where that candle shineth, all things are framed as worthy of him and of his sight, whom they know to be seeing their heart. --

William Struther, 1633.

Verse 168. -- *All my ways are before thee.* Walk, Christian, in the view of God's omniscience; say to thy soul, cave, videt Deus; take heed, God seeth. It is under the rose, as the common phrase is, that treason is spoken, when subjects think they are far enough from their king's hearing; hut did such know the prince to be under the window, or behind the hangings, to their discourse would be more loyal. This made David so upright in his walking: "I have kept thy precepts, for all my ways are before thee." If Alexander's empty chair, which his captains, when they met in counsel, set before them, did awe them so as to keep them in good order; how helpful would it be to set before ourselves the fact that God is looking upon us! The Jews covered Christ's face, and then buffeted him: Matthew 14:65. So does the hypocrite; he first says in his heart, God sees not, or at least forgets that he sees, and then he makes bold to sin against him; like that foolish bird, which runs her head among the reeds, and thinks herself safe from the fowler, as if because she did not see her enemy, therefore he could not see her. Te mihi abscondam, non me tibi (Augustine). I may hide thee from my eye, but not myself from thine eye. --William Gurnall.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 168. --

1. The claim of God's word upon our utmost obedience." I have kept thy precepts and thy testimonies." He does not mean that he had kept them perfectly; for that were to contradict other expressions in the psalm. He means that he kept them sincerely and strove to keep them perfectly, as one who realized their claim upon him.
 - a. The whole word is divine: an equal authority pervades every precept; no distinction should be made of more or less obligation.
- (b) The whole word is pure and right; expediency, or making the measure and manner of obedience suitable to our own purpose, is a false principle; to be carefully distinguished from righteous expediency, which is the foregoing of a personal right in consideration of another's benefit.
- (c) The moral code of the word is a unity; obedience is like a connected chain, a wilful flaw in one link renders all useless.
 1. The consciousness which greatly helps obedience: "For all my ways are before thee."
 - a. "Are before thee," as plainly seen by thee.
 - (b) "Are before thee," constantly observed.

(c) "Are before thee;" deliberately placed before thee by me, that they may be corrected and directed.

--J.F.

Verse 168. -- All my ways are before thee.

1. The saint's delight.
2. The sinner's distress.

--W.W.

Verse 168. (second clause). --

1. Necessarily so: for thou art the omniscient God: Psalms 134:3.
2. Voluntarily so: for I choose to walk in thy sight. See Psalms 16:9
3. Consciously and blessedly so. For the light of thy countenance inspires and gladdens me. See Psalms 89:15.

--W.H.J.P.

Verse 168. (second clause). -- Living in the sight of God Actually the case with all; designedly the case of the godly; happily the case of the favoured; preeminently the case of those who abide in fellowship.

Verse 168. --

1. The practical and doctrinal teachings of God before us.
2. All our ways before him.
3. The sort of conduct which these two causes will produce.

EXPOSITION

The Psalmist is approaching the end of the psalm, and his petitions gather force and fervency; he seems to break into the inner circle of divine fellowship, and to come even to the feet of the great God whose help he is imploring this nearness creates the most lowly mew of himself, and leads him to close the psalm upon his face in deepest self humiliation, begging to be sought out like a lost sheep.

EXPOSITION

Verse 169. Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD. He is tremblingly afraid lest he should not be heard. He is conscious that his prayer is nothing better than the cry of a poor child, or the groan of a wounded beast. He dreads lest it should be shut out from the ear of the Most High, but he very boldly prays that it may come before God, that it may be in his sight, under his notice, and looked upon with his acceptance; yea, he goes further, and entreats, "Let my cry come near before thee, O Lord." He wants the Lord's attention to his prayer to be very close and considerate. He uses a figure of speech and personifies his prayer. We may picture his prayer as Esther, venturing into the royal presence, entreating an audience, and begging to find favour in the sight of the blessed and only Potentate. It is

a very sweet thing to a suppliant when he knows of a surety that his prayer has obtained audience, when it has trodden the sea of glass before the throne, and has come even to the footstool of the glorious seat around which heaven and earth adore. It is to Jehovah that this prayer is expressed with trembling earnestness -- our translators, filled with holy reverence, translate the word, "O LORD." We crave audience of none else, for we have confidence in none beside.

Give we understanding according to thy word. This is the prayer about which the Psalmist is so exceedingly anxious. With all his gettings he would get understanding, and whatever he misses he is resolved not to miss this priceless boon. He desires spiritual light and understanding as it is promised in God's word, as it proceeds from God's word, and as it produces obedience to God's word. He pleads as though he had no understanding whatever of his own, and asks to have one given to him. "Give me understanding." In truth, he had an understanding according to the judgment of men, but what he sought was an understanding according to God's word, which is quite another thing. To understand spiritual things is the gift of God. To have a judgment enlightened by heavenly light and conformed to divine truth is a privilege which only grace can give. Many a man who is accounted wise after the manner of this world is a fool according to the word of the Lord. May we be among those happy children who shall all be taught of the Lord.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

This commences a new division of the psalm, indicated by the last letter of the Hebrew alphabet, the letter Tau, corresponding to our "t," or "th." --Albert Barnes.

Verse 169. -- *Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD.* That is, as some will have it, Let this whole preceding Psalm, and all the petitions (whereof we have here a repetition) therein contained, be highly accepted in heaven. --John Trapp.

Verse 169. -- *Let my cry come near before thee, O LORD.* We are now come to the last section of this psalm, wherein we see David more fervent in prayer than he was in the first, as ye shall easily observe by comparing them both together. The godly, the longer they speak to God, are the more fervent and earnest to speak to him; so that unless necessity compel them, they desire never to intermit conference with him.

Many prayers hath he made to God in this psalm: now in the end he prays for his prayers, that the Lord would let them come before him. Some men send out prayers, but God turns them into sin, and puts them away back from him: therefore David seeks favour to his prayers. --William Cowper.

Verse 169. -- *Give me understanding.* This was the prayer of Solomon ([1 Kings 3:9](#)), and we are told that it pleased the Lord, and as a reward he added temporal prosperity, which the young king had not asked. Yet Solomon meant less by his prayer than his father David did; for we see in him little trace of the deep devotion for which his father was so remarkable. The Psalmist here prays a deep prayer which can only be answered by the Holy Ghost himself enlightening the soul. The understanding is a

most important member of our spiritual frame. Conscience is the understanding exercised upon moral questions, and if that be not right, where shall we be? Our understanding of the word of God comes by teaching, but also through experience: we understand hardly anything till we experience it. Such an enlightening experience is the gift of God, and to him we must look for it in prayer. --C.H.S.

Verse 169. -- *Give we understanding.* The especial work of the Holy Spirit in the illumination of our minds unto the understanding of the Scripture is called "understanding." The Psalmist prays "Give me understanding, and I shall keep thy law" (verse 34). So the apostle speaks to Timothy: "Consider what I say; and the Lord give thee understanding in all things": 2 Timothy 2:7. Besides his own consideration of what was proposed unto him, which includes the due and diligent use of all outward means, it was moreover necessary that God should give him understanding by an inward effectual work of his Spirit, that he might comprehend the things wherein he was instructed. And the desire hereof, as of that without which there can be no saving knowledge of the word, for advantage by it, the Psalmist expresses emphatically, with great fervency of spirit in verse 144: "The righteousness of thy testimony is everlasting: give me understanding, and I shall live." Without this he knew that he could have no benefit by the everlasting righteousness of the testimonies of God. All understanding, indeed, however it be abused by the most, is the work and effect of the Holy Ghost for "the inspiration of the Almighty giveth understanding": Job 32:8. So is this spiritual understanding in an especial manner the gift of God. In this "understanding" both the ability of our mind and the due exercise of it is included. This one consideration, that the saints of God have with so much earnestness prayed that God would give them understanding as to his mind and will as revealed in the word, with his reiterated promises that he would so do, is of more weight with me than all the disputes of men to the contrary. No farther argument is necessary to prove that men do not understand the mind of God in the Scripture in a due manner, than their supposal and confidence that so they can do without the communication of a spiritual understanding unto them by the Holy Spirit. This self confidence is directly contrary unto the plain, express testimonies of the word. --John Owen.

Verse 169. -- *Give me understanding.* Why should the man of God here pray for understanding? Had he not often prayed for it before? Was he a novice in knowledge, being a prophet? Doth not our Saviour Christ reprehend repetitions and babbling in prayer? True it is our Saviour Christ doth reprehend that babbling which is without faith and knowledge and a feeling of our wants; but he speaketh not against those serious repetitions which proceed from a plentiful knowledge, abundant faith, and lively feeling of our necessities. Again, although it cannot be denied but lie was a man of God, and had received great grace, yet God giveth knowledge to his dearest saints in this life but in part, and the most which we see and know is but little. Besides, when we have knowledge, and knowledge must be brought into practice, we shall find such difficulties, such waywardness, such forgetfulness, such wants, that although we have had with the prophet a very good direction in the

general things of the word, which are universal and few, yet we shall find many distractions in our practices, which must be particular and many; and we shall either fail in memory by forgetfulness, or in judgment by blindness, or in affection by dulness. So easily may we slip when we think we may hold our journey on. Wherefore the man of God, through that examination which he took of his heart and affections, seeing those manifold straits and difficulties, prayeth in the verse following, not for the renewing of men in general in their troubles, but for the considering of his own particular condition. --Richard Greenham.

Verse 169. -- *According to the word.* David here seeks understanding not carnally, for the wisdom of the flesh is death: but he seeks understanding according to God's word. Without this the wisdom of man is foolishness; and the more subtil he seems to be in his ways, the more deeply he involves himself in the snare of the devil. "They have rejected the word of the Lord; and what wisdom is in them?" Jeremiah 8:9. But seeing he was an excellent prophet, and protested before that he had more understanding than the ancients, yea, than his teachers; how is it that he still prays for understanding? In answer to this we are to know, that there is a great difference between the gifts of nature and grace. Nature oftentimes gives to man very excellent gifts, as rare memory, knowledge, quick wit, strength, external beauty; but therewithal it teacheth not man to consider that in which he is wanting; whereof it comes to pass, that he waxeth proud of that which he hath. This is a common thing to men in the state of nature, that of small gifts they conceive a great pride: but grace, as it gives to man more excellent gifts than nature can afford, so it teacheth him to look unto that which he wants, that he be not puffed up by considering that which he hath, but carried in all humility of heart to pray for that which he wants. -- Abraham Wright.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Outlines Upon Keywords of the Psalm, By Pastor C. A. Davis.

Verses 169-176. -- The concluding cry. Bespeaking audience for his the Psalmist asks for understanding and deliverance (ver. 169, 170); raises to praise God (ver. 171), and to speak of God (ver. 172), and cries for help (ver. 173), salvation (ver. 174), life (ver. 175), and (ver. 176).

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 169,170. --

1. The singular dignity of prayer. We are on earth, but our prayers pass the seraphim and "come near before God."
2. The powerful right of prayer -- to urge with God his own word: "according to thy word."
3. The triumphant possibilities of prayer. Blessing us in mind and estate. For time and eternity. "Give me understanding." "Deliver me."
4. The amazing license accorded to prayer. To double and reiterate its requests (as here).

--W.B.H.

Verse 169. --

1. Admission to the royal court.
2. Instruction from the royal throne.
3. Reliance on the royal word.

EXPOSITION

Verse 170. Let my supplication come before thee. It is the same entreaty with a slight change of words. He humbly calls his cry a supplication, a sort of beggar's petition; and again he asks for audience and for answer. There might be hindrances in the way to an audience, and he begs for their removal -- let it come. Other believers are heard -- let my prayer come before thee.

Deliver me according to thy word. Rid me of mine adversaries, clear me of my slanderers, preserve me from my tempters, and bring me up out of all my afflictions, even as thy word has led me to expect thou wilt do. It is for this that he seeks understanding. His enemies would succeed through his folly, if they succeeded at all; but if he exercised a sound discretion they would be baffled, and he would escape from them. The Lord in answer to prayer frequently delivers his children by making them wise as serpents as well as harmless as doves.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 170. -- *Let my supplication come before thee*, etc. The sincere worshipper cannot be contented with anything short of actual intercourse with God. The round of duty cannot please where the spirit of grace and supplication has not been vouchsafed. A filial disposition will pour itself forth in earnest longings after communion with God. Nor will the hope of gracious audience be founded on any other plea save that of the sure word of Jehovah's promise. It is in accordance with that word, and not in opposition to it, that the child of God expects to be heard. All his deliverance he feels to be from the Lord, and all that he looks for from heaven he anticipates in answer to prayer. O for more of that faith which makes its appeal to the divine veracity, and which looks with steadfast eye to the promise of a covenant keeping God. --John Morison.

Verse 170. -- *Let my supplication come before thee*. Observe the order of the words here and in the preceding verse. First we had, "Let my cry come near;" then "Give me understanding," and that "according to thy word," and now we have "Let my prayer enter in (LXX., Syr., Arb., Vulg.) before thee." Just so, if you wish for an interview with a man of very high rank, first you come near his house, then you ask for information and instruction as to his intentions, then you ask permission to enter, lest you should be driven away and refused admittance. Knock therefore at the door of the heavenly palace: knock, not with your bodily hand, but with the right hand of prayer. For the voice can knock as well as the hand, as it is written, "It is the voice of my Beloved that knocketh": Song of Solomon 5:2. And when you have knocked, see how you go in, lest after entering you should not get the sight of

the King. For there are many who make their way into palaces, and do not at once get an audience of an earthly sovereign, but have to watch constantly to obtain an interview at last. Nor have they the choice of the opportunity, they come when they are sent for, and then present their petition, if they wish to be favourably received. -- Ambrose, in Neale and Littledale.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 170-174. -- The pleader: Psalms 119:170. The singer: Psalms 119:171. The preacher: Ps 119:172. The worker: Psalms 119:173. The waiter: Psalms 119:174.

Verse 170. --

1. Access sought.
2. Answer entreated.
3. Argument employed.

EXPOSITION

Verse 171. My lips shall utter praise, when thou hast taught me thy statutes. He will not always be pleading for himself, he will rise above all selfishness, and render thanks for the benefit received. He promises to praise God when he has obtained practical instruction in the life of godliness: this is something to praise for, no blessing is more precious. The best possible praise is that which proceeds from men who honour God, not only with their lips, but in their lives. We learn the music of heaven in the school of holy living. He whose life honours the Lord is sure to be a man of praise. David would not only be grateful in silence, but he would express that gratitude in appropriate terms: his lips would utter what his life had practised. Eminent disciples are wont to speak well of the master who instructed them, and this holy man, when taught the statutes of the Lord, promises to give all the glory to him to whom it is due.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 171. -- *My lips shall utter praise.* You have stood at the fountain head of a stream of water, and admired while it bubbled up, and ran down in a clear little rivulet, till at length it swelled the mighty river. Such is the allusion here. The heart taught of God, cannot contain itself, but breaks out in praise and singing. This would be the effect of divine illumination, and this would be felt to be a privilege, yea, and a high duty. Have you not found so, believers, specially on common occasions? Be assured, such utterances are the sign of a renewed heart; yea, of a heart filled with all gratitude of right feeling. -- John Stephen.

Verse 171. -- *My lips shall utter praise, etc.*

O make me, Lord, thy statutes learn!

Keep in thy ways my feet,

Then shall my lips divinely burn;

Then shall my songs be sweet.
Each sin I cast away shall make
My soul more strong to soar;
Each deed of holiness shall wake
A strain divine the more.
My voice shall more delight thine ear
The more I wait on time;
The service bring my song more near
The angelic harmony.

T. H. Gill, in "Breathings of the Better Life" 1881.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 171. -- Taught; taught to praise; praising; praising for being taught.

Verse 171. -- Learning to sing by learning to obey.

Verse 171. -- The Happy Scholar.

1. He rejoices in the lesson he has learnt.
2. In the Teacher who has taught him.
3. Looks forward to the end of his lesson as the time for the full singing of his song. -- C.A.D.

Verse 171. -- Lessons in Praise. --

1. It is saints' work.
2. It is sacred work, not to be hurriedly rushed into.
3. It needs Spirit instructed singers. --W.B.H.

EXPOSITION

Verse 172. My tongue shall speak of thy word. When he had done singing he began preaching. God's tender mercies are such that they may be either said or sung. When the tongue speaks of God's word it has a most fruitful subject; such speaking will be as a tree of life, whose leaves shall be for the healing of the people. Men will gather together to listen to such talk, and they will treasure it up in their hearts. The worst of us is that for the most part we are full of our own words, and speak but little of God's word. Oh, that we could come to the same resolve as this godly man, and say henceforth, "My tongue shall speak of thy word." Then should we break through our sinful silence; we should no more be cowardly and half hearted, but should be true witnesses for Jesus. It is not only of God's works that we are to speak, but of his word. We may extol its truth, its wisdom, its preciousness, its grace, its power; and then we may tell of all it has revealed, all it has promised, all it has commanded, all it has effected. The subject gives us plenty of sea room; we may speak on for ever: the tale is for ever telling, yet untold.

For all thy commandments are righteousness. David appears to have been mainly enamoured of the preceptive part of the word of God, and concerning the precept his chief delight lay in its purity and excellence. When a man can speak this from his heart, his heart is indeed a temple of the Holy Ghost. He had said aforetime (Psalms 119:138), "Thy testimonies are righteous," but here he declares that they are righteousness itself. The law of God is not only the standard of right, but it is the essence of righteousness. This the Psalmist affirms of each and every one of the precepts without exception. He felt like Paul -- "The law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good." When a man has so high an opinion of God's commandments it is little wonder that his lips should be ready to extol the ever glorious One.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 172. -- *My tongue shall speak of thy word.* One duty of thankfulness promised by David is, to speak of God's words for the edification of others. Every Christian man, as he is a priest to offer sacrifice unto God, so is he a prophet to teach his brethren; for unto us all stands that commandment, "Edify one another in their most holy faith." But, alas, ye shall see many Christians now, who at their tables, and in their companies, can speak freely upon any subject; only for spiritual matters, which concern the soul, there they are dumb, and cannot say with David, "My tongue shall speak of thy word." -- William Cowper.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 172. --

1. The orator: "My tongue shall speak."
2. His chosen theme: "of thy word."
3. His inward impulse: "for all thy commandments are righteousness."

Verse 172. -- Savoury Speech.

1. A resolution all believers should make.
2. The qualification all believers should seek (Psalms 45:1; Matthew 7:34,35)
3. The edification believers would thus secure.

--C.A.D.

EXPOSITION

Verse 173. Let thine hand help me. Give me practical succour. Do not entrust me to my friends or thy friends, but put thine own hand to the work. Thy hand has both skill and power, readiness and force: display all these qualities on my behalf. I am willing to do the utmost that I am able to do; but what I need is thine help, and this is so urgently required that if I have it not I shall sink. Do not refuse thy succour. Great as thy hand is, let it light on me, even me. The prayer reminds me of Peter walking on the sea and beginning to sink; he, too, cried, "Lord, help me," and the hand of his Master was

stretched out for his rescue.

For I have chosen, thy precepts. A good argument. A man may fitly ask help from God's hand when he has dedicated his own hand entirely to the obedience of the faith. "I have chosen thy precepts." His election was made, his mind was made up. In preference to all earthly rules and ways, in preference even to his own will, he had chosen to be obedient to the divine commands. Will not God help such a man in holy work and sacred service? Assuredly he will. If grace has given us the heart with which to will, it will also give us the hand with which to perform. Wherever, under the constraints of a divine call, we are engaged in any high and lofty enterprise, and feel it to be too much for our strength, we may always invoke the right hand of God in words like these.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 173. -- *Let thine hand help me.* David having before made promises of thankfulness, seeks now help from God, that he may perform them. Our sufficiency is not of ourselves, but of God; to will and to do are both from him. In temporal things men oftentimes take great pains with small profit; first, because they seek not to make their conscience good; next, because they seek not help from God: therefore they speed no better than Peter, who fished all night and got nothing till he cast his net in the name of the Lord. But in spiritual things we may far less look to prosper, if we call not for God's assistance: the means will not profit us unless God's blessing accompany them. There is preaching, but for the most part without profit; there is prayer, but it prevails not; there is hearing of the word, but without edifying; and all because in spiritual exercises instant prayer is not made unto God, that his hand may be with us to help us. --Abraham Wright.

Verse 173. -- *I have chosen thy precepts.* Hath God given you a heart to make choice of his ways? O bless God! There was a time when you went on in giving pleasing to the flesh, and you saw then no better thing than such a kind of life, and the Lord hath been pleased to discover better things to you, so as to make you renounce your former ways, and to make choice of another way, in which your souls have found other manner of comforts, and satisfactions, and contentments than ever you did before. Bless God as David did: "Blessed be the Lord who hath given me counsel"...Seeing God hath thus inclined your heart to himself, be for ever established in your choice: seeing God hath shown to you his ways, as Pilate said in another case, "That I have written I have written": so say you, "That I have chosen I have chosen." --Jeremiah Burroughs, in "Moses his Choice."

Verse 173, 174. -- *I have chosen.* My delight. Cheerfulness accompanies election of a thing. Lumpishness is a sign we never chose it, but were forced to it. Such cheerfulness in service procures cheerfulness in mercies: [Isaiah 64:5](#), "Thou meetest him that rejoiceth and worketh righteousness." He puts to his hand to help such an one. Christ loves not melancholy and phlegmatic service; such a temper in acts of obedience is a disgrace to God and to religion: to God, it betrays us to have jealous thoughts of God, as though he were a hard master; to religion, it makes others think duties are

drudgeries, and not privileges.

--Stephen Charnock.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 173. --

1. "To will is present with me."
2. "How to perform that which I would, I find not."
3. "Help. Lord."

Verse 173. --

1. Help needed to keep the divine precepts.
2. Help sought: "Let thy hand," etc. We should choose nothing and do nothing in which we cannot ask help from God.

--G.R.

Verse 173. --

1. God's Hand.
 - a. Its warm hold (John 5:29).
- (b) Its wealth of contents (Psalms 104:28).
- (c) Its heavy blow (Psalms 39:10).
- (d) Its weight (1 Samuel 5:11).
- (e) Its saving reach (Isaiah 54:1).
- (f) Its sweet shadow (Isaiah 49:2), etc.
 1. The saint plucks him by the sleeve: "Let thy hand help me."
- (a) His humble representation.
- (b) His down drawing of the hand of God.

--W.B.H.

Verse 173. -- Let Thy hand help me.

1. Thy reconciling hand: "stretched out."
2. Thy comforting hand; like that which touched Daniel and John.
3. Thy supplying hand. "Thou openest thy hand," etc.
4. Thy protecting hand: "all his saints are in thy hand": Deuteronomy 33:3. "Great Shepherd of the sheep."
5. Thy supporting hand: "I will uphold thee."
6. Thy governing hand: "all my times are in thy hand."
7. Thy chastening hand: "Thy hand was heavy upon me."
8. Thy prospering hand: "the hand of the Lord was with," etc.

--W.J.

EXPOSITION

Verse 174. I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD. He speaks like old Jacob on his deathbed; indeed, all saints, both in prayer and in death, appear as one, in word, and deed, and mind. He knew God's salvation, and yet he longed for it; that is to say, he had experienced a share of it, and he was therefore led to expect something yet higher and more complete. There is a salvation yet to come, when we shall be clean delivered from the body of this death, set free from all the turmoil and trouble of this mortal life, raised above the temptations and assaults of Satan, and brought near unto our God, to be like him and with him for ever and ever.

I have longed for thy salvation, O Jehovah; and thy law is my delight. The first clause tells us what the saint longs for, and this informs us what is his present satisfaction. God's law, contained in the ten commandments, gives joy to believers. God's law, that is, the entire Bible, is a well spring of consolation and enjoyment to all who receive it. Though we have not yet reached the fulness of our salvation, yet we find in God's word so much concerning a present salvation that we are even now delighted.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 174. -- *I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD, ere.* The thing which we learn hence out of David's joining these two together, I long for salvation, and thy law is my delight, is this, that it is not enough for a man to say, he longs and desires to be saved, unless he makes a conscience to use the appointed means to bring him thereunto. It had been but hypocrisy in David to say he longed for salvation, if his conscience had not been able to witness with him that the law was his delight. It is mere mockery for a man to say he longeth for bread, and prayeth to God every day to give him his daily bread, if he yet walk in no calling, or else seek to get it by fraud and rapine, not staying himself at all upon God's providence. Who will imagine that a man wishes for health, who either despiseth or neglects the means of his recovery? God hath in his own wisdom appointed a lawful means for every lawful thing; this means, being obediently used, the comfortable obtaining of the end may be confidently looked for; the means being not observed, to think to attain to the end is mere presumption. God will deliver Noah from the flood, but Noah must be "moved with reverence," and "prepare the ark" ([Hebrews 11:7](#)), or else he could not have escaped. He would save Lot from Sodom, but yet Lot must hurry him out quickly, and not look behind him till he have entered Zoar: [Genesis 19:17](#). He was pleased to cure Hezekiah of the plague, but yet Hezekiah must take "a lump of figs, and lay it upon his boil:" [Isaiah 38:21](#). He vouchsafed to preserve Paul and company at sea, yet the sailors must "abide in the ship," else ye cannot be saved, saith Paul: [Acts 27:31](#). --Samuel Hieron, 1572-1617.

Verse 174. -- *I have longed for thy salvation.* It is God's salvation proper that he must desire -- "thy

salvation" -- for nothing else could satisfy his pure mind -- perfect peace with God, perfect purity and perfect hope. Now, if you ask what was God's way of delivering, and what was his way of salvation, the answer is, it was set forth in his word, and was what the Psalmist calls his "law." God's salvation and his law were discerned to be one. "I have longed for thy salvation, O LORD; and thy law is ray delight." -- John Stephen.

Verse 174. -- *I have longed for thy salvations*, O LORD. "Salvation," by the "hand," or arm of Jehovah, (which is often in Scripture a title of Messiah,) hath been the object of the hopes, the desires, and "longing" expectations of the faithful, from Adam to this hour, and will continue so to be until he, who hath already visited us in great humility, shall come again in glorious majesty to complete our redemption and take us to himself. -- George Horne.

Verse 174. -- *I have longed for thy salvation*, O LORD. For a present salvation from the guilt and power of sin, and for future salvation, in the full and everlasting enjoyment of God in heaven. David had the happiness to be a partaker, both of pardoning mercy and of sanctifying grace; yet still he longed for more of this salvation, that is, for a more assured faith of pardoning mercy, and larger measures of sanctifying grace. A gracious soul is insatiable; the more it hath received, the more it desires to receive. Enjoyment, instead of surfeiting, sharpens the appetite. Nay, so sweet is the relishing of spiritual things, that every renewed taste of them quenches the thirst for other things.

Thy law is my delight. Here David chooses the term "law" for denoting the whole revelation of God's will, to remind us of the inseparable connexion between privilege and duty, faith and obedience, holiness and comfort; and to teach us that we ought to be thankful to God for the direction he hath given us in the road to heaven, no less than for the promises by which we are assured of the possession of it. --Robert Walker, 1716--1783.

Verse 174. -- *Thy law is my delight*. Religion will decay or flourish, as it is our duty or our delight. The mind is incapable of continued exertion for duty; but it readily falls in with "delight." Thus our duties become our privileges, while Christ is their source and life. Every step of progress is progress in happiness. This verse of which experience is the best interpreter is the believer's language in his lively, as well as in his fainting state. For the more he knows and enjoys of tim divine presence, the more he longs to know and enjoy it. --Charles Bridges.

Verse 174. -- *Delight*, in the plural, "delights," as in verses 24, 77, 92, 143. God's word is an abundant source of pleasure to his people. --William S. Plumer.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 174. --

1. Jacob's longings.
2. Moses' choice.

Verse 174. -- God's servant drinking at salvation's well, but unsated.

1. Longing yielding to delight.

(a) At God's salvation.

(b) At the rich Scripture inventory.

1. Delight bringing forth further longing.

(a) For deeper discoveries in the word.

(b) Richer experiences in the life.

(c) Heaven's consummation.

--W.B.H.

Verse 174. --

1. Sighings for heaven. Holiness, happiness, God.

2. Sips by the way. The word of God, the will of God, service of God, the God in all.

--W.B.H.

Verse 174. -- I have longed for thy salvation. Thy holy salvation. Thy full salvation. Thy free salvation.

Thy present salvation. Thy permanent salvation. --W.J.

Verse 174. -- I have longed, etc. This longing arises,

1. From a painful consciousness of the need of salvation.

2. From a perception of the glories of God's salvation.

3. From the promises which give assurance of the possibility of obtaining this salvation.

4. From the gracious promptings of the Holy Ghost.

--W.H.J.P.

EXPOSITION

Verse 175. Let my soul live. Fill it full of life, preserve it from wandering into the ways of death, give it to enjoy the indwelling of the Holy Ghost, let it live to the fulness of life, to the utmost possibilities of its new created being.

And it shall praise thee. It shall praise thee for life, for new life, for eternal life, for thou art the Lord and Giver of life. The more it shall live, the more it shall praise, and when it shall live in perfection it shall praise thee in perfection. Spiritual life is prayer and praise.

And let thy judgments help me. While I read the record of what thou hast done, in terror or in love, let me be quickened and developed. While I see thy hand actually at work upon me, and upon others, chastening sin, and smiling upon righteousness, let me be helped both to live aright and to praise thee. Let all thy deeds in providence instruct me, and aid me in the struggle to overcome sin and to practise holiness. This is the second time he has asked for help in this portion; he was always in need of it, and so are we.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 175. -- *Let my soul live*, and it shall praise thee, etc. This verse containeth three things, first, David's petition for life: "Let my soul live." "My soul;" that is, myself: the soul is put for the whole man. The contrary: "Let me die with the Philistines," said Samson (Judges 21:30); Hebrew, margin, "Let my soul die." His life was sought after by the cruelty of his enemies; and he desireth God to keep him alive.

Secondly, His argument from the aim of his life; "And it shall praise thee." The glorifying of God was his aim. The fruit of all God's benefits to profit us, and praise God. David professes that all the days of his life he would live in the sense and acknowledgment of such a benefit.

Thirdly, The ground of his hope and confidence in the last clause: "And let thy judgments help me." Our hopes of help are grounded on God's judgments, whereby is meant his word. There are judgments decreed, judgments executed; doctrinal judgments, and providential judgments, That place intimates the distinction: "Because sentence against an evil work is not executed speedily, therefore the heart of the sons of men is fully set in them to do evil:" Ecclesiastes 8:11. There is *sententia lata et dilata*. Here God's judgments are put for the sentence pronounced; and chiefly for one part of them, the promises of grace. As also, "I have hoped in thy judgments:" Ps 119:43. Promises are the objects of hope. --Thomas Manton.

Verse 175. -- *Let my soul live*. What is the life that the Psalmist is now praying for, but the salvation for which he had just expressed his longing? The taste that he has received makes him hunger for a higher and more continued enjoyment -- not for selfish gratification, but that he might employ himself in the praise of his God. Indeed, as we have drawn towards the close of this Psalm, we cannot but have observed that character of praise to pervade his experience, which has been generally remarked in the concluding Psalms of this sacred book. Much do we lose of spiritual strength for want of occupying ourselves more in the exercise of praise. --Charles Bridges.

Verse 175. -- *Live and praise*. The saint improves his earthly things for an heavenly end. Where layest thou up thy treasure? Dost thou bestow it on thy voluptuous appetite, thy hawks and thy hounds; or dost thou lock it up in the bosom of Christ's poor members? What use makest thou of thy honour and greatness? To strengthen the hands of the godly or the wicked? And so of all thy other temporal enjoyments. A gracious heart improves them for God; when a saint prays for these things, he hath an eye to some heavenly end. If David prays for life, it is not that he may live, but "live and praise God." When he was driven from his regal throne by the rebellious arms of Absalom see what his desire and hope were, 2 Samuel 15:25: "The king said unto Zadok, Carry back the ark of God into the city: if I shall find favour in the eyes of the LORD, he will bring me again, and shew me both it, and his habitation." Mark, not shew me my crown, my palace, but the ark, the house of God. --William Gurrall.

Verse 175. -- *Live and praise*. Liveliness of soul is the Spirit's gift, and it will show itself in abounding

praises. --Henry Law.

Verse 175. -- *Let thy judgments help me.* In the second clause it would be harsh to understand the word "judgments" of the commandments, to which it does not properly belong to give help. It seems, then, that the prophet, perceiving himself liable to numberless calamities -- even as the faithful, by reason of the unbridled license of the wicked, dwell in this world as sheep among wolves, -- calls upon God to protect him in the way of restraining, by his secret providence, the wicked from doing him harm. It is a very profitable doctrine, when things in the world are in a state of great confusion, and when our safety is in danger amid so many and varied storms, to lift up our eyes to the judgments of God, and to seek a remedy in them. --John Calvin.

Verse 175, 176. --

Though like a sheep estranged I stray,

Yet have I not renounced thy way.

Thine hand extend; thine own reclaim;

Grant me to live, and praise thy name.

Richard Mant.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 175. --

1. The highest life.
2. The highest occupation.
3. Both dependent on the highest aid.

Verse 175. -- Praise.

1. The noblest employment of life -- to praise God.
2. The noblest presentation of praise -- the holy life.
3. The noblest application of divine judgments -- to inspire praise.

EXPOSITION

Verse 176. This is the finale, the conclusion of the whole matter: I have gone astray like a lost sheep -- often, wilfully, wantonly, and even hopelessly, but for thine interposing grace. In times gone by, before I was afflicted, and before thou hadst fully taught me thy statutes, I went astray. "I went astray" from the practical precepts, from the instructive doctrines, and from the heavenly experiences which thou hadst set before me. I lost my road, and I lost myself. Even now I am apt to wander, and, in fact, have roamed already; therefore, Lord, restore me.

Seek thy servant. He was not like a dog, that somehow or other can find its way back; but he was like a lost sheep, which goes further and further away from home; yet still he was a sheep, and the Lord's sheep, his property, and precious in his sight, and therefore he hoped to be sought in order to be

restored. However far he might have wandered he was still not only a sheep, but God's "servant," and therefore he desired to be in his Master's house again, and once more honoured with commissions for his Lord. Had he been only a lost sheep he would not have prayed to be sought; but being also a "servant" he had the power to pray. He cries, "See thy servant," and he hopes to be not only sought, but forgiven, accepted, and taken into work again by his gracious Master.

Notice this confession; many times in the psalm David has defended his own innocence against foul mouthed accusers, but when he comes into the presence of the Lord his God he is ready enough to confess his transgressions. He here sums up, not only his past, but even his present life, under the image of a sheep which has broken from its pasture, forsaken the flock, left the shepherd, and brought itself into the wild wilderness, where it has become as a lost thing. The sheep bleats, and David prays, "Seek thy servant."

His argument is a forcible one, -- for I do not forget thy commandments. I know the right, I approve and admire the right, what is more, I love the light, and long for it. I cannot be satisfied to continue in sin, I must be restored to the ways Of righteousness. I have a home sickness after my God, I pine after the ways of peace; I do not and I cannot forget thy commandments, nor cease to know that I am always happiest and safest when I scrupulously obey them, and find all my joy in doing so. Now, if the grace of God enables us to maintain in our hearts the loving memory of God's commandments it will surely yet restore us to practical holiness. That man cannot be utterly lost whose heart is still with God. If he be gone astray in many respects, yet still, if he be true in his soul's inmost desires, he will be found again, and fully restored. Yet let the reader remember the first verse of the psalm while he reads the last: the major blessedness lies not in being restored from wandering, but in being upheld in a blameless way even to the end. Be it ours to keep the crown of the causeway, never leaving the King's highway for By path Meadow, or any other flowery path of sin. May the Lord uphold us even to the end. Yet even then we shall not be able to boast with the Pharisee, but shall still pray with the publican, "God be merciful to me a sinner; "and with the Psalmist, "Seek thy servant."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Verse 176. -- *I have gone astray like a lost sheep.* Though a sheep go astray, yet it is soon called back by the voice of the shepherd: "My sheep hear my voice." Thus David when he went against Nabal was called back by the Lord's voice in a woman; and when he had slain Uriah he was brought again by Nathan. And therefore if we will be sheep, then though we sometimes go astray, yet we must be easily reclaimed. --Richard Greenhorn.

Verse 176. -- *I have gone astray like a lost sheep,* driven out by storm, or dark day, or by the hunting of the dogs chased out from the rest of the flock. --David Dickson.

Verse 176. -- *I have gone astray like a lost sheep,* etc. And this is all the conclusion -- "a lost sheep!" This long psalm of ascriptions, praises, avowals, resolves, high hopes, ends in this, that he is a

perishing sheep. But, stay, there is hope -- "Seek thy servant." "I have gone astray like a lost sheep." The original is of the most extensive range, comprehending all time past, and also the habitual tendencies of the man. The believer feels that he had gone astray when the grace of God found him; that he had gone astray many times, had not the grace of God prevented it. He feels that he went astray on such and such unhappy occasions. He also feels that he hath gone astray in all that he hath done; and indeed that he is astray now. But the word expresses the habitual tendency likewise -- I go astray like a lost sheep, and this rendering is in keeping with the prayer, "Seek thy servant." The third member is also properly rendered in keeping with it: "I go astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments." All this is descriptive of the remaining corruption that is in the believer. He is not unmindful of the Lord; he has the root of the matter in him, the seed of divine life; yet he does go astray; whence the necessity of the prayer: "Seek thy servant." Isaiah's description of men, although conveyed in the same terms, is evidently more sweeping, as the context words show: "All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord hath laid on him the iniquity of us all." This would seem to apply to the race of man. Rather is the experience of the Psalmist similar to that described by the apostle Paul: "I find a law, that when I would do good, evil is present with me. For I delight in the law of God, after the inward man: But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members." And the Psalmist had the same remedy at the early period, as had the apostle in the later times; for God's salvation is one. The Psalmist's remedy was, "Seek thy servant;" the apostle's: "O wretched man that I am! Who shall deliver me from the body of this death? I thank God through Jesus Christ our Lord." --John Stephen.

Verse 176. -- *I have gone astray.* The original word signifies either the turning of the foot, or the turning of the heart, or both, out of the way. "I have gone astray like a lost sheep;" that is, I have been deceived, and so have gone out of the way of thy holy commandments. Satan is an ill guide, and our hearts are no better: he that follows either, quickly loseth himself; and until God seeketh us (as David prays in the next words), we cannot find our way when we are once out of it. --Joseph Caryl.

Verse 176. -- *I have gone astray.* Gotthold one day saw a farmer carefully counting his sheep as they came from the field. Happening at the time to be in an anxious and sorrowful mood, he gave vent to his feelings and said: Why art thou cast down, my soul? and why disquieted with vexing thoughts? Surely thou must be dear to the Most High as his lambs are to this farmer. Art thou not better than many sheep? Is not Jesus Christ thy shepherd? Has not he risked his blood and life for thee? Hast thou no interest in his words: "I give unto my sheep eternal life, and they shall never perish, neither shall any pluck them out of my hand"? John 10:28. This man is numbering his flock; and thinkest thou that God does not also count and care for his believing children and elect, especially as his beloved Son has averred, that the very hairs of our head are all numbered? Mt 10:30. During the day, I may

perhaps have gone out of the way, and heedlessly followed my own devices; still, at the approach of evening, when the faithful Shepherd counts his lambs, he will mark my absence, and graciously seek and bring me back. Lord Jesus, "I have gone astray like a lost sheep; seek thy servant; for I do not forget thy commandments." --Christian Striver (1629-1693), in Gotthold's Emblems.

Verse 176. -- *I have gone astray*, etc. Who is called "the man after God's own heart"? David, the Hebrew king, had fallen into sins enough -- blackest crimes -- there was no want of sin. And, therefore, unbelievers sneer, and ask, "Is this your man after God's own heart?" The sneer, it seems to me, is but a shallow one. What are faults, what are the outward details of a life, if the inner secret of it, the remorse, temptations, the often baffled, never ended struggle of it, be forgotten?...David's life and history, as written for us in those psalms of his, I consider to be the truest emblem ever given us of a man's moral progress and warfare here below. All earnest souls will ever discover in it the faithful struggle of an earnest human soul towards what is good and best. Struggle often baffled -- sore baffled -- driven as into entire wreck; yet a struggle never ended, ever with tears, repentance, true unconquerable purpose begun anew. --Thomas Carlyle, (1795-1881), in "Heroes and Hero Worship."

Verse 176. -- *For I do not forget thy commandments*. In all my wandering; with my consciousness of error; with my sense of guilt; I still do feel that I love thy law, thy service, thy commandments. They are the joy of my heart, and I desire to be recalled from all my wanderings, that I may find perfect happiness in thee and in thy service evermore. Such is the earnest wish of every regenerated heart. For as such a one may have wandered from God, yet he is conscious of true attachment to him and his service; he desires and earnestly prays that he may be "sought out," brought back, and kept from wandering any more. --Albert Barnes.

Verse 176. -- *For I do not forget thy commandments*. The godly never so fall but there remains in them some grace, which reserves a hope of medicine to cure them: so David here. Albeit he transgressed some of God's commandments, yet he fell not into any full oblivion of them. --William Cowper.

Verse 176. -- *I do not think that there could possibly be a more appropriate conclusion of such a Psalm as this*, so full of the varied experience and the ever changing frames and feelings even of a child of God, in the sunshine and the cloud, in the calm and in the storm, than this ever clinging sense of his propensity to wander, and the expression of his utter inability to find his way back without the Lord's guiding hand to restore him; and at the same time with it all, his fixed and abiding determination never to forget the Lord's commandments. What an insight into our poor wayward hearts does this verse give us -- not merely liable to wander, but ever wandering, ever losing our way, ever stumbling on the dark mountains, even while cleaving to God's commandments! But at the same time what a prayer does it put into our mouths, "Seek thy servant," -- "I am thine, save me." Yes, blessed be God! there is One mighty to save. "Kept by the power of God through faith unto salvation."

--Barton Bouchier.

As far as I have been able, as far as I have been aided by the Lord, I have treated throughout, and expounded, this great Psalm. A task which more able and learned expositors have performed, or will perform better; nevertheless, my services were not to be withheld from it on that account, when my brethren earnestly required it of me. -- Augustine.

HINTS FOR PASTORS AND LAYPERSONS

Verse 176. --

1. My confession: "I have gone astray."
2. My profession: "thy servant."
3. My petition: "seek thy servant."
4. My plea: "for I do not forget," etc.

Verse 176. --

1. The confession: "I have gone astray."
2. The petition: "Seek thy servant."
3. The plea: "For I do not," etc.

--G.R.

Verse 176. -- The last verse as such. The closing minor cadence.

1. The highest flights of human devotion must end in confession of sin: "I have gone astray."
2. The sincerest professions of human fidelity must give place to the acknowledgment of helplessness: "seek thy servant."
3. The loftiest human declarations of love to God's law must come down to The mournful acknowledgment that we have only not forgotten it.

--C.A.D.

WORKS WRITTEN ABOUT THE 119 PSALM. IN SPURGEON'S DAY

Two and Twentie Sermons of Maister Iohn Caluin. In which Sermons is most religiously handled, the hundredth and nineteenth Psalme of David, by eight verses apart according to the Hebrew Alphabet. Translated out of French into Englishe by Thomas Stocker. Imprinted at London for John Harison and Thomas Man. 1580. 4to

"An Exposition on the 119 Psalme." In "The Workes of...M. RICHARD GREENHAM" pp. 379-608, folio, 1612.

A Holy Alphabet for Sion's Scholars; Full of Spiritval Instrvctions, and Heavenly Consolations, to direct and encourage them in their Progresse towards the New Jerusaleum: Deliuered, by way of Commentary vpon the whole 119 Psalme. By WILLIAM COWPER, Minister of God's Word, and B. of Galloway...4to. London... 1613. Also in Bishop Cowper's Works pp. 359 474, folio, 1629.

"Summary and Holy Observations collected out of the route first Octonaries or parts of the hundred

and nineteenth Psalme."

The above will be found in "A Commentarie upon the first and second chapters of Saint Paul to the Colossians...together with divers places of Scripture briefly explained. By Mr. Paul Bayne, B. D. London: 1635." 4to

One Hundred and Ninety Sermons on the Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm. By the Rev. THOMAS MANTON, D.D., Folio. London, 1725. Also 3 vols., 8vo., 1842; 3 vols. (with Life), 1845; and in vols. 7,8, and 9 of Nichol's (now Nisbet's) edition of Manton's Works.

An Hundred, Seventy and Six, SACRED OBSERVATIONS. Upon the Several VERSES of (The Sweetest of PSALMES) the Hundred and Nineteenth PSALM, Stated, Opened, and Applied (as a brief Exposition thereon) to the People of WEST COWES, in the Isle of WIGHT, being the Exercise of my Publick Ministry, in their New Chappel, lately Consecrated by the Right Reverend Father in God, George Lord Bishop of WINTON.

The preceding forms the latter part of a very small 8 vo. entitled "MOSES REVIVED," on "The Unlawfulness of Eating Blood"; by John Moore, 1669. The exposition is simply worthless, and we notice it merely to save collectors of Psalm literature trouble and expense.

Exposition of Psalm 119 as illustrative of the Character and Exercises of Christian Experience. By the Rev. CHARLES BRIDGES, M.A. 12mo 1827, and many subsequent editions.

Lord's Day Literature: or, Illustrations of the Book of Psalms, from the Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm consecutively. By R. B. SANDERSON, Esq., B.A. 12mo 1842.

The Utterance of the 119. Psalm; expounded in a Series of Lectures. By the Rev. JOHN STEPHEN, A.M. Free John Knox's, Aberdeen... 1861. 2mo

Psalm 120

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Suddenly we have left the continent of the vast Hundred and Nineteenth Psalm for the islands and islets of the Songs of Degrees. It may be well to engage in protracted devotion upon a special occasion, but this must cast no slur upon the sacred brevities which sanctify the godly life day by day. He who inspired the longest psalm was equally the author of the short compositions which follow it.

TITLE. A SONG OF DEGREES. We have already devoted a sufficient space to the consideration of this title in its application to this psalm and the fourteen compositions which succeed it. These appear to us to be Pilgrim Psalms, but we are not sure that they were always sung in company; for many of them are in the first person singular. No doubt there were solitary pilgrims as well as troops who went

to the house of God in company, and for these lonely ones hymns were prepared.

SUBJECT. A certain author supposes that this hymn was sung by an Israelite upon leaving his house to go up to Jerusalem. He thinks that the good man had suffered from the slander of his neighbours, and was glad to get away from their gossip, and spend his time in the happier engagements of the holy feasts. It may be so, but we hope that pious people were not so foolish as to sing about their bad neighbours when they were leaving them, for a few days. If they wished to leave their houses in safety, and to come home to kind surroundings, it would have been the height of folly to provoke those whom they were leaving behind by singing aloud a psalm of complaint against them. We do not know why this ode is placed first among the Psalms of Degrees, and we had rather hazard no conjecture of our own. We prefer the old summary of the translators—"David prayeth against Doeg"—to any far fetched supposition: and if this be the scope of the psalm, we see at once why it suggested itself to David at the station where the ark abode, and from which he had come to remove it. He came to fetch away the ark, and at the place where he found it he thought of Doeg, and poured out his complaint concerning him. The author had been grievously calumniated, and had been tortured into bitterness by the false charges of his persecutors, and here is his appeal to the great Arbiter of right and wrong before whose judgment seal no man shall suffer from slanderous tongues.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *In my distress.* Slander occasions distress of the most grievous kind. Those who have felt the edge of a cruel tongue know assuredly that it is sharper than the sword. Calumny rouses our indignation by a sense of injustice, and yet we find ourselves helpless to fight with the evil, or to act in our own defence. We could ward off the strokes of a cutlass, but we have no shield against a liar's tongue. We do not know who was the father of the falsehood, nor where it was born, nor where it has gone, nor how to follow it, nor how to stay its withering influence. We are perplexed, and know not which way to turn. Like the plague of flies in Egypt, it baffles opposition, and few can stand before it. Detraction touches us in the most tender point, cuts to the quick, and leaves a venom behind which it is difficult to extract. In all ways it is a sore distress to come under the power of "slander, the foulest whelp of sin." Even in such distress we need not hesitate to cry unto the Lord. Silence to man and prayer to God are the best cures for the evil of slander.

I cried unto the LORD (or Jehovah). The wisest course that he could follow. It is of little use to appeal to our fellows on the matter of slander, for the more we stir in it the more it spreads; it is of no avail to appeal to the honour of the slanderers, for they have none, and the most piteous demands for justice will only increase their malignity and encourage them to fresh insult. As well plead with panthers and wolves as with black hearted traducers. However, when cries to man would be our weakness, cries to

God will be our strength. To whom should children cry but to their father? Does not some good come even out of that vile thing, falsehood, when it drives us to our knees and to our God? "And he heard me". Yes, Jehovah hears. He is the living God, and hence prayer to him is reasonable and profitable. The Psalmist remembered and recorded this instance of prayer hearing, for it had evidently much affected him; and now he rehearses it for the glory of God and the good of his brethren. "The righteous cry and the Lord heareth them". The ear of our God is not deaf, nor even heavy. He listens attentively, he catches the first accent of supplication; he makes each of his children confess,—"he heard me". When we are slandered it is a joy that the Lord knows us, and cannot be made to doubt our uprightness: he will not hear the lie against us, but he will hear our prayer against the lie.

If these psalms were sung at the ascent of the ark to Mount Zion, and then afterwards by the pilgrims to Jerusalem at the annual festivals and at the return from Babylon, we shall find in the life of David a reason for this being made the first of them. Did not this servant of God meet with Doeg the Edomite when he enquired of the oracle by Abiathar, and did not that wretched creature believe him and betray him to Saul? This made a very painful and permanent impression upon David's memory, and therefore in commencing the ark journey he poured out his lament before the Lord, concerning the great and monstrous wrong of "that dog of a Doeg", as Trapp wittily calls him. The poet, like the preacher, may find it to his advantage to "begin low, "for then he has the more room to rise: the next Psalm is a full octave above the present mournful hymn. Whenever we are abused it may console us to see that we are not alone in our misery we are traversing a road upon which David left his footprints.

Verse 2. *Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips.* It will need divine power to save a man from these deadly instruments. Lips are soft: but when they are lying lips they suck away the life of character and are as murderous as razors. Lips should never be red with the blood of honest men's reputes, nor salved with malicious falsehoods. David says, "Deliver my soul": the soul, the life of the man, is endangered by lying lips; cobras are not more venomous, nor devils themselves more pitiless. Some seem to lie for lying sake, it is their sport and spirit: their lips deserve to be kissed with a hot iron; but it is not for the friends of Jesus to render to men according to their deserts. Oh for a dumb generation rather than a lying one! The faculty of speech becomes a curse when it is degraded into a mean weapon for smiting men behind their backs. We need to be delivered from slander by the Lord's restraint upon wicked tongues, or else to be delivered out of it by having our good name cleared from the liar's calumny. And from a deceitful tongue This is rather worse than downright falsehood. Those who fawn and flatter, and all the while have enmity in their hearts, are horrible beings; they are the seed of the devil, and he worketh in them after his own deceptive nature. Better to meet wild beasts and serpents than deceivers: these are a kind of monster whose birth is from beneath, and whose end lies far below. It should be a warning to liars and deceivers when they see that all good men pray

against them, and that even bad men are afraid of them. Here is to the believer good cause for prayer. "Deliver us from evil", may be used with emphasis concerning this business. From gossips, talebearers, writers of anonymous letters, forgers of newspaper paragraphs, and all sorts of liars, good Lord deliver us!

Verse 3. *What shall be given unto thee?* What is the expected guerdon of slander? It ought to be something great to make it worth while to work in so foul an atmosphere and to ruin one's soul. Could a thousand worlds be bribe enough for such villainous deeds? The liar shall have no welcome recompense: he shall meet with his deserts; but what shall they be? What punishment can equal his crime? The Psalmist seems lost to suggest a fitting punishment. It is the worst of offences—this detraction, calumny, and slander. Judgment sharp and crushing would be measured out to it if men were visited for their transgressions. But what punishment could be heavy enough? What form shall the chastisement take? O liar, "what shall be given unto thee?" Or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue? How shalt thou be visited? The law of retaliation can hardly meet the case, since none can slander the slanderer, he is too black to be blackened; neither would any of us blacken him if we could. Wretched being! He fights with weapons which true men cannot touch. Like the cuttlefish, he surrounds himself with an inky blackness into which honest men cannot penetrate. Like the foul skunk, he emits an odour of falsehood which cannot be endured by the true; and therefore he often escapes, unchastised by those whom he has most injured. His crime, in a certain sense, becomes his shield; men do not care to encounter so base a foe. But what will God do with lying tongues? He has uttered his most terrible threats against them, and he will terribly execute them in due time.

Verse 4. *Sharp arrows of the mighty.* Swift, sure, and sharp shall be the judgment. Their words were as arrows, and so shall their punishment be. God will see to it that their punishment shall be comparable to an arrow keen in itself, and driven home with all the force with which a mighty man shoots it from his bow of steel,—"sharp arrows of the mighty". Nor shall one form of judgment suffice to avenge this complicated sin. The slanderer shall feel woes comparable to coals of juniper, which are quick in flaming, fierce in blazing, and long in burning. He shall feel sharp arrows and sharper fires. Awful doom! All liars shall have their portion in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone. Their worm dieth not, and their fire is not quenched. Juniper coals long retain their heat, but hell burneth ever, and the deceitful tongue may not deceive itself with the hope of escape from the fire which it has kindled. What a crime is this to which the All merciful allots a doom so dreadful! Let us hate it with perfect hatred. It is better to be the victim of slander than, to be the author of it. The shafts of calumny will miss the mark, but not so the arrows of God: the coals of malice will cool, but not the fire of justice. Shun slander as you would avoid hell.

Verse 5. *Woe is me, that sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!* Gracious men are vexed with the conversation of the wicked. Our poet felt himself to be as ill at ease among lying

neighbours as if he had lived among savages and cannibals. The traitors around him were as bad as the unspeakable Turk. He cries "Woe is me!" Their sin appalled him, their enmity galled him. He had some hope from the fact that he was only a sojourner in Mesech; but as years rolled on the time dragged heavily, and he feared that he might call himself a dweller in Kedar. The wandering tribes to whom he refers were constantly at war with one another; it was their habit to travel armed to the teeth; they were a kind of plundering gypsies, with their hand against every man and every man's hand against them; and to these he compared the false hearted ones who had assailed his character. Those who defame the righteous are worse than cannibals; for savages only eat men after they are dead, but these wretches eat them up alive.

"Woe's me that I in Mesech am

A sojourner so long;

That I in tabernacles dwell

To Kedar that belong.

My soul with him that hateth peace

Hath long a dweller been;

I am for peace; but when I speak,

For battle they are keen.

My soul distracted mourns and pines

To reach that peaceful short,

Where all the weary are at rest,

And troublers vex no more."

Verse 6. *My soul hath long dwelt with him that hateth peace.* Long, long enough, too long had he been an exile among such barbarians. A peace maker is a blessing, but a peace hater is a curse. To lodge with such for a night is dangerous, but to dwell with them is horrible. The verse may apply to any one of the Psalmist's detractors: he had seen enough of him and pined to quit such company. Perhaps the sweet singer did not at first detect the nature of the man, for he was a deceiver; and when he did discover him he found himself unable to shake him off, and so was compelled to abide with him. Thoughts of Doeg, Saul, Ahithophel, and the sons of Zeruah come to our mind,—these last, not as enemies, but as hot blooded soldiers who were often too strong for David. What a change for the man of God from the quietude of the sheepfold to the turmoil of court and the tumult of combat! How he must have longed to lay aside his sceptre, and to resume his crook. He felt the time of his dwelling with quarrelsome spirits to be long, too long; and he only endured it because, as the Prayer book version has it, he was constrained so to abide.

Verse 7. *I am for peace.* Properly, "I am peace"; desirous of peace, peaceful, forbearing,—in fact, peace itself. But when I speak, they are for war. My kindest words appear to provoke them, and they

are at daggers drawn at once. Nothing pleases them; if I am silent they count me morose, and if I open my mouth they cavil and controvert. Let those who dwell with such pugilistic company console themselves with the remembrance that both David and David's Lord endured the same trial. It is the lot of the saints to find foes even in their own households. Others besides David dwelt in the place of dragons. Others besides Daniel have been cast into a den of lions. Meanwhile, let those who are in quiet resting places and peaceful habitations be greatly grateful for such ease. "Deus nobis haec otia fecit": God has given us this tranquillity. Be it ours never to inflict upon others that from which we have been screened ourselves.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

TITLE. "A Song of Degrees". A most excellent song, Tremellius rendereth it; and so indeed this and the fourteen following are, both for the matter, and for the form or manner of expression, which is wondrous short and sweet, as the very epigrams of the Holy Ghost himself, wherein each verse may well stand for an oracle. And in this sense, "adam hammahalah", or, a man of degrees, is put for an eminent or excellent man: 1Ch 17:17. Others understand it otherwise; wherein they have good leave to abound in their own sense; an error here is not dangerous.—*John Trapp.*

Whole Psalm. In the interpretation of these psalms, which sees in them the "degrees" of Christian virtues, this psalm aptly describes the first of such steps—the renunciation of the evil and vanity of the world. It thus divides itself into two parts.

1. The Psalmist, in the person of one beginning the grades of virtue, finds many opponents in the shape of slanderers and ill advisers.

2. He laments the admixture of evil—"Woe is me".—*H. T. Armfield.*

Whole Psalm. It is a painful but useful lesson which is taught by this first of the Pilgrim Psalms, that all who manifest a resolution to obey the commands and seek the favour of God, may expect to encounter opposition and reproach in such a course... This these worshippers of old found when preparing to seek the Lord in his Temple. They were watched in their preparation by malignant eyes; they were followed to the house of prayer by the contempt and insinuations of bitter tongues. But their refuge is in him they worship; and, firmly convinced that he never can forsake his servants, they look up through the cloud of obloquy to his throne, and implore the succour which they know that his children shall ever find there. "O Lord, in this my trouble deliver my soul".—*Robert Nisbet.*

Whole Psalm. The pilgrims were leaving home; and lying lips commonly attack the absent. They were about to join the pilgrim caravan; and in the excitements of social intercourse their own lips might easily deviate from truth. The psalm, moreover, breathes an intense longing for peace; and in this world of strife and confusion, when is that longing inappropriate? Is it any marvel that a Hebrew, with a deep spiritual longing for peace, should cry as he started for the Temple, "Let me get out of all

that, at least for a time. Let me be quit of this fever and strain, free from the vain turbulence and conflicting noises of the world. Let me rest and recreate myself a while in the sacred asylum and sanctuary of the God of peace. God of peace, grant me thy peace as I worship in thy presence; and let me find a bettered world when I come back to it, or at least bring a bettered and more patient heart to its duties and strifes".—*Samuel Cox*.

Verse 1. *In my distress I cried unto the Lord*, etc. See the wondrous advantage of trouble,—that it makes us call upon God; and again see the wondrous readiness of mercy, that when we call he heareth us! Very blessed are they that mourn while they are travelling the long upward journey from the Galilee of the Gentiles of this lower world to the heavenly Jerusalem, the high and holy city of the saints of God.—*J.W. Burgon, in "A Plain Commentary."*

Verse 1. *In my distress.* God's help is seasonable; it comes when we need it. Christ is a seasonable good... For the soul to be dark, and for Christ to enlighten it; for the soul to be dead, and Christ to enliven it; for the soul to be doubting, and for Christ to resolve it; and for the soul to be distressed, and for Christ to relieve it; is not this in season? For a soul to be hard, and for Christ to soften it; for a soul to be haughty, and for Christ to humble it; for a soul to be tempted, and for Christ to succour it; and for a soul to be wounded, and for Christ to heal it? Is not this in season?—*R. Mayhew, 1679.*

Verse 1. *Cried. Heard.* The verbs are in the past tense, but do not refer merely to a past occasion. Past experience and present are here combined. From the past he draws encouragement for the present.—*J.J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 1. *And he heard me.* The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man availeth much: Jas 5:16; Zec 13:9. He that prayeth ardently, speeds assuredly (Ps 91:15); and the delayed return of prayer should be carefully observed and thankfully improved: Ps 66:20.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2. *Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips*, etc. An unbridled tongue is "vehiculum Diaboli", the chariot of the Devil, wherein he rides in triumph. Greenhorn doth describe the tongue prettily by contraries, or diversities: "It is a little piece of flesh, small in quantity, but mighty in quality; it is soft, but slippery; it goeth lightly, but falleth heavily; it striketh soft, but woundeth sore; it goeth out quickly, but burneth vehemently; it pierceth deep, and therefore not healed speedily; it hath liberty granted easily to go forth but it will find no means easily to return home; and being once inflamed with Satan's bellows, it is like the fire of hell." The course of an unruly tongue is to proceed from evil to worse, to begin with foolishness, and go on with bitterness, and to end in mischief and madness. See Ec 10:13. The Jew's conference with our Saviour began with arguments: "We be Abraham's seed," said they, etc.; but proceeded to blasphemies: "Say we not well that thou art a Samaritan, and hast a devil?" and ended in cruelty: "Then took they up stones to cast at him." Joh 8:33,48,59. This also is the base disposition of a bad tongue to hate those whom it afflicts: Pr 26:28. The mischief of the tongue may further appear by the mercy of being delivered from it, for,

1. So God hath promised it (Joh 5:15,21). "God saveth the poor from the sword, from their mouth, and from the hand of the mighty, "and "thou shalt be hid from the scourge of the tongue, "or from being betongued, as some render it, that is, from being, as it were, caned or cudgelled with the tongues of others. "Thou shalt hide them in the secret of thy presence from the pride of man: thou shalt keep them secretly in a pavilion from the strife of tongues" (Ps 31:20); that is, from all calumnies, reproaches, evil speakings of all kinds. God will preserve the good names of his people from the blots and bespatterings of malicious men, as kings protect their favourites against slanders and clamours.

2. So the saints have prayed for it, as David: "Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips, and from a deceitful tongue."—*Edward Reyner*.

Verse 2. *Deliver my soul, O Lord, from lying lips*, etc. In the drop of venom which distils from the sting of the smallest insect, or the spike of the nettle leaf, there is concentrated the quintessence of a poison so subtle that the microscope cannot distinguish it, and yet so virulent that it can inflame the blood, irritate the whole constitution, and convert day and night into restless misery; so it is sometimes with the words of the slanderer.—*Frederick William Robertson*.

Verse 2. *Lying lips* bore false witness against him, or with a "deceitful tongue" tried to ensnare him, and to draw something from him, on which they might ground an accusation.—*George Horne*.

Verse 3. *What shall be given unto thee? or what shall be done unto thee, thou false tongue?* What dost thou expect, "thou false tongue, "in pleading a bad cause? What fee or reward hast thou for being an accuser instead of an advocate? What shall it profit thee (as we put it in the margin); what shalt thou gain by thy deceitful tongue? or (as our margin hath it again), "What shall the deceitful tongue give unto thee, "that thou goest about slandering thy brother, and tearing his good name? Hath thy deceitful tongue houses or lands to give thee? hath it any treasures of gold and silver to bestow upon thee? Surely, as itself is so it gives only "Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper" as the next verse intimates... The tongue indeed will speak often in these cases gratis, or without a fee; but it never doth without danger and damage to the speaker. As such speakers shoot arrows, like the arrows of the mighty, and as they scatter coals, like the coals of juniper, so they usually get an arrow in their own sides, and not only burn their fingers, but heap coals of fire upon their own heads. Ungodly men will do mischief to other men purely for mischief's sake: yet when once mischief is done it proves most mischievous to the doers of it; and while they hold their brethren's heaviness a profit, though they are never the better, they shall feel and find themselves in a short time much the worse.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verses 3, 4. What shall be given? Intimating that his enemy expected some great reward for his malice against David; but, saith the Psalmist, he shall have "sharp arrows of the Almighty, with coals of juniper"; as if he had said, "Whatever reward he have from men, this shall be his reward from

God".—*John Jackson*, in "*The Morning Exercises*," 1661.

Verses 3, 4. The victim of slander, in these heavy complaints he has just uttered, may be indulging in excess, which pious friends are represented as coming forward to reprove by reminding him how little a true servant of God can be really injured by slander. Hence, as in the margin of our Bibles, the psalm assumes the dramatic form, and represents his fellow worshippers as asking the complainer: What evil, O servant of God, can the false tongue give to thee! Nursling of Omnipotence, what can it do to thee... The answer of suffering nature and bleeding peace still returns: "It is like the sharp arrows of the mighty, like coals of juniper". An arrow from the bow of a mighty warrior, that flies unseen and unsuspected to its mark, and whose presence is only known when it quivers in the victim's heart, not unaptly represents the silent and deadly flight of slander; while the fire which the desert pilgrim kindles on the sand, from the dry roots of the juniper, a wood which, of all that are known to him, throws out the fiercest and most continued heat, is not less powerfully descriptive of the intense pain and the lasting injury of a false and malicious tongue.—*Robert Nisbet*.

Verses 3, 4. Coals of juniper, these "shall be given unto thee". As if he had said, thou shalt have the hottest coals, such coals as will maintain heat longest, implying that the hottest and most lasting wrath of God should be their portion. Some naturalists say that coals of juniper raked up in the ashes will keep fire a whole year; but I stay not upon this.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 4. *Sharp arrows of the mighty, with coals of juniper.* The world's sin is the world's punishment. A correspondence is frequently observed between the transgression and the retribution... This law of correspondence seem to be here indicated. Similar figures are employed to express the offence and the punishment of the wicked. "They bend their tongue like a bow for lies." "Who whet their tongue like a sword, and bend their bows to shoot in secret at the perfect." But let the slanderer be upon his guard. There is another bow besides that in his possession. The arrows are sharp and burning; and when they are sent from the bow by the arm of Omnipotence, nothing can resist their force, and in mortal agony his enemies bite the dust. "He hath bent his bow, and made it ready. He hath also prepared for him the instruments of death: He ordaineth his arrows against the persecutors." "God shall shoot at them with an arrow; suddenly shall they be wounded; so shall they make their own tongue fall upon themselves." This train of thought is also pursued in the illustration of fire. James compares the tongue of slander to fire. "And the tongue is a fire, a world of iniquity: so is the tongue among the members, that it defileth the whole body, and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell." Such is the tongue, and here is the punishment: "Coals of juniper," remarkable for their long retention of heat. And yet what a feeble illustration of the wrath of God, which burns down to the lowest hell! "His lips are full of indignation, and his tongue as a devouring fire." Liars are excluded from heaven by a special enactment of the Sovereign; and all of them "shall have their part in the lake which burneth with fire and brimstone, which is the second death." "Who among us shall

dwell with the devouring fire? Who among us shall dwell with everlasting burnings?" With what solemn awe should we not cry out to the Lord, "Gather not my soul with sinners, nor my life with bloody mens!"—*N. McMichael*, in "*The Pilgrim Psalms*," 1860.

Verse 4. *Sharp arrows of the mighty.* He compares wicked doctrine to an arrow which is not blunt, but sharp; and moreover which is cast, not of him that is weak and feeble, but that is strong and mighty; so that there is danger on both sides, as well of the arrow which is sharp and able to pierce, as also of him which with great violence hurleth the same.—*Martin Luther*.

Verse 4. *Arrows. Coals of juniper.* When the tongue is compared to "arrows", there is a reference (according to the Midrash), to the irrevocableness of the tongue's work. Even the lifted sword may be stayed, but the shot arrow may not. The special point to be drawn out in the mention of "coals of juniper", is the inextinguishableness of such fuel. There is a marvellous story in the Midrash which illustrates this very well. Two men in the desert sat down under a juniper tree, and gathered sticks of it where with they cooked their food. After a year they passed over the same spot where was the dust of what they had burned; and, remarking that it was now twelve months since they had the fire, they walked fearlessly upon the dust, and their feet were burned by the "coals" beneath it, which were still unextinguished.—*H.T. Armfield*.

Verse 4. *Coals of juniper.* The fire of the Retham burns for a very long time covered with its ashes; like malignant slander. But the secret malignity becomes its own terrible punishment.—*William Kay*.

Verse 4. *Coals of juniper.* We here at *Wadf Kinnah* found several Bedouins occupied in collecting brushwood, which they burn into charcoal for the Cairo market; they prefer for this purpose the thick roots of the shrub Retham, "*Genista raetam*" of Forskal, which grows here in abundance.—*Johann Ludwig Burckhardt*, 1784-1817.

Verse 4. *Coals of juniper.* At this time we spoke four "ships of the desert", bound for Cairo, and loaded with "coals of juniper", or, in other words, with charcoal made from the roots or branches of the ratam, or white broom of the desert, the identical bush referred to by the sacred writer.—*John Wilson*, in "*The Lands of the Bible visited and described*," 1847.

Verse 4. By "coals of juniper," we understand arrows made of this wood, which when heated possesses the property of retaining the heat for a long time; and consequently, arrows of this kind, after having been placed in the fire, would in the hands of the warrior do terrible execution. Some persons think that this verse is not to be understood as a figurative description of calumny, but rather of the punishment which God will inflict upon the calumniator. They therefore regard this as an answer to the question in the preceding verse: "What shall he give?" etc.—*George Phillips*.

Verse 5. *Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech, that I dwell in the tents of Kedar!* Mesech was a son of Japheth; and the name here signifies his descendants, the Mosques, who occupied that wild mountain region which lies between the Caspian Sea and the Black Sea. Kedar, again, was a son of

Ishmael; and the name here signifies his descendants, the wandering tribes, whose "hand is against every man, and every man's hand against them." There is no geographical connection between those two nations: the former being upon the north of Palestine, and the latter upon the south. The connection is a moral one. They are mentioned together, because they were fierce and warlike barbarians. David had never lived on the shores of the Caspian Sea, or in the Arabian wilderness; and he means no more than this, that the persons with whom he now dwelt were as savage and quarrelsome as Mesech and Kedar. After a similar fashion, we call rude and troublesome persons Turks, Tartars, and Hottentots. David exclaims, I am just as miserable among these haters of peace, as if I had taken up my abode with those savage and treacherous tribes.—*N. McMichael*.

Verse 5. *Woe is me, that I sojourn in Mesech*, etc. David exclaims, Alas for me because, dwelling amongst false brethren and a bastard race of Abraham, he was wrongfully molested and tormented by them, although he had behaved himself towards them in good conscience. Since then, at the present day, in the church of Rome, religion is dishonoured by all manner of disgraceful imputations, faith torn in pieces, light turned into darkness, and the majesty of God exposed to the grossest mockeries, it will certainly be impossible for those who have any feeling of true piety within them to lie in the midst of such pollutions without great anguish of spirit.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 6. The Arabs are naturally thievish and treacherous; and it sometimes happens, that those very persons are overtaken and pillaged in the morning who were entertained the night before with all the instances of friendship and hospitality. Neither are they to be accused for plundering strangers only, and attacking almost every person whom they find unarmed and defenceless, but for those many implacable and hereditary animosities which continually subsist among them; literally fulfilling the prophecy of Hagar, that "Ishmael should be a wild man; his hand should be against every man, and every man's hand against him".—*Thomas Shaw*, 1692-1751.

Verse 6. Our Lord was with the wild beasts in the wilderness. There are not a few who would rather face even these than the angry spirits which, alas, are still to be found even in Christian Churches.—*Wesleyan Methodist Magazine*, 1879.

Verses 6, 7. What holy and gentle delight is associated with the very name of peace. Peace resting upon our bosom, and soothing all its cares: peace resting upon our households, and folding all the members in one loving embrace: peace resting upon our country, and pouring abundance from her golden horn peace resting upon all nations, and binding them together with the threefold cord of a common humanity, a common interest, and a common religion! The man who hates peace is a dishonour to the race, an enemy to his brother, and a traitor to his God. He hates Christ, who is the Prince of peace. He hates Christians, who are men of peace.—*N. McMichael*.

Verse 7. *I am for peace*, etc. Jesus was a man of peace; he came into our world, and was worshipped at his nativity as the Prince of peace: there was universal peace throughout the world at

the time of his birth; he lived to make peace "by the blood of his cross": he died to complete it. When he was going out of the world, he said to his disciples, "Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you: not as the world giveth, give I unto you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid": Joh 14:27. When he was risen from the dead, and made his first appearance to his disciples, he said unto them. "Peace be unto you": he is the peace maker: the Holy Ghost is the peace bringer: his gospel is the gospel of peace; it contains the peace of God which passeth all understanding. "I am for peace: but when I speak, they are for war". The bulk of the Jewish nation abhorred Christ, they were for putting him to death; to avenge which, the Lord brought the Roman army against them, and many of them were utterly destroyed. So David literally was for peace with Saul; yet, when opportunities made way for any negotiations, it was soon discovered Saul was for war, instead of peace, with him. May we see how this, which is the introductory psalm to those fourteen which follow, styled Songs of Degrees, hath a concern with our Lord Jesus Christ; and that David the son of Jesse was in many cases a type of him, and several of his enemies, sorrows, and griefs, forerunning figures of what would befall Messiah, and come upon him. Amen.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce*.

Verse 7. *I am for peace.* Good men love peace, pray for it, seek it, pursue it, will give anything but a good conscience for it. Compare Mt 5:9; Heb 7:14: *W.S. Plumer*. "It is a mark of a pious man, as far as in him is, to seek peace": *Arnesius*. "I would not give one hour of brotherly love for a whole eternity of contention": *Dr. Ruffner*.

Verse 7. *When I speak, they are for war.* He spoke with all respect and kindness that could be; proposed methods of accommodation; spoke reason, spoke love; but they would not so much as hear him patiently; but cried out, To arms! To arms! so fierce and implacable were they, and so bent on mischief. Such were Christ's enemies: for his love they were his adversaries; and for his good words and good works they stoned him; and if we meet with such enemies we must not think it strange, nor love peace the less for our seeking it in vain. "Be not overcome of evil", no, not of such evil as this; "but", even when thus tried, still try to "overcome evil with good".—*Matthew Henry*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. A reminiscence.

1. It is threefold; distress, prayer, deliverance.
2. It has a threefold bearing: it excites my hope, stimulates my petitions, and arouses my gratitude.

Verse 1.

1. Special trouble: "In my distress."
2. Special prayer: "I cried unto the Lord."
3. Special favour: "He heard me."—*G.R.*

Verse 2. The unjustly slandered have, besides the avenging majesty of their God to protect them,

many other consolations, as

1. The consciousness of innocence to sustain them.
2. The promise of divine favour to support them: "I will hide thee from the scourge of the tongue."
3. There is the consideration to soothe: "Blessed are ye when men shall revile you and persecute you, "etc.
4. That a lie has not usually a long life.
5. There is, lastly, for comfort, the repairing influence of time.—*R. Nisbet*.

Verse 2. A prayer against slander. We are liable to it; it would do us great injury and cause us great pain; yet none but the Lord can protect us from it, or deliver us out of it.

Verse 3. The rewards of calumny. What can they be? What ought they to be? What have they been?

Verse 3.

1. What the reviler does for others.
2. What he does to himself.
3. What God will do with him.

Verse 4. The nature of slander and the punishment of slander.

Verse 4.

1. The tongue is sharper than an arrow.
 - (a) It is shot in private.
 - (b) It is tipped with poison.
 - (c) It is polished with seeming kindness.
 - (d) It is aimed at the most tender part.
2. The tongue is more destructive than fire. Its scandals spread with greater rapidity. They consume that which other fires cannot touch, and they are less easily quenched. "The tongue", says an Apostle, "is a fire...and setteth on fire the course of nature; and it is set on fire of hell". A fiery dart of the wicked one.—*G.R.*

Verse 5. Bad lodgings. Only the wicked can be at home with the wicked. Our dwelling with them is trying, and yet it may be useful

- (1) to them,
- (2) to us: it tries our graces, reveals our character, abates our pride, drives us to prayer, and makes us long to be home.

Verse 5.

1. None but the wicked enjoy the company of the wicked.
2. None but the worldly enjoy the company of worldlings.
3. None but the righteous enjoy the company of the righteous.—*G.R.*

Verse 6.

1. Trying company.
2. Admirable behaviour.
3. Undesirable consequences: "When I speak, they are for war".

Verse 7. The character of the man of God. He is at peace. He is for peace. He is peace. He shall have peace.

Verse 7.

1. Piety and peace are united.
2. So are wickedness and war.—*G.R.*

Psalm 121

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE, ETC. This bears no other title than "A Song of degrees". It is several steps in advance of its predecessor, for it tells of the peace of God's house, and the guardian care of the Lord, while Psalm 120 bemoans the departure of peace from the good man's abode, and his exposure to the venomous assaults of slanderous tongues. In the first instance his eyes looked around with anguish, but here they look up with hope. From the constant recurrence of the word keep, we are led to name this song "a Psalm to the keeper of Israel". Were it not placed among the Pilgrim Psalms we should regard it as a martial hymn, fitted for the evensong of one who slept upon the tented field. It is a soldier's song as well as a traveller's hymn. There is an ascent in the psalm itself which rises to the greatest elevation of restful confidence.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help.* It is wise to look to the strong for strength. Dwellers in valleys are subject to many disorders for which there is no cure but a sojourn in the uplands, and it is well when they shake off their lethargy and resolve upon a climb. Down below they are the prey of marauders, and to escape from them the surest method is to fly to the strongholds upon the mountains. Often before the actual ascent the sick and plundered people looked towards the hills and longed to be upon their summits. The holy man who here sings a choice sonnet looked away from the slanderers by whom he was tormented to the Lord who saw all from his high places, and was ready to pour down succour for his injured servant. Help comes to saints only from above, they look elsewhere in vain: let us lift up our eyes with hope, expectance, desire, and

confidence. Satan will endeavour to keep our eyes upon our sorrows that we may be disquieted and discouraged; be it ours firmly to resolve that we will look out and look up, for there is good cheer for the eyes, and they that lift up their eyes to the eternal hills shall soon have their hearts lifted up also. The purposes of God; the divine attributes; the immutable promises; the covenant, ordered in all things and sure; the providence, predestination, and proved faithfulness of the Lord—these are the hills to which we must lift up our eyes, for from these our help must come. It is our resolve that we will not be bandaged and blindfolded, but will lift up our eyes. Or is the text in the interrogative? Does he ask, "Shall I lift up mine eyes to the hills?" Does he feel that the highest places of the earth can afford him no shelter? Or does he renounce the idea of recruits hastening to his standard from the hardy mountaineers? and hence does he again enquire, "Whence cometh my help?" If so, the next verse answers the question, and shows whence all help must come.

Verse 2. *My help cometh from the LORD, which made heaven and earth.* What we need is help,—help powerful, efficient, constant: we need a very present help in trouble. What a mercy that we have it in our God. Our hope is in Jehovah, for our help comes from him. Help is on the road, and will not fail to reach us in due time, for he who sends it to us was never known to be too late. Jehovah who created all things is equal to every emergency; heaven and earth are at the disposal of him who made them, therefore let us be very joyful in our infinite helper. He will sooner destroy heaven and earth than permit his people to be destroyed, and the perpetual hills themselves shall bow rather than he shall fail whose ways are everlasting. We are bound to look beyond heaven and earth to him who made them both: it is vain to trust the creatures: it is wise to trust the Creator.

Verse 3. *He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.* Though the paths of life are dangerous and difficult, yet we shall stand fast, for Jehovah will not permit our feet to slide; and if he will not suffer it we shall not suffer it. If our foot will be thus kept we may be sure that our head and heart will be preserved also. In the original the words express a wish or prayer,—"*May he not suffer thy foot to be moved.*" Promised preservation should be the subject of perpetual prayer; and we may pray believing; for those who have God for their keeper shall be safe from all the perils of the way. Among the hills and ravines of Palestine the literal keeping of tim feet is a great mercy; but in the slippery ways of a tried and afflicted life, the boon of upholding is of priceless value, for a single false step might cause us a fall fraught with awful danger. To stand erect and pursue the even tenor of our way is a blessing which only God can give, which is worthy of the divine hand, and worthy also of perennial gratitude. Our feet shall move in progress, but they shall not be moved to their overthrow. He that keepeth thee will not slumber,—or "thy keeper shall not slumber". We should not stand a moment if our keeper were to sleep; we need him by day and by night; not a single step can be safely taken except under his guardian eye. This is a choice stanza in a pilgrim song. God is the convoy and body guard of his saints. When dangers are awake around us we are safe, for our Preserver is awake also, and will not

permit us to be taken unawares. No fatigue or exhaustion can cast our God into sleep; his watchful eyes are never closed.

Verse 4. *Behold, he that keepeth Israel shall neither slumber nor sleep.* The consoling truth must be repeated: it is too rich to be dismissed in a single line. It were well if we always imitated the sweet singer, and would dwell a little upon a choice doctrine, sucking the honey from it. What a glorious title is in the Hebrew—"The keeper of Israel, "and how delightful to think that no form of unconsciousness ever steals over him, neither the deep slumber nor the lighter sleep. He will never suffer the house to be broken up by the silent thief; he is ever on the watch, and speedily perceives every intruder. This is a subject of wonder, a theme for attentive consideration, therefore the word "Behold" is set up as a waymark. Israel fell asleep, but his God was awake. Jacob had neither walls, nor curtains, nor body guard around him; but the Lord was in that place though Jacob knew it not, and therefore the defenceless man was safe as in a castle. In after days he mentioned God under this enchanting name—"The God that led me all my life long": perhaps David alludes to that passage in this expression. The word "keepeth" is also full of meaning: he keeps us as a rich man keeps his treasures, as a captain keeps a city with a garrison, as a royal guard keeps his monarch's head. If the former verse is in strict accuracy a prayer, this is the answer to it; it affirms the matter thus, "Lo, he shall not slumber nor sleep—the Keeper of Israel". It may also be worthy of mention that in verse three the Lord is spoken of as the personal keeper of one individual, and here of all those who are in his chosen nation, described as Israel: mercy to one saint is the pledge of blessing to them all. Happy are the pilgrims to whom this psalm is a safe conduct; they may journey all the way to the celestial city without fear.

Verse 5. *The Lord is thy keeper.* Here the preserving One, who had been spoken of by pronouns in the two previous verses, is distinctly named—Jehovah is thy keeper. What a mint of meaning lies here: the sentence is a mass of bullion, and when coined and stamped with the king's name it will bear all our expenses between our birthplace on earth and our rest in heaven. Here is a glorious person—Jehovah, assuming a gracious office and fulfilling it in person,—Jehovah is thy keeper, in behalf of a favoured individual—thy, and a firm assurance of revelation that it is even so at this hour—Jehovah is thy keeper. Can we appropriate the divine declaration? If so, we may journey onward to Jerusalem and know no fear; yea, we may journey through the valley of the shadow of death and fear no evil. The Lord is thy shade upon thy right hand. A shade gives protection from burning heat and glaring light. We cannot bear too much blessing; even divine goodness, which is a right hand dispensation, must be toned down and shaded to suit our infirmity, and this the Lord will do for us. He will bear a shield before us, and guard the right arm with which we fight the foe. That member which has the most of labour shall have the most of protection. When a blazing sun pours down its burning beams upon our heads the Lord Jehovah himself will interpose to shade us, and

that in the most honourable manner, acting as our right hand attendant, and placing us in comfort and safety. "The Lord at thy right hand shall smite through kings". How different this from the portion of the ungodly ones who have Satan standing at their right hand, and of those of whom Moses said, "their defence has departed from them". God is as near us as our shadow, and we are as safe as angels.

Verse 6. *The sun shall not smite thee by day, nor the moon by night.* None but the Lord could shelter us from these tremendous forces. These two great lights rule the day and the night, and under the lordship of both we shall labour or rest in equal safety. Doubtless there are dangers of the light and of the dark, but in both and from both we shall be preserved—literally from excessive heat and from baneful chills; mystically from any injurious effects which might follow from doctrine bright or dim; spiritually from the evils of prosperity and adversity; eternally from the strain of overpowering glory and from the pressure of terrible events, such as judgment and the burning of the world. Day and night make up all time: thus the ever present protection never ceases. All evil may be ranked as under the sun or the moon, and if neither of these can smite us we are indeed secure. God has not made a new sun or a fresh moon for his chosen, they exist under the same outward circumstances as others, but the power to smite is in their case removed from temporal agencies; saints are enriched, and not injured, by the powers which govern the earth's condition; to them has the Lord given "the precious things brought forth by the sun, and the precious things put forth by the moon," while at the same moment he has removed from them all glare and curse of heat or damp, of glare or chill.

Verse 7. *The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil, or keep thee from all evil.* It is a great pity that our admirable translation did not keep to the word keep all through the psalm, for all along it is one. God not only keeps his own in all evil times but from all evil influences and operations, yea, from evils themselves. This is a far reaching word of covering: it includes everything and excludes nothing: the wings of Jehovah amply guard Iris own from evils great and small, temporary and eternal. There is a most delightful double personality in tiffs verse: Jehovah keeps the believer, not by agents, but by himself; and the person protected is definitely pointed out by the word thee,—it is not our estate or name which is shielded, but the proper personal man. To make this even more intensely real and personal another sentence is added, "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil:" he shall preserve thy soul,—or Jehovah will keep thy soul. Soul keeping is the soul of keeping. If the soul be kept all is kept. The preservation of the greater includes that of the less so far as it is essential to the main design: the kernel shall be preserved, and in order thereto the shell shall be preserved also. God is the sole keeper of the soul. Our soul is kept from the dominion of sin, the infection of error, the crush of despondency, the puffing up of pride; kept from the world, the flesh, and the devil; kept for holier and greater things; kept in the love of God; kept unto the eternal kingdom and glory. What can harm a

soul that is kept of the Lord?

Verse 8. *The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in from this time forth, and even for evermore.* When we go out in the morning to labour, and come home at eventide to rest, Jehovah shall keep us. When we go out in youth to begin life, and come in at the end to die, we shall experience the same keeping. Our exits and our entrances are under one protection. Three times have we the phrase, "Jehovah shall keep", as if the sacred Trinity thus sealed the word to make it sure: ought not all our fears to be slain by such a threefold flight of arrows? What anxiety can survive this triple promise? This keeping is eternal; continuing from this time forth, even for evermore. The whole church is thus assured of everlasting security: the final perseverance of the saints is thus ensured, and the glorious immortality of believers is guaranteed. Under the aegis of such a promise we may go on pilgrimage without trembling, and venture into battle without dread. None are so safe as those whom God keeps; none so much in danger as the self secure. To goings out and comings in belong peculiar dangers since every change of position turns a fresh quarter to the foe, and it is for these weak points that an especial security is provided: Jehovah will keep the door when it opens and closes, and this he will perseveringly continue to do so long as there is left a single man that trusteth in him, as long as a danger survives, and, in fact, as long as time endures. Glory be unto the Keeper of Israel, who is endeared to us under that title, since our growing sense of weakness makes us feel more deeply than ever our need of being kept. Over the reader we would breathe a benediction, couched in the verse of Keble.

"God keep thee safe from harm and sin,
Thy Spirit keep; the Lord watch o'er
Thy going out, thy coming in,
From this time, evermore."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

TITLE. "A Song of Degrees." It has been ingeniously pointed out that these "degrees" or "steps" consist in the reiteration of a word or thought occurring in one clause, verse, or stanza, which in the next verse or stanza is used, as it were, as a step (or degree) by which to ascend to another and higher truth. Thus in our psalm, the idea of "my help", expressed in Ps 121:1, is repeated in Ps 121:2. This has now become a step by which in Ps 121:3 we reach the higher truth or explanation of "my help", as: "He that keepeth thee will not slumber, "the same idea being with slight modification reembodyed in Ps 121:4. Another "degree" is then reached in Ps 121:5, when "He who slumbers not" is designated as Jehovah, the same idea once more enlarged upon being (the word occurring twice in Ps 121:5) in Ps 121:6. The last and highest degree of this song is attained in Ps 121:7, when the truth implied in the word Jehovah unfolds itself in its application to our preservation, which, with

further enlargement, is once more repeated in Ps 121:8. Perhaps some internal connexion might be traced between all the fifteen Psalms of Degrees. At any rate, it will not be difficult to trace the same structure if each of the psalms "of Degrees", making allowance for occasional devotions and modifications.—*Alfred Edersheim*, in "*The Golden Diary*," 1877.

Whole Psalm. According to Ps 121:1 this psalm was designed to be sung in view of the mountains of Jerusalem, and is manifestly an evening song for the sacred band of pilgrims, to be sung in the last night watch, the figures of which are also peculiarly suitable for a pilgrim song; and with Psalm 122, which, according to the express announcement in the introduction, was sung, when the sacred pilgrim trains had reached the gates of Jerusalem, and halted for the purpose of forming in order, for the solemn procession into the Sanctuary, Ps. 134. . . . The idea is a very probable one, that the psalm was the evening song of the sacred pilgrim band, sung on retiring to rest upon the last evening, when the long wished for termination of their wandering, the mountains of Jerusalem, had come into view in the distance. In this we obtain a suitable connection with the following psalm, which would be sung one station further on when the pilgrims were at the gates of Jerusalem. In this case we find an explanation of the fact, that in the middle point of the psalm there stands the Lord as the "keeper" of Israel, with reference to the declaration. "I keep thee", which was addressed to the patriarch as he slept on his pilgrimage: and in this case also "he neither slumbereth nor sleepeth" is seen in its true light.—*E.W. Hengstenberg*.

It has been said Mr. Romaine read this psalm every day; and sure it is, that every word in it is calculated to encourage and strengthen our faith and hope in God.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce*.

Verse 1. *I will lift up mine eyes*, etc. Since we, being burdened with the effects of worldly pleasures, and also with other cares and troubles, can by no means ascend to thee that art on the top of so high a mountain, accompanied with so many legions of angels that still attend upon thee, we have no remedy, but with thy prophet David now to lift up the eyes of our hearts and minds towards thee, and to cry for help to come down from thee to us, thy poor and wretched servants.—*Sir Anthony Cope*, in "*Meditations on Twenty Select Psalms*," 1547.

Verse 1. *I will lift up mine eyes*, etc. In thy agony of a troubled conscience always look upwards unto a gracious God to keep thy soul steady; for looking downward on thyself thou shalt find nothing but what will increase thy fear, infinite sins, good deeds few, and imperfect: it is not thy faith, but God's faithfulness thou must rely upon; casting thine eyes downwards on thyself, to behold the great distance betwixt what you deserve and what thou desirest, is enough to make thee giddy, stagger, and reel into despair. Ever therefore lift up thine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh thy help, never viewing the deep dale of thy own unworthiness, but to abate thy pride when tempted to presumption.—*Thomas Fuller* (1608-1661), in "*The Cause and Cure of a Wounded Conscience*."

Verse 1. *The hills.* There can be no doubt that in Palestine we are in the "Highlands" of Asia. This

was the more remarkable in connection with the Israelites, because they were the only civilized nation then existing in the world, which dwelt in a mountainous country... The Hebrew people was raised above the other ancient states, equally in its moral and in its physical relations. From the Desert of Arabia to Hebron is a continual ascent, and from that ascent there is no descent of any importance, except to the plains of the Jordan, Esdraelon, and the coast. From a mountain sanctuary, as it were, Israel looked over the world... It was to the "mountains" of Israel that the exile lifted up his eyes, as the place from whence his help came.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley*.

Verse 1. *The hills, from whence cometh my help.* See no riches but in grace, no health but in piety, no beauty but in holiness, no treasure but in heaven, no delight but in "the things above."—*Anthony Farindon*.

Verse 1. *From whence cometh my help.* The natives of India used to say that when Sir Henry Laurence looked twice to heaven and then to earth he knew what to do.

To Heaven I lift mine eye,
To Heaven, Jehovah's throne,
For there my Saviour sits on high,
And thence shall strength and aid supply
To all He calls His own.
He will not faint nor fail,
Nor cause thy feet to stray:
For him no weary hours assail,
Nor evening darkness spreads her veil
O'er his eternal day.
Beneath that light divine
Securely shalt thou move;
The sun with milder beams shall shine,
And eve's still queen her lamp incline
Benignant from above.
For he, thy God and Friend,
Shall keep thy soul from harm,
In each sad scene of doubt attend,
And guide thy life, and bless thy end,
With his almighty arm.

—*John Bowtler, 1814.*

Verses 1,2. Faint at the close of life's journey, a Christian pilgrim repeated the line,—"Will he not his help afford?" She quoted it several times, trying to recall the song in which it occurs, and asked that

the once familiar hymn, part of the voice of which she caught, might be all fetched home to her mind again; and she was greatly refreshed and comforted when we read at her bedside Charles Wesley's spirited paraphrase, beginning,—

"To the hills I lift mine eyes,
The everlasting hills;
Streaming thence in fresh supplies,
My soul the Spirit feels.
Will he not his help afford?
Help, while yet I ask, is given:
God comes down; the God and Lord
That made both earth and heaven."

—*Edward Jewitt Robinson*, in "*The Caravan and the Temple*", 1878.

Verses 1-3.

Look away to Jesus,
Look away from all!
Then we need not stumble,
Then we shall not fall.
From each snare that lures,
Foe or phantom grim.
Safety this ensures,
Look away to him!

—*Frances Ridley Havergal*.

Verse 2. *My help cometh from the Lord.* I requite to remember that my, help cometh from the Lord, not only when seemingly there is no outward help from men or otherwise, but also and especially when all seems to go well with me,—when abundance of friends and help are at hand. For then, surely, I am most in danger of making an arm of flesh my trust, and thus reaping its curse; or else of saying to my soul, "Take thine ease", and finding the destruction which attends such folly.—*Alfred Edersheim*.

Verse 2. *Maker of heaven and earth*, and therefore mighty to help.—*James G. Murphy*.

Verse 3. *He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.* The sliding of the foot is a frequent description of misfortune, for example, Ps 38:16, Ps 66:9, and a very natural one in mountainous Canaan. Where a single slip of the foot was often attended with great danger. The language here naturally refers to complete, lasting misfortune.—*E.W. Hengstenberg*.

Verse 3. *He will not suffer thy foot to be moved.* A man cannot go without moving of his feet; and a man cannot stand whose feet are moved. The foot by a synecdoche is put for the whole body, and

the body for the whole outward estate; so that, "He will not suffer thy foot to be moved", is, he will not suffer thee or thine to be moved or violently cast down. The power of thine opposers shall not prevail over thee, for the power of God sustains thee. Many are striking at thy heels, but they cannot strike them up while God holds thee up. If the will of thine enemies might stand, thou shouldest quickly fall; but God "will not suffer thy foot to be moved".—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verses 3-8. There is something very striking in the assurance that the Lord will not suffer the foot even of the most faint and wearied one to be moved. The everlasting mountains stand fast, and we feel as if, like Mount Zion, they could not be removed for ever; but the step of man—how feeble in itself, how liable to stumble or trip even against a pebble in the way! Yet that foot is as firm and immoveable in God's protection as the hills themselves. It is one of his own sweet promises, that he will give his angels charge over every child Of his, that lie come to no harm by the way. But, oh, how immeasurably beyond even the untiring wings of angels is the love promised here! that love which engages to protect from every danger, as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wings. In the hours of occupation and hurry, in the conflicts and perils of the day, in the helplessness of sleep, in the glare and heat of the noonday, amid the damps and dews of night, that wakeful eye is still over every child for his good. Man, indeed, goeth forth to his work and to his labour till the evening; but alike as he goes forth in the morning, and as he returns in the evening, the Lord still holds him up in all his goings forth and his comings in; no manner of evil shall befall him. And oh! what a sweet addition is it to the promise, "He shall preserve thy soul". It is the very argument of the apostle, and the very inference he draws, "The eyes of the Lord are upon the righteous, and his ears are open unto their cry",—"He neither slumbereth nor sleepeth",—and then he asks, "Who is he that will harm you, if ye be followers of that which is good?" From the very dawn of life to its latest close, even for evermore, "He will preserve thee from all evil; he will preserve thy soul."—*Barton Bouchier*.

Verses 3, 4, 5. A great practical difficulty is to find a keeper who will remain awake during the whole night. The weariness of those who keep a faithful watch, and their longing for day during the tedious lonely hours of darkness, is alluded to in a graphic and beautiful figure of the Psalmist—

"My soul waiteth for the Lord

More than keepers for the morning,

More than keepers for the morning."

The usual method adopted to secure due vigilance is to require the man to call out loudly, or to blow a whistle, every quarter of an hour... Yet, notwithstanding all precautions, as soon as sleep falls on the tired camp, it is too often the case that the hireling keeper lies down on the ground, wraps around him his thick "abaiyeh", or cloak, and, careless of his charge, or overcome with weariness yields himself up to his drowsy propensities. Viewed in the light of these facts, how full of condescension and cheer is the assurance of God's never ceasing care—

"He who keepeth thee will not slumber.

Behold, he who keepeth Israel

Doth not slumber or sleep.

Jehovah is thy keeper."

While the services of the keeper constitute at all times a marked feature of life in Palestine, they are perhaps more needed when travelling through the country than at any other time. Then, when the moving camp is nightly pitched in strange fields, it becomes absolutely necessary to apply to the nearest authorities for a nocturnal guardian, before one can safely lie down to rest. Now this Psalm 121 being one of "the Songs of Degrees, "was probably composed to be sung on the way to Jerusalem, as a pilgrim hymn, when the Israelites were coming up annually to keep the three great feasts. As a journeying psalm, it would therefore have peculiar significance in its allusion to the keeper by night.—*James Neil*, in "*Palestine Explored*," 1882.

Verses 3, 4. When one asked Alexander how he could sleep so soundly and securely in the midst of danger, he told him that Parmenio watched, Oh, how securely may they sleep over whom he watcheth that never slumbers nor sleeps!—*From "The Dictionary of Illustrations,"* 1873.

Verses 3, 4. A poor woman, as the Eastern story has it, came to the Sultan one day, and asked compensation for the loss of some property. "How did you lose it?" said the monarch. "I fell asleep", was the reply, "and a robber entered my dwelling". "Why did you fall asleep?" "I fell asleep because I believed that you were awake". The Sultan was so much delighted with the answer of the woman, that he ordered her loss to be made up. But what is true, only by a legal fiction, of human governments, that they never sleep is true in the most absolute sense with reference to the divine government. We can sleep in safety because our God is ever awake. We are safe because he never slumbers. Jacob had a beautiful picture of the ceaseless care of Divine Providence on the night when he fled from his father's house. The lonely traveller slept on the ground, with the stones for his pillow, and the sky for his canopy. He had a wondrous vision of a ladder stretching from earth to heaven, and on which angels were seen ascending and descending. And he heard Jehovah saying to him, "Behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou goest."—*N. McMichael*.

Verse 4. It is necessary, observes S. Bernard, that "he who keepeth Israel" should "neither slumber nor sleep", for he who assails Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps. And as the One is anxious about us, so is the other to slay and destroy us, and his one care is that he who has once been turned aside may never come back.—*Neale and Littledale*.

Verse 4. *Slumber. Sleep.* There is no climax in these words, as some have supposed. Etymologically, the first is the stronger word, and it occurs in Ps 76:5 6 of the sleep of death. In this instance there is no real distinction between the two. Possibly there may be an allusion to the nightly encampment, and the sentries of the caravan.—*J.J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verse 4. *He... shall neither slumber nor sleep.* This form of expression, he will not slumber nor sleep, would be improper in other languages, according to the idiom of which it should rather be, He will not sleep, yea, he will not slumber: but when the Hebrews invert this order, they argue from the greater to the less. The sense then is, that as God never slumbers even in the smallest degree, we need not be afraid of any harm befalling us while he is asleep.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 4. *He that keepeth Israel.* With an allusion to Jacob, who slept at Bethel, and to whom the promise of God took this form, "And, behold, I am with thee, and will keep thee in all places whither thou guest": Ge 28:15.—*Aben Ezra, quoted by H.T. Armfield.*

Verse 4. *Shall neither slumber nor sleep.* Man sleeps; a sentinel may slumber on his post by inattention, by long continued wakefulness, or by weariness; a pilot may slumber at the helm; even a mother may fall asleep by the side of the sick child; but God is never exhausted, is never weary, is never inattentive. He never closes his eyes on the condition of his people, on the wants of the world.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 4. A number of years ago Captain D. commanded a vessel sailing from Liverpool to New York, and on one voyage he had all his family with him on board the ship. One night, when all were quietly asleep, there arose a sudden squall of wind, which came sweeping over the waters until it struck the vessel, and instantly threw her on her side, tumbling and crashing everything that was moveable, and awakening the passengers to a consciousness that they were in imminent peril. Everyone on board was alarmed and uneasy, and some sprang from their berths and began to dress, that they might be ready for the worst. Captain D. had a little girl on board, just eight years old, who, of course, awoke with the rest.

"What's the matter?" said the frightened child.

They told her a squall had struck the ship.

"Is father on deck?" said she.

"Yes; father's on deck."

The little thing dropped herself on her pillow again without a fear, and in a few moments was sleeping sweetly in spite of winds or waves.

Fear not the windy tempests wild,

Thy bark they shall not wreck;

Lie down and sleep, O helpless child!

Thy Father's on the deck.

—*"The Biblical Treasury," 1873.*

Verses 4, 5. The same that is the protector of the church in general, is engaged for the preservation of every particular believer; the same wisdom, the same power, the same promises. "He that keepeth Israel" (verse 4), "is thy keeper" (verse 5). The Shepherd of the flock is the Shepherd of every sheep,

and will take care that not one, even of the little ones, shall perish.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 5. *The Lord is thy keeper.* Two principal points are asserted in these previous words.

1. Jehovah, and Jehovah alone, the omnipotent and self-existent God, is the Keeper and Preserver of his people.

2. The people of God are kept, at all times and in all circumstances, by his mighty power unto everlasting salvation; they are preserved even "for evermore." In the first particular, the divinity of the great Keeper is declared; and, in the second, the eternal security of his people through his omnipotence and faithfulness. This was the Psalmist's gospel. He preached it to others, and he felt it himself. He did not speculate upon what he did not understand; but he had a clear evidence, and a sweet perception, of these two glorious doctrines, which he delivered to the people... This character, under the name of Jehovah, is the character of Christ. Just such a one is Jesus, the Shepherd of Israel. He says of himself to the Father, "Those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the Son of Perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled." ...From what has been premised, it seems evident, that the keeper of the faithful is no other than Jehovah. This the Psalmist has proved. It appears equally evident that Christ is their Keeper and Preserver. This he hath declared himself; and his apostles have repeatedly declared it of him. It follows, therefore, that Christ is truly and essentially Jehovah. All the sophistry in the world cannot elude this conclusion; nor all the heretics in the world destroy the premises. And, if Christ be Jehovah, he is all that supreme, eternal, omnipotent being, which Arians, Socinians, and others deny him to be.—*Ambrose Serle*, in "*Hora Sotitarice*," 1815.

Verse 5. *Keeper. Shade.* The titles of God are virtually promises. When he is called a sun, a shield, a strong tower, a hiding place, a portion. The titles of Christ, light of the world, bread of life, the way, the truth, and life; the titles of the Spirit, the Spirit of truth, of holiness, of glory, of grace, and supplication, the sealing, witnessing Spirit; faith may conclude as much out of these as out of promises. Is the Lord a sun? then he will influence me, etc. Is Christ life? then he will enliven me, etc.—*David Clarkeon*, 1621-1686.

Verse 5. *Thy shade upon thy right hand.* That is, always present with thee; or, as the Jewish Arab renders it, "Closer than thy shadow at, or from thy right hand."—*Thomas Benton*, in "*Annotations on the Book of Job and the Psalms*," 1732.

Verse 5. *Thy shade.* In eastern countries the sun's burning rays are often arrows by which premature death is inflicted; and when the Psalmist speaks of Jehovah as a shady covert for the righteous that imagery suggests the idea of the "coup de soleil" or sunstroke as the evil avoided.—*J.F.*, in *The Baptist Magazine*, 1831.

Verse 5. *Shade.* The Hebrew word is tsel, "a shadow," and hence it has been supposed that the words, "thy shadow at thy right hand," are a figurative expression, referring to the protection afforded

by the shade of a tree against the scorching rays of the sun, or to the custom which prevails in tropical climates especially, of keeping off the intense heat of the sun by a portable screen, such as an umbrella or parasol. The word is often put for defence in general. Compare Nu 14:9; Isa 30:2; Jer 48:45.—*James Anderson*.

Verses 5-8. How large a writ or patent of protection is granted here! No time shall be hurtful, neither "day nor night," which includes all times. Nothing shall hurt, neither sun nor moon, nor heat nor cold. These should include all annoyances. Nothing shall be hurt. "Thy soul shall be preserved, thy outgoings and thy comings in shall be preserved." These include the whole person of man, and him in all his just affairs and actions. Nothing of man is safe without a guard, and nothing of man can be unsafe which is thus guarded. They should be kept who can say, "The Lord is our keeper"; and they cannot be kept, no, not by legions of angels, who have not the Lord for their keeper. None can keep us but he, and he hath promised to keep us "for evermore."—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 6. *The sun shall not smite thee.* hrh of the sun signifies to smite injuriously (Isa 49:10), plants, so that they wither (Ps 102:5), and the head (Joh 4:8), so that symptoms of sunstroke (2Ki 4:19; Jud 8:2 seq.) appear. The transferring of the word to the word is not zeugmatic. Even the moon's rays may become insupportable, may affect the eyes injuriously, and (more particularly in the equatorial regions) produce fatal inflammation of the brain. From the hurtful influences of nature that are round about him the promise extends in verses 7,8 in every direction. Jahve, says the poet to himself, will keep (guard) thee against all evil, of whatever kind it may be and whencesoever it may threaten; he will keep thy soul, and therefore thy life both inwardly and outwardly; he will keep thy going out and coming in, i.e., all thy business and intercourse of life... everywhere and at all times; and that from this time forth even for ever.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

Verse 6. *The sun shall not smite thee by day,* etc. A promise made with allusion unto, and application of that care which God had over his people, when he brought them out of Egypt through the wilderness, when he guarded them from the heat of the sun by a cloud by day, and from the cold and moistness of the night and moon by a pillar of fire by night.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 6. *Nor the moon by night.*

The moon, the governess of floods,
Pale in her anger, washes all the air,
That rheumatic diseases do abound.

—*William Shakespeare* (1564-1616), in "*The Midsummer Night's Dream*."

Verse 6. Joseph Hart in one of his hymns speaks of some who "travel much by night." To such this promise is precious.—*Biblical Treasury*.

Verse 6. *Nor the moon by night.* The effect of the moonlight on the eyes in tiffs country is singularly injurious... The moon here really strikes and affects the sight, when you sleep exposed to it, much

more than the sun, a fact of which I had a very unpleasant proof one night, and took care to guard against it afterwards; indeed, the sight of a person who should sleep with his face exposed at night would soon be utterly impaired or destroyed.—*John Carne*, in "*Letters from the East*," 1826.

Verse 6. *Nor the moon by night.* In the cloudless skies of the East, where the moon shines with such exceeding clearness, its effects upon the human frame have been found most injurious. The inhabitants of these countries are most careful in taking precautionary measures before exposing themselves to its influence. Sleeping much in the open air, they are careful to cover well their heads and faces. It has been proved beyond a doubt that the moon smites as well as the sun, causing blindness for a time, and even distortion of the features. Sailors are well aware of this fact; and a naval officer relates that he has often, when Sailing between the tropics, seen the commanders of vessels waken up young men who have fallen asleep in the moonlight. Indeed, he witnessed more than once the effects of a moonstroke, when the mouth was drawn on one side and the sight injured for a time. He was of opinion that, with long exposure, the mind might become seriously affected. It is supposed that patients suffering under fever and other illnesses are affected by this planet, and the natives of India constantly affirm that they will either get better or worse, according to her changes.—*C.W.*, in, "*The Biblical Treasury*."

Verse 7. *The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil.* Lawyers, when they are drawing up important documents, frequently conclude with some general terms to meet any emergency which may possibly occur. They do this on the principle, that what is not in may be supposed to be intentionally left out. In order to guard against this inference, they are not content with inserting a number of particular cases; they conclude with a general statement, which includes everything, whether expressed or not. A similar formula is inserted here. It is of great Importance, that the feet of travellers be kept from sliding, as they pursue their journey. It is of great importance, that they be preserved from heat by day, and from cold by night. But other dangers await them, from which they require protection; and lest the suspicion be entertained, that no provision is made for these being surmounted, they are all introduced in the saving and comprehensive clause. No matter what may be their character, no matter from what quarter they may appear, no matter when they may come, and no matter how long they may continue, the declaration covers them all. Divine grace changes the nature of everything it handles, and transforms everything it touches into gold. Afflictions are overruled for good; and the virtues of the Christian life are developed with unusual lustre. "The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil."—*N. McMichael*.

Verse 7. *The Lord shall preserve thee from all evil*, etc. It is an absolute promise, there are no conditions annexed; it honours God for us simply to believe it, and rest on the Lord for the performance of it. As we view it, what have we to fear? The mouth of the Lord hath spoken it, his word is immutable. Jesus preserves body and soul, he is the Saviour of the body as well as of the

soul.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

Verses 7, 8. The threefold expression, "shall keep thee...thy soul...thy going out and thy coming in," marks the completeness of the protection vouchsafed, extending to all that the man is and that he does.—*J.J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verses 7, 8. It is of importance to mark the reason why the prophet repeats so often what he had so briefly and in one word expressed with sufficient plainness. Such repetition seems at first sight superfluous: but when we consider how difficult it is to correct our distrust, it will be easily perceived that he does not improperly dwell upon the commendation of the divine providence. How few are to be found who yield to God the honour of being a "keeper", in order to their being thence assured of their safety, and led to call upon him in the midst of their perils! On the contrary, even when we seem to have largely experienced what this protection of God implies, we yet instantly tremble at the noise of a leaf falling from a tree, as if God had quite forgotten us. Being then entangled in so many unholy misgivings, and so much inclined to distrust, we are taught from the passage that if a sentence couched in a few words does not suffice us, we should gather together whatever may be found throughout the whole Scriptures concerning the providence of God, until this doctrine—"That God always keeps watch for us"—is deeply rooted in our hearts; so that, depending upon his guardianship alone, we may bid adieu to all the vain confidences of the world.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 8. *The Lord shall preserve.* The word "shamar" imports a most tender preservation; from it comes "shemuroth", signifying the eyelids, because they are the keepers of the eye, as the Lord is called in the verse preceding—*shomer* *Ishrael*, "the keeper of Israel". If the lids of the eye open, it is to let the eye see; if they close, it is to let it rest, at least to defend it; all their motion is for the good of the eye. O, what a comfort is here! The Lord calls his Church "the apple of his eye": "he that toucheth you, touches the apple of mine eye". The Church is the apple of God's eye, and the Lord is the covering of it. O, how well are they kept whom "the keeper of Israel" keepeth! The Lord was a buckler to Abraham, none of his enemies could harm him; for his buckler covered him thoroughly. The Lord was a hedge unto Job; Satan himself confessed he could not get through it, howsoever many a time he assayed it, to have done evil unto Job. . . . But seeing this same promise of preservation was made before (for from the third verse to the end of the Psalm, six sundry times, is the word of keeping or preserving repeated), why is it now made over again? Not without cause; for this doubling and redoubling serves, first, for a remedy of our ignorance. Men, if they be in any good estate, are ready to "sacrifice to their own net, "or "to cause their mouth to kiss their own hand, "as if their own hand had helped them: thus to impute their "deliverance" to their "calf, "and therefore often is this resounded, "The Lord, " "The Lord." Is thy estate advanced? The Lord hath done it. Hast thou been preserved from desperate dangers? Look up to the Lord, thy help is from on high, and to him let the praise be returned. Secondly, it is for a remedy of our natural diffidence: the word of the Lord in itself

is as sure when it is spoken, as when it is sworn; as sure spoken once, as when it is oftener repeated; yet is not the Lord content to speak only, but to swear also; nor to speak once, but often, one and the selfsame thing. The reason is showed us by the apostle, that hereby he may "declare to the heirs of promise the stability of his counsel." Heb 6:1 Ge 21:32. As Joseph spake of Pharaoh his vision, "It was doubled, because the thing is established by God, and God hasteth to perform it"; so is it with every word of the Lord, when it is repeated; it is because it is established, and God hastens to perform it.—From a Sermon by *Bishop Couper*, entitled "*His Majesties Coming in*," 1623.

Verse 8. *The Lord shall preserve thy going out and thy coming in.* All actions being comprehended under one of these two sorts, "going out" to more public, and "coming in" to more private affairs; or again, "going out" to begin, and "coming in" at the end of the work. But by this expression may here perhaps be more particularly signified that God would protect David, even to the end of his days, whenever he marched out with his armies, or brought them home.—*Thomas Fenton*.

Verse 8. *From this time forth, and even for evermore.* He has not led me so tenderly thus far to forsake me at the very gate of heaven.—*Adoniram Judson*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The window opened towards Jerusalem.

1. The hills we look to.
2. The help we look for.
3. The eyes we look with.

Verse 1. *Whence cometh my help?* A grave question; for,

1. I need it, greatly, in varied forms, constantly, and now.
2. In few directions can I look for it, for men are feeble, changeable, hostile, etc.
3. I must look above. To Providence, to Grace, to my God.

Verse 2. The Creator the creature's helper.

Verse 2.

1. God is his people's "help."
2. He helps them in proportion as they feel their need of his help.
3. His help is never ill vain. "My help cometh." not from the earth merely, or the skies, but "from the Lord, which made heaven and earth". Isa 40:26-31.—*G.R.*

Verse 3 (First clause). The preservation of saintly character the care of the Creator.

Verse 3. Comfort for a pilgrim along the 'mauvais pas' of life. We have a Guide omniscient, omnipotent, never slumbering, unchanging.

Verse 3. *He that keepeth thee will not slumber.*

1. The Lord's care is personal in its objects. The keeper of Israel is the keeper of the individual. God

deals with us individually.

- (a) This is implied in his care of the church, which is composed of individuals.
- (b) It is involved in the nature of our religion, which is a personal thing.
- (c) It is affirmed in Scripture. Examples; promises; experiences. "He loved me, "etc., etc.
- (d) It is confirmed by experience.

2. The Lord's care is unwearied in its exercise: "Will not slumber."

- (a) He is never unacquainted with our condition.
- (b) He is never indifferent to it.
- (c) He is never weary of helping us. We sometimes think he sleeps, but this is our folly.

—*Frederick J. Benskin*, of Reading, 1882.

Verse 4.

- 1. The suspicion—that God sleeps.
- 2. The denial.
- 3. The implied opposite—he is ever on the watch to bless.

Verse 4. He keepeth Israel,

- 1. As his chief treasure, most watchfully.
- 2. As his dearest spouse, most tenderly.
- 3. As the apple of his eye, most charily and warily.

—*Daniel Featley*, 1582-1645.

Verse 5. The Lord Keeper.

- 1. Blessings included in this title.
- 2. Necessities which demand it.
- 3. Offices which imply it,—Shepherd, King, Husband, Father, etc.
- 4. Conduct suggested by it.

Verse 5 (last clause). God as near us, and as indivisible from us as our shadow.

Verse 5. *The Lord is thy keeper*, not angels.

- 1. He is able to keep thee. He has infinite knowledge, power, etc.
- 2. He has engaged to keep thee.
- 3. He has kept thee.
- 4. He will keep thee. In his love; in his covenant, etc., as his sheep, his children, his treasures, as the apple of his eye, etc.—*F.J.B.*

Verse 5. *The Lord is thy keeper.*

- 1. Wakeful: "Will not slumber."
- 2. Universal: "Thy going out and thy coming in:" "From all evil."
- 3. Perpetual: "Day:" "night: ...evermore."

4. Special: "Thy:" "Israel."—*W.J.*

Verse 6. The highest powers, under God, prevented from hurting believers, and even made to serve them.

Verse 6. Our Horoscope.

1. Superstitious fears removed.
2. Sacred assurances supplied.

Verse 7.

1. Personal agency of God in providence.
2. Personal regard of providence to the favoured individual.
3. Special care over the centre of the personality—"thy soul."

Verse 8. Who? "The Lord." What? "Shall preserve thee." When? "Going out and coming in from this time forth." How long? "For evermore." What then? "I will lift up mine eyes."

Verse 8.

1. Changing—going out and coming in.
2. Unchanging—"The Lord shall preserve," etc.

WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIRST PSALM

In "Letters on Spiritual Subjects . . ." by SAMUEL EYLES PIERCE... London: 1862, Vol. I., pp. 359-370, there are "Some Observations on the Hundred and Twenty first Psalm."

In "Meditations on Twenty select Psalms," by 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.

See also List of Works upon the Gradual Psalms, in notes on [Psalm 120](#).

Psalm 122

[Exposition](#)

[Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings](#)

[Hints to the Village Preacher](#)

[Other Works](#)

TITLE AND SUBJECT. This brief but spirited Psalm is entitled "*A Song of Degrees of David*", and thus we are informed as to its author, and the occasion for which it was designed: David wrote it for the people to sing at the time of their goings up to the holy feasts at Jerusalem. It comes third in the series, and appears to be suitable to be sung when the people had entered the gates, and their feet stood within the city. It was most natural that they should sing of Jerusalem itself, and invoke peace

and prosperity upon the Holy City, for it was the centre of their worship, and the place where the Lord revealed himself above the mercy seat. Possibly the city was not all built in David's day, but he wrote under the spirit of prophecy, and spoke of it as it would be in the age of Solomon; a poet has license to speak of things, not only as they are, but as they will be when they come to their perfection. Jerusalem, or the Habitation of Peace, is used as the key word of this Psalm, wherein we have in the original many happy allusions to the salem, or peace, which they implored upon Jerusalem. When they stood within the triple walls, all things around the pilgrims helped to explain the words which they sang within her ramparts of strength. One voice led the Psalm with its personal "I, " but ten thousand brethren and companions united with the first musician and swelled the chorus of the strain.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us go into the house of the LORD.* Good children are pleased to go home, and glad to hear their brothers and sisters call them thither. David's heart was in the worship of God, and he was delighted when he found others inviting him to go where his desires had already gone: it helps the ardour of the most ardent to hear others inviting them to a holy duty. The word was not "go, "but "let us go"; hence the ear of the Psalmist found a double joy in it. He was glad *for the sake of others*: glad that they wished to go themselves, glad that they had the courage and liberality to invite others. He knew that it would do them good; nothing better can happen to men and their friends than to love the place where God's honour dwelleth. What a glorious day shall that be when many people shall go and say, "Come ye, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob, and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths." But David was glad *for his own sake*: he loved the invitation to the holy place, he delighted in being called to go to worship in company, and, moreover, he rejoiced that good people thought enough of him to extend their invitation to him. Some men would have been offended, and would have said, "Mind your own business. Let my religion alone; "but not so King David, though he had mote dignity than any of us, and less need to be reminded of his duty. He was not teased but pleased by being pressed to attend holy services. He was glad to go into the house of the Lord, glad to go in holy company, glad to find good men and women willing to have him in their society. He may have been sad before, but this happy suggestion cheered him up: he pricked up his ears, as the proverb puts it, at the very mention of his Father's house. Is it so with us? Are we glad when others invite us to public worship, or to church fellowship? Then we shall be glad when the spirits above shall call us to the house of the Lord not made with hands, eternal in the heavens.

"Hark! they whisper: angels say,

Sister spirit, come away."

If we are glad to be called by others to our Father's house, how much more glad shall we be actually

to go there. We love our Lord, and therefore we love his house, and pangs of strong desire are upon us that we may soon reach the eternal abode of his glory. An aged saint: when dying, cheered herself with this evidence of grace, for she cried, "I have loved the habitation of thine house, and the place where thine honour dwelleth, "and therefore she begged that she might join the holy congregation of those who for ever behold the King in his beauty. Our gladness at the bare thought of being in God's house is detective as to our character, and prophetic of our being one day happy in the Father's house on high. What a sweet Sabbath Psalm is this! In prospect of the Lord's day, and all its hallowed associations, our soul rejoices. How well, also, may it refer to the, church! We are happy when we see numerous bands ready to unite themselves with the people of God. The pastor is specially glad when many come forward and ask of him assistance in entering into fellowship with the church. No language is more cheering to him than the humble request, "Let us go into the house of the Lord."

Verse 2. *Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem;* or, better, "our feet are standing." The words imply present and joyous standing within the walls of the city of peace; or perhaps the pilgrims felt so sure of getting there that they antedated the joy, and spoke as if they were already there, though they were as yet only on the road. If we are within the church we may well triumph in the fact. While our feet are standing in Jerusalem our lips may well be singing. Outside the gates all is danger, and one day all will be destruction; but within the gates all is safely, seclusion, serenity, salvation, and glory. The gates are opened that we may pass in, and they are only shut that our enemies may not follow us. The Lord loveth the gates of Zion, and so do we when we are enclosed within them. What a choice favour, to be a citizen of the New Jerusalem! Why are we so greatly favoured? Many feet are running the downward road, or kicking against the pricks, or held by snares, or sliding to an awful fall; but our feet, through grace divine, are "standing"—an honourable posture, "within thy gates, O Jerusalem"—an honourable position, and there shall they stand for ever—an honourable future.

Verse 3. *Jerusalem is builded as a city that is compact together.* David saw in vision the city built; no more a waste, or a mere collection of tents, or a city upon paper, commenced but not completed. God's mercy to the Israelitish nation allowed of peace and plenty, sufficient for the uprise and perfecting of its capital: that City flourished in happy times, even as the church is only built up when all the people of God are prospering. Thanks be to God, Jerusalem is builded: the Lord by his glorious appearing has built up Zion. Furthermore, it is not erected as a set of booths, or a conglomeration of hovels, but as a city, substantial, architectural, designed, arranged, and defended. The church is a permanent and important institution, founded on a rock, builded with art, and arranged with wisdom. The city of God had this peculiarity about it, that it was not a long, straggling street, or a city of magnificent distances (as some mere skeleton places have been styled), but the allotted space was filled, the buildings were a solid block, a massive unity: this struck the dwellers in villages, and conveyed to them the idea of close neighbourhood, sure standing, and strong defence.

No quarter could be surprised and sacked while other portions of the town were unaware of the assault: the ramparts surrounded every part of the metropolis, which was singularly one and indivisible. There was no flaw in this diamond of the world, this pearl of cities. In a church one of the most delightful conditions is the compactness of unity: "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." A church should be one in creed and one in heart, one in testimony and one in service, one in aspiration and one in sympathy. They greatly injure our Jerusalem who would build dividing walls within her; she needs compacting, not dividing. There is no joy in going up to a church which is rent with internal dissension: the gladness of holy men is aroused by the adhesiveness of love, the unity of life; it would be their sadness if they saw the church to be a house divided against itself. Some bodies of Christians appear to be periodically blown to fragments, and no gracious man is glad to be in the way when the explosions take place: thither the tribes do not go up, for strife and contention are not attractive forces.

Verse 4. *Whither the tribes go up, the tribes of the LORD.* When there is unity within there will be gatherings from without: the tribes go up to a compact centre. Note that Israel was one people, but yet it was in a sense divided by the mere surface distinction of tribes; and this may be a lesson to us that all Christendom is essentially one, though from various causes we are divided into tribes. Let us as much as possible sink the tribal individuality in the national unity, so that the church may be many waves, but one sea; many branches, but one tree; many members, but one body. Observe that the tribes were all of them the Lord's; whether Judah or Benjamin, Manasseh or Ephraim, they were all the Lord's. Oh that all the regiments of the Christian army may be all and equally the Lord's own, alike chosen, redeemed, accepted, and upheld by Jehovah. Unto the testimony of Israel. They went up to the holy city to hear and to bear testimony. Everything in the temple was a testimony unto the Lord, and the annual journeys of the tribes to the hallowed shrine partook of the same testifying character, for these journeys were Israel's open avowal that Jehovah was their God, and that he was the one only living and true God. When we assemble on the Sabbath a large part of our business is giving out and receiving testimony: we are God's witnesses; all the tribes of the one church of Jesus Christ bear witness unto the Lord.

To give thanks unto the name of the LORD. Another part of our delightful duty is to praise the Lord. Sacred praise is a chief design of the assembling of ourselves together. All Israel had been fed by the fruit of the field, and they went up to give thanks unto the name of their great Husbandman: we, too, have countless mercies, and it becomes us unitedly in our solemn gatherings to magnify the name of our loving Lord. Testimony should be mingled with thanks, and thanks with testimony, for in combination they bless both God and man, and tend to spread themselves over the hearts of our companions; who, seeing our joyful gratitude, are the more inclined to hearken to our witness bearing. Here, then, was part of the cause of the gladness of the pious Israelite when he had an

invitation to join the caravan which was going to Zion: he would there meet with representatives of all the clans of his nation, and aid them in the double object of their holy assemblies, namely, testimony and thanksgiving. The very anticipation of such delightful engagements filled him to overflowing with sacred gladness.

Verse 5. *For there are set thrones of judgment.* If discontented with the petty judgments of their village lords, the people could bring their hard matters to the royal seat, and the beloved King would be sure to decide aright; for the judgment thrones were The thrones of the house of David. We who come to the church and its public worship are charmed to come to the throne of God, and to the throne of the reigning Saviour.

"He reigns! Ye saints, exalt your strains:

Your God is King, your Father reigns:

And he is at the Father's side,

The Man of love, the Crucified."

To a true saint the throne is never more amiable than in its judicial capacity; righteous men love judgment, and are glad that right will be rewarded and iniquity will be punished. To see God reigning in the Son of David and evermore avenging the just cause is a thing which is good for weeping eyes, and cheering for disconsolate hearts. They sang of old as they went towards the throne, and so do we. "The Lord reigneth, let the earth rejoice." The throne of judgment is not removed, but firmly "set," and there it shall remain till the work of justice is accomplished, and truth and right are set on the throne with their King. Happy people to be under so glorious a rule.

Verse 6. *Pray for the peace of Jerusalem.* Peace was her name, pray that her condition may verify her title. Abode of Peace, peace be to thee. Here was a most sufficient reason for rejoicing at the thought of going up to the house of the Lord, since that sacred shrine stood in the centre of an area of peace: well might Israel pray that such peace should be continued. In a church peace is to be desired, expected, promoted, and enjoyed. If we may not say "Peace at any price," yet we may certainly cry "Peace at the highest price." Those who are daily fluttered by rude alarms are charmed to reach their nest in a holy fellowship, and abide in it. In a church one of the main ingredients of success is internal peace: strife, suspicion, party spirit, division,—these are deadly things. Those who break the peace of the church deserve to suffer, and those who sustain it win a great blessing. Peace in the church should be our daily prayer, and in so praying we shall bring down peace upon ourselves; for the Psalmist goes on to say, They shall prosper that love thee, or, perhaps we may read it as a prayer, "May they have peace that love thee." Whether the passage be regarded as a promise or as a prayer matters not, for prayer pleads the promise, and the promise is the ground of prayer. Prosperity of soul is already enjoyed by those who take a deep interest in the church and cause of God: they are men of peace, and find peace in their holy endeavours: God's people pray for

them, and God himself delights in them. Prosperity of worldly condition often comes to the lovers of the church if they are able to bear it: many a time the house of Obededom is blessed because of the ark of the Lord. Because the Egyptian midwives feared the Lord, therefore the Lord made them houses. No man shall ever be a permanent loser by the house of the Lord: in peace of heart alone. If in nothing else, we find recompense enough for all that we can do in promoting the interests of Zion.

Verse 7. *Peace be within thy walls.* See how the poet personifies the church, and speaks to it: his heart is with Zion, and therefore his conversation runs in that direction. A second time is the sweet favour of peace earnestly sought after: "There is none like it, give it me." Walls were needed to keep out the foe, but it was asked of the Lord that those walls might prove sufficient for her security. May the munitions of rock so securely defend the city of God that no intruder may ever enter within her enclosure. May her ramparts repose in safety. Three walls environed her, and thus she had a trinity of security. And prosperity within thy palaces, or "Repose within thy palaces." Peace is prosperity; there can be no prosperity which is not based on peace, nor can there long be peace if prosperity be gone, for decline of grace breeds decay of love. We wish for the church rest from internal dissension and external assault: war is not her element, but we read of old, "Then had the churches rest; and walking in the fear of the Lord, and in the comfort of the Holy Ghost, were multiplied." The bird of Paradise is not a sternly petrel: her element is not the hurricane of debate, but the calm of communion. Observe that our Jerusalem is a city of palaces: kings dwell within her walls, and God himself is there. The smallest Church is worthy of higher honour than the greatest confederacies of nobles. The order of the New Jerusalem is of more repute in heaven than the knights of the Golden Fleece. For the sake of all the saintly spirits which inhabit the city of God we may well entreat for her the boons of lasting peace and abounding prosperity.

Verse 8. *For my brethren and companions' sakes, I will now say, Peace be within thee.* It is to the advantage of all Israel that there should be peace in Jerusalem. It is for the good of every Christian, yea, of every man, that there should be peace and prosperity in the church. Here our humanity and our common philanthropy assist our religious prayer. By a flourishing church our children, our neighbours, our fellow countrymen are likely to be blest. Moreover, we cannot but pray for a cause with which our dearest relatives and choicest friends are associated: if they labour for it, we must and will pray for it. Here peace is mentioned for the third time. Are not these frequent threes some hint of the Trinity? It would be hard to believe that the triple form of so many parts of the Old Testament is merely accidental. At least, the repetition of the desire displays the writer's high valuation of the blessing mentioned; he would not again and again have invoked peace had he not perceived its extreme desirableness.

Verse 9. *Because of the house of the LORD our God I will seek thy good.* He prays for Jerusalem because of Zion. How the church salts and savours all around it. The presence of Jehovah, our God,

endears to us every place wherein he reveals his glory. Well may we seek her good within whose walls there dwells God who alone is good. We are to live for God's cause, and to be ready to die for it. First we love it (Ps 122:6) and then we labour for it, as in this passage: we see its good, and then seek its good. If we can do nothing else we can intercede for it. Our covenant relation to Jehovah as our God binds us to pray for his people,—they are "the house of the Lord our God." If we honour our God we desire the prosperity of the church which he has chosen for his indwelling. Thus is the poet glad of an invitation to join with others in the Lord's service. He goes with them and rejoices, and then he turns his delight into devotion, and intercedes for the city of the great King. O church of the living God, we hail thine assemblies, and on bended knee we pray that thou mayest have peace and felicity. May our Jehovah so send it. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Foxe, in his "Acts and Monuments," relates of Wolfgang Schuch, the martyr, of Lothareng in Germany, that upon hearing the sentence that he was to be burned pronounced upon him, he began to sing the hundred and twenty second Psalm, *Laetus sum in his quae dicta sunt mihi.* etc.

Whole Psalm. Perhaps the true text of this Psalm is found in its designation, "A Song of Degrees." Every verse is treated as a degree of advancement in the spiritual life, beginning with "help" from the eternal "hills" for the trials of time, closing with preservation "for evermore." *Henry Melvill.*

Verse 1. *I was glad when they said unto me,* etc. Gregory Nazianzen writeth that his father being a heathen, and often besought by his wife to become a Christian, had this verse suggested unto him in a dream, and was much wrought upon thereby. *John Trapp.*

Verse 1. *I was glad when they said,* etc. These words seem to be very simple, and to contain in them no great matter; but if you look into the same with spiritual eyes, there appeareth a wonderful great majesty in them; which because our Papists cannot see, they do so coldly and negligently pray, read, and sing this Psalm and others, that a man would think there were no tale so foolish or vain, which they would not either recite or hear with more courage and delight. These words, therefore, must be unfolded and laid before the eyes of the faithful: for when he saith, *We will go into the house of the Lord,* what notable thing can we see in these words, if we only behold the stones, timber, gold, and other ornaments of the material temple? But to go into the house of the Lord signifieth another manner of thing; namely, to come together where we may have God present with us, hear his word, call upon his holy name, and receive help and succour in our necessity. Therefore it is a false definition of the temple which the Papists make; that it is a house built with stones and timber to the honour of God. What this temple is they themselves know not; for the temple of Solomon was not therefore beautiful because it was adorned with gold and silver, and other precious ornaments; but

the true beauty of the temple was, because in that place the people heard the word of the Lord, called upon his name, found him merciful, giving peace and remission of sins, etc. This is rightly to behold the temple, and not as the visored bishops behold their idolatrous temple when they consecrate it.
Martin Luther.

Verse 1. *I was glad when they said unto me, Let us (or, We will) go,* etc. You have here,

1. David's delight.
2. The object or reason of it.

In the object there are circumstances enough to raise his joy to the highest note.

First, *A company*, either a tribe, or many of, or all, the people: "They said unto me." So, in another place, he speaketh of "walking to the house of God in company:" Ps 55:14. A glorious sight, a representation of heaven itself, of all the angels crying aloud, the Seraphim to the Cherubim, and the Cherubim echoing back again to the Seraphim, "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of Sabaoth."

Secondly, *Their resolution* to serve the Lord: *Dixerunt*, "They said it:" and "to say" in Scripture is to resolve. "We will go," is either a lie, or a resolution.

Thirdly, *Their agreement* and joint consent: "We," "This is as a circle, and taketh in all within its compass. If there be any dissenting, unwilling person, he is not within this circumference, he is none of the "We." A Turk, a Jew, and a Christian cannot say, "We will serve the Lord;" and the schismatic or separatist shutteth himself out of the house of the Lord. "We" is a bond of peace, keepeth us at unity, and maketh many as one.

Fourthly, *Their cheerfulness* and alacrity. They speak like men going out of a dungeon into the light, as those who had been long absent from what they loved, and were now approaching unto it, and in fair hope to enjoy what they most earnestly desired: "We will go; we will make haste, and delay no longer. *Ipsa festinatio tarda est*, "Speed itself is but slow paced." We cannot be there soon enough.

Fifthly and lastly: *The place where they will serve God*: not one of their own choosing; not the groves, or hills, or high places; no oratory which pride, or malice, or faction had erected; but a place appointed and set apart by God himself. *Servient Domino in domo sua*: "They will serve the Lord in his own house." They said unto me, "We will go into the house of the Lord." *Anthony Farindon.*

Verse 1. *Let us go into the house of the Lord.* "Let us go," spoken by one hundred men in any city to those over whom they have influence, would raise a monster meeting... But who among those who thus single out the working classes, have gone to them and said, "Let us go—let us go together into the house of the Lord"? The religious adviser, standing at a distance from the multitude, has advised, and warned, and pleaded, saying, "Go, or you will not escape perdition; "Why don't you go?" The Christian visitor has likewise used this kind of influence; but how few have taken the working man by the hand, and said, "Let us go together"? You can *bring* multitudes whom you never can send. Many who would never come alone would come most willingly under the shadow of your company. Then,

brethren, to your nonattending neighbour say, "Let us go"; to reluctant members of your own family say, "Let us go"; to those who once went to the house of God in your company, but who have backslidden from worship say, "Let us go"; to all whose ear, and mind, and heart, you can command for such a purpose say, "Let us go—let us go together into the house of the Lord." *Samuel Martin* (1817-1878), in a Sermon entitled "*Gladness in the Prospect of Public Worship.*"

Verse 1. *I was glad when they said unto me*, etc. Such in kind, but far greater in degree, is the gladness, which the pious soul experiences when she is called hence; when descending angels say unto her, Thy labour and sorrow are at an end, and the hour of thy enlargement is come; put off immortality and misery at once; quit thy house of bondage, and the land of thy captivity; fly forth, and "let us go together into the house of the Lord, not made with hands, eternal in the heavens." *George Horne.*

Verses 1-2. This is a mutual exhortation. The members of the church invite each other: "Let us go into the house of the Lord." It is not enough to say, Go you to church, and I shall stop at home. That will never do. We must invite by example as well as by precept. Mark the plural forms: "Let *us* go into the house of God. *Our* feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem." We are to speak as Moses did to Hobab, his brother-in-law, "Come thou with us, and we will do thee good; for the Lord hath spoken good concerning Israel." The same duty is binding upon us, with regard to those who make no profession of religion, and whose feet never stand in the house of God. Zechariah, in an animated picture of the future glories of the church, describes the newborn zeal of the converts as taking this direction. They cannot but speak of what they have seen and heard, and others must share in their joy. "And the inhabitants of one city shall go to another, saying, Let us go speedily to pray before the Lord, and to seek the Lord of hosts: I will go also." *N. M`michael.*

Verse 2. With what a blessed hope do they, while they are here in this mortal life, lift up their affections, desires, and thoughts to the heavenly country, because they are able to say with the prophet, *Our feet stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.* Like those who haste to any place, they are said to be always thinking as if they were already there, and in reality they are there in mind though not in body, and are able greatly to comfort others. What wonder, if a righteous man, wishing to comfort others, should thus speak, "*Our feet stand, i.e., our desires, our contemplations, shall be fixed and stable in thy courts, O Jerusalem; i.e., in the mansions of the heavenly kingdom, so that our conversation shall be in heaven, and all our works be done in relation to eternal life, for which we long with greatest intensity of desire. This is not that Jerusalem which killed the prophets and stoned those that were sent unto her, but that where the perfect vision of peace reigns.*" *Paulus Palanterius.*

Verse 2. *Our feet shall stand within thy gates, O Jerusalem.* Dr. Clarke, in his travels, speaking of the companies that were travelling from the East to Jerusalem, represents the procession as being very long, and, after climbing over the extended and heavy ranges of hills that bounded the way, some of

the foremost at length reached the top of the last hill, and, stretching up their hands in gestures of joy, cried out, "The Holy City! The Holy City!"—and fell down and worshipped; while those who were behind pressed forward to see. So the dying Christian, when he gets on the last summit of life, and stretches his vision to catch a glimpse of the heavenly city, may cry out of its glories, and incite those who are behind to press forward to the sight. *Edward Payson, 1783-1827.*

Verse 2. *O Jerusalem.* The celestial city is full in my view. Its glories beam upon me, its breezes fan me, its odours are wafted to me, its sounds strike upon my ears, and its spirit is breathed into my heart. Nothing separates me from it but the river of death, which now appears but as an insignificant rill, that may be crossed at a single step, whenever God shall give permission. The Sun of Righteousness has been gradually drawing nearer and nearer, appearing larger and brighter as he approached, and now he fills the whole hemisphere; pouring forth a flood of glory, in which I seem to float like an insect in the beams of the sun; exulting, yet almost trembling, while I gaze on this excessive brightness, and wondering, with unutterable wonder, why God should deign thus to shine upon a sinful worm. *Edward Payson's dying experience.*

Verse 2. *O Jerusalem*

Lo, towered Jerusalem salutes the eyes!
A thousand pointing fingers tell the tale;
"Jerusalem!" a thousand voices cry,
"All hail, Jerusalem!" hill, down, and dale
Catch the glad sounds, and shout "Jerusalem, all hail."
—*Torquato Tasso, 1544-1595.*

Verse 4. *The tribes* are "the tribes of the Lord, "as being the keepers of his commandments. *H. T. Armfield.*

Verse 4. *Unto the testimony of Israel, and to give thanks unto the name of the Lord.* These two mean nothing else than that in Jerusalem was the appointed place where the word was to be taught and prayer offered. But these ought to be written in golden letters, because David says nothing about the other services, but only of these two. He does not say that the Temple was divinely appointed, that there the victims should be sacrificed; that there incense should be offered; that oblations and sacrifices should be brought; that each one should by his gifts show his gratitude. He says nothing about these things, although only in the Temple were they commanded to be done. He makes mention only of prayer and of thanksgiving. *Martin Luther.*

Verse 4. *The testimony of Israel.* The object which is represented in the Psalm as having power to attract all hearts, and command the ready attendance of the tribes, is "*the testimony of Israel*," "the revelation, in other words, which God made to that people of his character, feelings, and purposes, as most holy, yet ready to forgive, a just God and the Saviour. This discovery of the nature of that

great Being before whom all must appear, is justly regarded as a ground of joy. *Robert Nisbet.*

Verses 4-5. Observe what a goodly sight it was to see *the testimony of Israel* and the *thrones of judgment* such near neighbours; and they are good neighbours, which may greatly befriend one another. Let "*the testimony of Israel*" direct the "*thrones of judgment*," and the "*thrones of judgment*" protect "*the testimony of Israel*." *Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5. Thrones of judgment. On a throne of ivory, brought from Africa or India, the throne of many an Arabian legend, the kings of Judah were solemnly seated on the day of their accession. From its lofty seat, and under that high gateway, Solomon and his successors after him delivered their solemn judgments. That "porch" or "gate of justice," still kept alive the likeness of the old patriarchal custom of sitting in judgment at the gate; exactly as the Gate of Justice still recalls it to us at Granada, and the Sublime Porte—"the Lofty Gate" at Constantinople. He sat on the back of a golden bull, its head turned over its shoulder, probably the ox or bull of Ephraim; under his feet, on each side of the steps, were six golden lions, probably the lions of Judah. This was "the seat of judgment." This was the throne of the house of David. *Arthur Penrhyn Stanley, in "Lectures on the History of the Jewish Church."*

Verse 5. It was a worthy commendation that David uttered in the praise of Jerusalem when he said, *There is the seat for judgment;* the which appointing of that seat for judgment was an argument that they loved justice. And first, the place wherein it was set assures us hereof, for it was set in the gate, where through men might have passage to and from the judgment seat. Secondly, the manner of framing the seat in the gate, namely, that the judges of force must sit with their faces towards the rising of the sun, in token that then judgment should be as pure from corruption, as the sun was clear in his chiefest brightness. Oh happy house of David, whose seat was set so conveniently, whose causes were heard so carefully, and matters judged so justly! *Henry Smith, 1560-1591.*

Verse 6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. By praying for Jerusalem's peace is meant such serene times wherein the people of God might enjoy his pure worship without disturbance. The Church has always had her vicissitudes, sometimes fair, and sometimes foul weather; but her winter commonly longer than her summer; yea, at the same time that the Sun of peace brings day to one part of it, another is wrapped up in the night of persecution. Universal peace over all the churches is a great rarity. *William Gumall.*

Verse 6. Pray for the peace of Jerusalem. When the Wesleyan Methodists opened a chapel at Painswick, near his own meeting, the late excellent Cornelius Winter prayed three times publicly the preceding Sabbath for their encouragement and success. When Mr. Hoskins, of Bristol, the Independent minister of Castle Green, opened a meeting in Temple Street; what did the incomparable Easterbrooke, the Vicar of the parish? The morning it was opened, he was almost the first that entered it, He seated himself near the pulpit. When the service was over, he met the

preacher at the foot of the stairs, and shaking him with both hands, said aloud: "I thank you cordially, my dear brother, for coming to my help—here is room enough for us both; and work enough for us both; and much more than we can both accomplish: and I hope the Lord will bless our cooperation in this good cause." *William Jay.*

Verse 6. *Pray (with this princely prophet) for the peace of Jerusalem.* I wish I could express the incomparable sweetness of this little *hemistichium*. I guess, the Holy Ghost was pleased to let the Psalmist play the poet here: the Psalms are holy poetry. The original words have such elegancy here, as (I think) all the Scripture cannot parallel this verse. It is in English inexpressible. For the point in hand only, he bids us pray for the peace of *Jerusalem*. *Peace* denominates *Jerusalem*, `tis the etymon of the word, it means *the vision of peace*. David by that term most sweetly alludes to the name of the city, yet conceals his wit; which could have been made more open: he said, מלך מלך מלך, "*Pray for the peace of Salem.*" For so it was called too, called first so, called still so (Ps 76:2) "At Salem is his tabernacle." That word merely sounds peace: God would have his Church the house of peace; and his temple there David might not build because he was a man of war; but Solomon his son, who had his name of peace, must build it. Christ, whose the church is, she his spouse, would not be born in Julius Caesar's reign; he was a warrior too: but in Augustus's days, who reigned in peace. And this may be a reason too, if you please, why David bids pray but for peace only, an earthly blessing. That word most fitted his art here, and sounded best. But under that word, by poetical *synecdoche*, he couched all heavenly blessings. *Richard Clarke, 1634.*

Verse 6. *Pray, etc.* Our praying for the church giveth us a share in all the church's prayers; we have a venture in every ship of prayer that maketh a voyage for heaven, if our hearts be willing to pray for the church; and if not, we have no share in it. Let no man flatter himself: they that *pray not* for the church of God *love not* the church of God. *Let them prosper that love thee*; that is, that *pray* for thee, the one is the counterpart of the other. If we do not love it, we will not pray for it; and if we do not pray for it, we do not love it. Yea, if we pray not for the church, *we lose* our share in the prayers of the church. You will say that man hath a great estate that hath a part in every ship at sea; and yet to have an adventure in all the prayers that are made to heaven is better than all the world. All the church's prayers are for all the living members of it, viz.—the blessings will be to them, for a man to have a venture ill every ship of prayer of all the churches throughout all the world. I would not (for my part) leave my share in it for all the world; and that man hath no share in it that will not afford a prayer for the church. *John Stoughton, 1640.*

Verse 6. *They shall prosper that love thee.* The word "*prosper*" conveys an idea which is not in the original. The Hebrew word means *to be secure, tranquil, at rest*, spoken especially of one who enjoys quiet prosperity: Job 3:26 12:6. The essential idea is that of quietness or rest; and the meaning here is, that those who love Zion *will* have peace; or, that the tendency of that love is to produce peace.

See Ro 5:1. The prayer was for "peace"; the thought in connexion with that was naturally that those who loved Zion *would* have peace. It is indeed true, in general, that they who love Zion, or who serve God, *will* "prosper"; but that is not the truth taught here. The idea is that they will have *peace*:—peace with God; peace in their own consciences; peace in the prospect of death and of the future world; peace amidst the storms and tempests of life; peace in death, in the grave, and for ever. *Albert Barnes.*

Verse 6. *They shall prosper that love thee.* Seeing they prosper that love and bear affection to Jerusalem, let men learn to show good will unto Christ's church, though as yet they be no ripe scholars themselves in Christ's school: though they be not grown to perfection let them express a good affection. A good will and inclination, where strength yet faileth, is accepted, and a ready disposition is not rejected: though thou be not yet of the saints, yet love the saints. If thou likest and lovest that thou wouldst be, thou must be that hereafter which yet thou art not. The little bird before she flieth fluttereth with her wings in the nest: the child creepeth before he goeth: so religion begins with affection, and devotion proceedeth from desire. A man must first love that he would be, before he can be that which he loveth. It is a good sign when a man affecteth that which he expects, and doth favour that which he would more fully favour. He that loveth Sion shall prosper: he that loveth virtue shall increase and prosper in it. The day of small things shall not be despised (Zec 4:10), neither shall the smoking flax be quenched (Mt 12:20); but the smoke shall bring forth fire, and fire shall break forth into a flame. *Andrew Willett (1562-1621), in "Certaine Fruitfull Meditations upon the 122. Psalme."*

Verse 6. They shall prosper that love thee. The reverse is also true. "None ever took a stone out of the Temple, but the dust did fly into his eyes." *Jewish Proverb.*

Verses 6-9. In this cordial and even impassioned invocation, it is curious to find one of those puns, or plays on words, which are characteristic of Hebrew poetry. The leading words of the strophe are "*peace*" and "*prosperity*." Now the Hebrew word for "*peace*" is *shalom*, and the Hebrew word for "*prosperity*" is *shalvah*, while the Hebrew form of "Jerusalem, "which means "City of Peace, "is *Yeru-shalaim*. So that, in effect, the poet wishes *shalom* and *shalvah* on *shalaim*—"peace" and "prosperity" on "the City of Peace." Such an use of words may not strike us as indicating any very subtle or profound sense of humour, or any remarkable artistic skill. But we must always remember that it is always difficult for one race to appreciate the humour, or wit, of another race. We must also remember that this art of playing on words and the sound of words—an art of which we are growing weary—was very novel and surprising to men not surfeited with it as we are, and who were themselves for the most part quite incapable of the simplest dexterities of speech. *Samuel Cox.*

Verse 7. *Peace be within thy walls.* The Church is a war town, and a walled town, which is situated among enemies, and may not trust them who are without, but must be upon its keeping, as the type

thereof, Jerusalem, with her walls and towers, did shadow forth. *David Dickson*.

Verse 7. *Within thy walls.* Or, To thy outward wall. Josephus tells us (Book V.) that there were at Jerusalem three ranges or rows of walls. The sense here is, Let no enemy approach so much as to thy out works to disturb thee. *Thomas Fenton*.

Verse 8. *For my brethren and companions' sakes.* Because they dwell there; or, because they go up there to worship; or, because they love thee, and find their happiness in thee; or, because they are unconverted, and all my hope of their salvation is to be derived from thee,—from the church, from the influence of religion. *Albert Barnes*.

Verse 8. *My brethren.* On another occasion, an elderly native, formerly a cannibal, addressing the Church members, said, "Brethren!" and, pausing for a moment, continued, "Ah! that is a new name; we did not know the true meaning of that word in our heathenism. It is the `Evangelia a Jesu' that has taught us the meaning of `brethren.'" *William Gill, in "Gems from the Coral Islands, "1869.*

Verse 9. *Because of the house of the Lord.* The city that was the scene of so immense assemblies had necessarily a peculiar character of its own. It existed for them, it lived by them. There were priests needed for the conduct of the worship, twenty four courses of them and 20,000 men. There were Levites, their servants, in immense numbers, needed to watch, maintain, clean the temple—to do the menial and ministering work necessary to its elaborate service and stupendous acts of worship. There were scribes needed for the interpretation of the law, men skilled in the Scriptures and tradition, with names like Gamaliel, so famed for wisdom as to draw young men like Saul from distant Tarsus, or Apollos from rich Alexandria. There were synagogues, 480 of them at least, where the rabbis read and the people heard the word which God had in past times spoken unto the fathers by the prophets. The city was indeed in a sense the religion of Israel, incorporated and localized, and the man who loved the one turned daily his face toward the other, saying, "My soul longeth, yea, even fainteth for the courts of Jahveh." *A. M. Fairbairn, in "Studies in the Life of Christ, "1881.*

Verse 9. *I will seek thy good.* It is not a cold wish; it is not a careless, loose seeking after it, that is the phrase in my text—"I will seek thy good." It is not a careless, loose seeking after it, almost as indifferently as a woman seeks after a pin which she has dropped; no, no; effort is implied. "I will seek"; I will throw my energies into it; my powers, my faculties, my property, my time, my influence, my connections, my family, my house, all that I have under my command shall, as far as I have power to command, and as far as God gives me ability to turn them to such a use, be employed in an effort to promote the interests of Zion. *Joseph Irons, 1786-1852.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Whole Psalm. Observe,

1. The joy with which they were to go up to Jerusalem: Ps 122:1-2.

2. The great esteem they were to have of Jerusalem: Ps 122:3-5.

3. The great concern they were to have for Jerusalem, and the prayers they were to put up for its welfare. *M. Henry.*

Verse 1.

1. David was glad to go to the house of the Lord. It was the house of the Lord therefore he desired to go. He preferred it to his own house.

2. He was glad when others said to him, "Let us go." The distance may be great, the weather may be rough, still, "Let us go."

3. He was glad to say it to others, "Let us go, "and to persuade others to accompany him. *G. R.*

Verse 1.

1. Joy in prospect of religious worship.

a) Because of the instruction we receive.

b) Because of the exercises in which we engage.

c) Because of the society in which we mingle.

d) Because of the sacred interests we promote.

2. Joy in the invitation to religious worship.

a) Because it shows others are interested in the service of God.

b) Because it shows their interest in us.

c) Because it furthers the interests of Zion. *F.J.B.*

Verse 1. Gladness of God's house. Are you "glad when, "etc.? Why glad?

1. That I have a house of the Lord to which I may go.

2. That any feel enough interest in me to say, "Let us go, " etc.

3. That I am able to go to God's house.

4. That I am disposed to go.

—J. G. Butler, in "The Preacher's Monthly, "1882.

Verse 1. *I was glad, etc.* So says,

1. *The devout worshipper*, who is glad to be invited to God's earthly house. It is his home, his school, his hospital, his bank.

2. *The adhesive Christian*, who is glad to be invited to God's spiritual house. Church is builded together, etc. There would he find a settled rest. Has no sympathies with religious gipsies, or no church people.

3. The *dying saint*, who is glad to be invited to God's heavenly house.

Simeon—Stephen—Peter—Paul. *W. J.*

Verse 1.

1. The duty of attending the services of God's house.

2. The duty of exciting one another to go.
3. The benefit of being thus excited. *F.J.B.*

Verse 2. Here is,

1. Personal attendance: "*My feet shall stand,*" etc.
2. Personal security: "*My feet shall stand.*"
3. Personal fellowship: "*O Jerusalem.*" *G. R.*

Verse 2. The inside of the church. The honour, privilege, joy, and fellowship of standing there.

Verse 3.

1. A type of the New Jerusalem.
 - a) As chosen by God.
 - b) As founded upon a rock.
 - c) As taken from an enemy.
2. A type of its prosperity: "*Builted as a city.*"
3. A type of its perfection: "*Compact together.*" *G. R.*

Verse 3. The unity of the church.

1. Implied in all covenant dealings.
2. Suggested by all Scriptural metaphors.
3. Prayed for by our Lord.
4. Promoted by the gifts of the Spirit.
5. To be maintained by us all.

Verses 3-4. The united church the growing church.

Verse 4.

1. The duty of public worship.
 - a) In one place: "*Whither the tribes go up.*"
 - b) In one company, though of many tribes: "*Whither the tribes go up.*"
2. The design.
 - a) For instruction: "*Unto the testimony of Israel.*"
 - b) For praise: "*To give thanks unto the name of the Lord.*" *G. R.*

Verse 5.

1. There are thrones of judgment in the sanctuary. Men are judged there.
 - a) By the law.
 - b) By their own consciences.
 - c) By the gospel.
2. There are thrones of grace: "*Of the house of David.*"
 - a) Of David's Son in the hearts of his people.

b) Of his people in David's Son. *G.R.*

Verse 6.

1. The prayer,

a) "For Jerusalem": not for ourselves merely, or for the world; but for the church. For the babes in grace; for the young men, and for the fathers. For the pastors, with the deacons and elders.

b) For the "peace" of Jerusalem. Inward peace and outward peace.

2. The promise.

a) To whom given: "They that love thee."

b) The promise itself: "They shall prosper"—individually and collectively.

Or,

1. Love to Jerusalem is the effect of true piety.

2. Prayer for Jerusalem is the effect of that love.

3. The peace of Jerusalem is the effect of that prayer; and,

4. The prosperity of Jerusalem is the effect of that peace. *G.R.*

Verse 6. God has connected giving and receiving, scattering and increasing, sowing and reaping, praying and prospering.

1. What we must do if we would prosper—"Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."

a) Comprehensively: "Peace"—spiritual, social, ecclesiastical, national.

b) Supremely: "Prefer Jerusalem above, "etc.

c) Practically: "Let peace rule in your hearts." "Seek peace and pursue it."

2. What we shall gain if we pray thus—"Prosperity."

a) Temporal prosperity may thus come. God turned again the captivity of Job when he prayed for his friends.

b) Spiritual prosperity shall thus come. Affairs of soul—holy exercises and services.

c) Numerical prosperity will thus come. "Increased with men as a flock." *W. J.*

Verses 6-9.

1. The blessings desired for the church.

a) Peace.

b) Prosperity. Notice the order and connection of these two.

2. The way to secure them.

a) Prayer: "Pray for the peace of Jerusalem."

b) Delight in the service of God: "I was glad, "etc.

c) Practical effort: "I will seek thy good."

3. Reasons for seeking them.

a) For our own sake: "They shall prosper," etc.

- b) For our companions' sake.
- c) For the sake of the "house of the Lord." *F. J. B.*

Verse 7.

1. Where peace is most desirable: "Within thy walls." Within town walls, within house walls, but principally within temple walls.

2. Where prosperity is most desirable.

a) In the closet.

b) In the church. These are the palaces of the Great King; "The ivory palaces whereby they have made thee glad." *G. R.*

Verse 7. The connection between peace and prosperity.

Verse 7. *Thy walls.*

1. Enquire why the church needs walls.

2. Enquire what are the walls of a church.

3. Enquire on which side of them we are.

Verse 7. The church a palace.

1. Intended for the great King.

2. Inhabited by the royal family.

3. Adorned with regal splendour.

4. Guarded by special power.

5. Known as the court of the blessed and only potentate.

Verses 8-9. Two great principles are here laid down why we should pray for the church,

1. Love to the brethren: "For my brethren and companions' sakes."

2. Love to God: "Because of the house of the Lord our God I will seek thy good." *N. M' michael.*

Verse 9. *I will seek thy good.*

1. By prayer for the church.

2. By service in the church.

3. By bringing others to attend.

4. By keeping the peace.

5. By living so as to commend religion.

WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SECOND PSALM

In "*Chandler's Life of David*," vol. 2. pp. 131-4, there is an Exposition of this Psalm.

Ecclesia Triumphans: That is, the Joy of the English Church, for the Happie Coronation of the most vertuous and pious Prince.

JAMES by the grace of God King of England, Scotland, France, and Ireland. . . . With a briefe

Exposition of the 122. Psalme, and fit application to the time... The second edition. By ANDREW WILLETT.] Printed by IOHN LEGAT, Printer to the Vniuersitie of Cambridge, 1614. Folio. This Exposition is generally to be found bound up with Willett's "Harmonie vpon the First Booke of Samuel."

Psalm 123

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. A Song of degrees. We are climbing. The first step (Ps. 120) saw us lamenting our troublesome surroundings, and the next saw us lifting our eyes to the hills and resting in assured security; from this we rose to delight in the house of the Lord; but here we look to the Lord himself, and this is the highest ascent of all by many degrees. The eyes are now looking above the hills, and above Jehovah's footstool on earth, to his throne in the heavens. Let us know it as "the Psalm of the eyes". Old authors call it Oculus "Sperans", or the eye of hope. It is a short Psalm, written with singular art, containing one thought, and expressing it in a most engaging manner. Doubtless it would be a favourite song among the people of God. It has been conjectured that this brief song, or rather sigh, may have first been heard in the days of Nehemiah, or under the persecutions of Antiochus. It may be so, but there is no evidence of it; it seems to us quite as probable that afflicted ones in all periods after David's time found this psalm ready to their hand. If it appears to describe days remote from David, it is all the more evident that the Psalmist was also a prophet, and sang what he saw in vision.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Unto thee lift I up mine eyes.* It is good to have some one to look up to. The Psalmist looked so high that he could look no higher. Not to the hills, but to the God of the hills he looked. He believed in a personal God, and knew nothing of that modern pantheism which is nothing more than atheism wearing a fig leaf. The uplifted eyes naturally and instinctively represent the state of heart which fixes desire, hope, confidence, and expectation upon the Lord. God is everywhere, and yet it is most natural to think of him as being above us, in that glory land which lies beyond the skies. "O thou that dwellest in the heavens", just sets forth the unsophisticated idea of a child of God in distress: God is, God is in heaven, God resides in one place, and God is evermore the same, therefore will I look to him. When we cannot look to any helper on a level with us, it is greatly wise to look above us; in fact, if we have a thousand helpers, our eyes should still be toward the Lord. The higher the Lord is the

better for our faith, since that height represents power, glory, and excellence, and these will be all engaged on our behalf. We ought to be very thankful for spiritual eyes; the blind men of this world, however much of human learning they may possess, cannot behold our God, for in heavenly matters they are devoid of sight. Yet we must use our eyes with resolution, for they will not go upward to the Lord of themselves, but they incline to look downward, or inward, or anywhere but to the Lord: let it be our firm resolve that the heavenward glance shall not be lacking. If we cannot see God, at least we will look towards him. God is in heaven as a king in his palace; he is here revealed, adored, and glorified: thence he looks down on the world and sends succours to his saints as their needs demand; hence we look up, even when our sorrow is so great that we can do no more. It is a blessed condescension on God's part that he permits us to lift up our eyes to his glorious high throne; yea, more, that he invites and even commands us so to do. When we are looking to the Lord in hope, it is well to tell him so in prayer: the Psalmist uses his voice as well as his eye. We need not speak in prayer; a glance of the eye will do it all; for—

"Prayer is the burden of a sigh,
The falling of a tear,
The upward glancing of an eye
When none but God is near."

Still, it is helpful to the heart to use the tongue, and we do well to address ourselves in words and sentences to the God who heareth his people. It is no small joy that our God is always at home: he is not on a journey, like Baal, but he dwells in the heavens. Let us think no hour of the day inopportune for waiting upon the Lord; no watch of the night too dark for us to look to him.

Verse 2. Behold—for it is worthy of regard among men, and O that the Majesty of heaven would also note it, and speedily send the mercy which our waiting spirits seek. See, O Lord, how we look to thee, and in thy mercy look on us. This Behold has, however, a call to us to observe and consider. Whenever saints of God have waited upon the Lord their example has been worthy of earnest consideration. Sanctification is a miracle of grace; therefore let us behold it. For God to have wrought in men the spirit of service is a great marvel, and as such let all men turn aside and see this great sight. "As the eyes of servants (or slaves) look unto the hand of their masters." They stand at the end of the room with their hands folded watching their lord's movements. Orientals speak less than we do, and prefer to direct their slaves by movements of their hands: hence, the domestic must fix his eyes on his master, or he might miss a sign, and so fail to obey it: even so, the sanctified man lifts his eyes unto God, and endeavours to learn the divine will from every one of the signs which the Lord is pleased to use. Creation, providence, grace; these are all motions of Jehovah's hand, and from each of them a portion of our duty is to be learned; therefore should we carefully study them, to discover the divine will. "And as the eyes of a maiden unto the hand of her mistress, "this second comparison

may be used because Eastern women are even more thorough than the men in the training of their servants. It is usually thought that women issue more commands, and are more sensitive of disobedience, than the sterner sex. Among the Roman matrons female slaves had a sorry time of it, and no doubt it was the same among the generality of Eastern ladies. "Even so our eyes wait upon the Lord our God." Believers desire to be attentive to each and all of the directions of the Lord; even those which concern apparently little things are not little to us, for we know that even for idle words we shall be called to account, and we are anxious to give in that account with joy, and not with grief. True saints, like obedient servants, look to the Lord their God reverentially: they have a holy awe and inward fear of the great and glorious One. They watch, obediently, doing his commandments, guided by his eye. Their constant gaze is fixed attentively on all that comes from the Most High; they give earnest heed, and fear lest they should let anything slip through inadvertence or drowsiness. They look continuously, for there never is a time when they are off duty; at all times they delight to serve in all things: Upon the Lord they fix their eyes expectantly, looking for supply, succour, and safety from his hands, waiting that he may have mercy upon them. To him they look singly, they have no other confidence, and they learn to look submissively, waiting patiently for the Lord, seeking both in activity and suffering to glorify his name. When they are smitten with the rod they turn their eyes imploringly to the hand which chastens, hoping that mercy will soon abate the rigour of the affliction. There is much more in the figure than we can display in this brief comment; perhaps it will be most profitable to suggest the question.—Are we thus trained to service? Though we are sons, have we learned the full obedience of servants? Have we surrendered self, and bowed our will before the heavenly Majesty? Do we desire in all things to be at the Lord's disposal? If so, happy are we. Though we are made joint heirs with Christ, yet for the present we differ little from servants, and may be well content to take them for our model.

Verse 3. *Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us.* He hangs upon the word "mercy," and embodies it in a vehement prayer: the very word seems to hold him, and he harps upon it. It is well for us to pray about everything, and turn everything into prayer; and especially when we are reminded of a great necessity we should catch at it as a keynote, and pitch our tune to it. The reduplication of the prayer before us is meant to express the eagerness of the Psalmist's spirit and his urgent need: what he needed speedily he begs for importunately. Note that he has left the first person singular for the plural. All the saints need mercy; they all seek it; they shall all have it, therefore we pray—"have mercy upon us". A slave when corrected looks to his master's hand that the punishment may cease, and even so we look to the Lord for mercy, and entreat for it with all our hearts. Our contemptuous opponents will have no mercy upon us; let us not ask it at their hands, but turn to the God of mercy, and seek his aid alone. "For we are exceedingly filled with contempt," and this is an acid which eats into the soul. Observe the emphatic words. Contempt is bitterness, wormwood mingled with gall; he

that feels it may well cry for mercy to his God. Filled with contempt, as if the bitter wine had been poured in till it was up to the brim. This had become the chief thought of their minds, the peculiar sorrow of their hearts. Excluding all other feelings, a sense of scorn monopolized the soul and made it unutterably wretched. Another word is added adverbially—exceedingly filled. Filled even to running over, as if pressed down and then heaped up. A little contempt they could bear, but now they were satiated with it, and weary of it. Do we wonder at the threefold mention of mercy when this master evil was in the ascendant? Nothing is more wounding, embittering, festering than disdain. When our companions make little of us we are far too apt to make little of ourselves and of the consolations prepared for us. Oh to be filled with communion, and then contempt will run off from us, and never be able to fill us with its biting vinegar.

Verse 4. *Our soul is exceedingly filled with the scorning of those that are at ease.* Knowing no troubles of their own, the easy ones grow cruel and deride the people of the Lord. Having the godly already in secret contempt, they show it by openly scorning them. Note those who do this: they are not the poor, the humble, the troubled, but those who have a merry life of it, and are self content. They are in easy circumstances; they are easy in heart through a deadened conscience, and so they easily come to mock at holiness; they are easy from needing nothing, and from having no severe toil exacted from them; they are easy as to any anxiety to improve, for their conceit of themselves is boundless. Such men take things easily, and therefore they scorn the holy carefulness of those who watch the hand of the Lord. They say, Who is the Lord that we should obey his voice? and then they turn round with a contemptuous look and sneer at those who fear the Lord. Woe unto them that are at ease in Zion; their contempt of the godly shall hasten and increase their misery. The injurious effect of freedom from affliction is singularly evident here. Place a man perfectly at ease and he derides the suffering godly, and becomes himself proud in heart and conduct. "And with the contempt of the proud". The proud think so much of themselves that they must needs think all the less of those who are better than themselves. Pride is both contemptible and contemptuous. The contempt of the great ones of the earth is often peculiarly acrid: some of them, like a well known statesman, are "masters of gibes and flouts and sneers", and never do they seem so much at home in their acrimony as when a servant of the Lord is the victim of their venom. It is easy enough to write upon this subject, but to be selected as the target of contempt is quite another matter. Great hearts have been broken and brave spirits have been withered beneath the accursed power of falsehood, and the horrible blight of contempt. For our comfort we may remember that our divine Lord was despised and rejected of men, yet he ceased not from his perfect service till he was exalted to dwell in the heavens. Let us bear our share of this evil which still rages under the sun, and let us firmly believe that the contempt of the ungodly shall turn to our honour in the world to come: even now it serves as a certificate that we are not of the world, for if we were of the world the world would love us as its own.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. This psalm (as ye see) is but short, and therefore a very fit example to show the force of prayer not to consist in many words, but in fervency of spirit. For great and weighty matters may be comprised in a few words, if they proceed from the spirit and the unspeakable groanings of the heart, especially when our necessity is such as will not suffer any long prayer. Every prayer is long enough if it be fervent and proceed from a heart that understandeth the necessity of the saints.—Martin Luther.

Whole Psalm. The change of performers in this psalm is very evident; the pronoun in the first distich is in the first person singular, in the rest of psalm the first plural is used.—*Stephen Street*.

Whole Psalm. This psalm has one distinction which is to be found in "scarcely any other piece in the Old Testament." In the Hebrew it has many rhymes. But these rhymes are purely accidental. They result simply from the fact that many words are used in it with the same inflections, and therefore with the same or similar terminations. Regularly recurring and intentional rhymes are not a characteristic of Hebrew poetry, any more than they were of Greek or Latin poetry.—*Samuel Cox*.

Verse 1. *Unto thee lift I up mine eyes.* He who previously lifted his eyes unto the hills, now hath raised his heart's eyes to the Lord himself.—*The Venerable Bede (672-735), in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1. *Unto thee lift I up mine eyes, etc.* This is the sigh of the pilgrim who ascendeth and loveth, and ascendeth because he loveth. He is ascending from earth to heaven, and while he is ascending, unto whom shall he lift his eyes, but unto him that dwelleth in heaven? We ascend to heaven each time we think of God. In that ascent lies all goodness: if we would repent, we must look not on ourselves, but on him; if we would be humble, we must look not on ourselves, but on him; if we would truly love, we must look not on ourselves, but on him who dwelleth in the heavens. If we would have him turn his eyes from our sins, we must turn our eyes unto his mercy and truth.—*Plain Commentary.*

Verse 1. *Unto thee lift I up mine eyes.* Praying by the glances of the eye rather than by words; mine afflictions having swollen my heart too big for my mouth.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1. *Unto thee do I lift up mine eyes.* You feel the greatness of the contrast these words imply. Earth and heaven, dust and deity; the poor, weeping, sinful children of mortality, the holy, ever blessed, eternal God: how wide is the interval of separation between them! But over the awful chasm, broader than ocean though it be, love and wisdom in the person of Jesus Christ, have thrown a passage, by which the most sinful may repair unafraid to his presence, and find the shame and the fears of guilt exchanged for the peace of forgiveness and the hope that is full of immortality.—*Robert Nisbet.*

Verse 1. There are many testimonies in the lifting up of the eyes to heaven. 1. It is the testimony of a believing, humble heart. Infidelity will never carry a man above the earth. Pride can carry a man no

higher than the earth either. 2. It is the testimony of an obedient heart. A man that lifts up his eye to God, he acknowledgeth thus much,—Lord, I am thy servant. 3. It is the testimony of a thankful heart; acknowledging that every good blessing, every perfect gift, is from the hand of God. 4. It is the testimony of a heavenly heart. He that lifts up his eyes to heaven acknowledgeth that he is weary of the earth; his heart is not there; his hope and desire is above. 5. It is the testimony of a devout heart: there is no part of the body besides the tongue that is so great an agent in prayer as the eye.—*Condensed from Richard Holdsworth.*

Verse 1. *O thou that dwellest in the heavens.* "That sittest." The Lord is here contemplated as enthroned in heaven, where he administers the affairs of the Universe, executes judgment, and hears prayer.—*James G. Murphy.*

Verses 1, 2. The lifting up the eyes, implies faith and confident persuasion that God is ready and willing to help us. The very lifting up of the bodily eyes towards heaven is an expression of this inward trust: so David in effect saith, From thee, Lord, I expect relief, and the fulfilling of thy promises. So that there is faith in it, that faith which is the evidence of things not seen. How great soever the darkness of our calamities be, though the clouds of present troubles thicken about us, and hide the Lord's care and loving kindness from us, yet faith must look through all to his power and constancy of truth and love. The eye of faith is a clear, piercing, eagle eye: Moses "endured, as seeing him who is invisible:" Heb 11:27. Faith seeth things afar off in the promises (Heb 11:13), at a greater distance than the eye of nature can reach to. Take it either for the eye of the body, or the mind, faith will draw comfort not only from that which is invisible, but also from that which is future as well as invisible; its supports lie in the other world, and in things which are yet to come.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verses 1, 2. In the first strophe the poet places himself before us as standing in the presence of the Majesty of Heaven, with his eyes fixed on the hand of God, absorbed in watchful expectation of some sign or gesture, however slight, which may indicate the divine will. He is like a slave standing silent but alert, in the presence of the Oriental "lord", with banns folded on his breast, and eyes fixed on his master, seeking to read, and to anticipate, if possible, his every wish. He is like a maiden in attendance on her mistress, anxiously striving to see her mind in her looks, to discover and administer to her moods and wants. The grave, reserved Orientals, as we know, seldom speak to their attendants, at least on public occasions. They intimate their wishes and commands by a wave of the hand, by a glance of the eye, by slight movements and gestures which might escape notice, were they not watched for with eager attention. Their slaves "hang upon their faces; "they" fasten their eyes" on the eyes of their master; they watch and obey every turn of his hand, every movement of his finger. Thus the Psalmist conceives of himself as waiting on God, looking to him alone, watching for the faintest signal, bent on catching and obeying it.—*Samuel Cox.*

Verse 2. *Behold.* An ordinary word, but here it hath an extraordinary position. Ordinarily it is a term of

attention, used for the awakening of men, to stir up their admiration and audience; but here it is a word not only prefixed for the exciting of men, but of God himself. David is speaking to God in his meditations. "Behold, " saith he. As we take it with respect to God, so it is a precatory particle: he beseeches God to look down upon him, while he looks up unto God: Look on us, as we look to thee; "Behold, Lord, as the eyes of servants, "etc. If we take it as it hath respect to man, so it is an exemplary particle, to stir them up to do the like. "Behold" what we do, and do likewise; let your eyes be like ours. "Behold, as the eyes of servants are to the hand of their masters, so are our eyes to the Lord our God." Let yours have the same fixing. So it is a word that draws all eyes after it to imitation.—*Richard Holdsworth.*

Verse 2. *Behold as the eyes of servants look,* etc. For direction, defence, maintenance, mercy in time of correction, help when the service is over hard, etc., "so do our eyes wait upon the Lord our God," viz., for direction and benediction.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 2. *Eyes of servants unto the hand,* etc. Our eyes ought to be to the hand of the Lord our God:—First, that we may admire his works. Secondly, that we may show that our service is pleasant to us; and to show our dependence on such a benign, mighty, and bountiful hand. Thirdly, that we may evince to him our love, and devoted willingness to do all things which he shall command by the slightest movement of a finger. Fourthly, that from him we may receive food, and all things necessary for sustenance. Fifthly, that he may be a defence for us against the enemies that molest us, either by smiting them with the sword, or by shooting of arrows; or by repelling others by the movement of a finger; or, at least, by covering us with the shield of his goodwill. Sixthly and lastly, that, moved by mercy, he would cease from chastisement.—*Condensed from Le Blanc.*

Verse 2. *As the eyes of servants look unto the hand of their masters,* etc. A traveller says, "I have seen a fine illustration of this passage in a gentleman's house at Damascus. The people of the East do not speak so much or so quick as those in the West, and a sign of the hand is frequently the only instructions given to the servants in waiting. As soon as we were introduced and seated on the divan, a wave of the master's hand indicated that sherbet was to be served. Another wave brought coffee and pipes; another brought sweetmeats. At another signal dinner was made ready. The attendants watched their master's eye and hand, to know his will and do it instantly." Such is the attention with which we ought to wait upon the Lord, anxious to fulfil his holy pleasure,—our great desire being, "Lord, what wilt thou have me to do?" An equally pointed and more homely illustration may be seen any day, on our own river Thames, or in any of our large seaport towns, where the call boy watches attentively the hand of the captain of the boat, and conveys his will to the engine men.—*The Sunday at Home.*

Verse 2. *As the eyes of slaves,* watching anxiously the least movement, the Smallest sign of their master's will. The image expresses complete and absolute dependence. Savary (in his Zettens on

Egypt, p. 135), says, "The slaves stand silent at the bottom of the rooms with their hands crossed over their breasts. With their eyes fixed upon their master they seek to anticipate every one of his wishes." ...In the Psalm the eye directed to the hand of God is the "oculus sperans", the eye which waits, and hopes, and is patient, looking only to him and none other for help.—*J.J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 2. *As the eyes of servants, etc.* The true explanation, I should apprehend, is this: As a slave, ordered by a master or mistress to be chastised for a fault, turns his or her imploring eyes to that superior, till that motion of the hand appears that puts an end to the bitterness that is felt; so our eyes are up to thee, our God, till thy hand shall give the signal for putting an end to our sorrows: for our enemies, O Lord, we are sensible, are only executing thy orders, and chastening us according to thy pleasure.—*Thomas Harmer.*

Verse 2. *Servants.* Note how humbly the faithful think of themselves in the sight of God. They are called and chosen to this dignity, to be the heirs and children of God, and are exalted above the angels, and yet, notwithstanding, they count themselves no better in God's sight than "servants." They say not here, Behold, like as children look to the hand of their fathers, but "as servants" to the hand of their masters. This is the humility and modesty of the godly, and it is so far off that hereby they lose the dignity of God's children, to the which they are called, that by this means it is made to them more sure and certain.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 2. From the everyday conduct of domestic servants we should learn our duty Godwards. Not without cause did our Saviour take his parables from common, everyday things, from fields, vines, trees, marriages, etc., that thus we might have everywhere apt reminders.—*Martin Geier.*

Verse 2. *Servants.* "A Maiden". Consider that there be two sorts of servants set down here, man servants and maid servants; and this is to let us know that both sexes may be confident in God. Not only may men be confident in the power of God, but even women also, who are more frail and feeble. Not only may women mourn to God for wrongs done to them, and have repentance for sin, but they may be confident in God also. And therefore see, in that rehearsal of believers and cloud of witnesses, not only is the faith of men noted and commended by the Spirit of God, but also the faith of women: and among the judges, Deborah, Jael, etc., are commended as worthies, and courageous in God. And the women also in the New Testament are noted for their following of Christ—even when all fled from him, then they followed him.—*From a Sermon by Alexander Henderson, 1583-1646.*

Verse 2. *Servants.* "A Maiden". We know how shamefully servants were treated in ancient times, and what reproaches must be cast upon them, whilst yet they durst not move a finger to repel the outrage. Being therefore deprived of all means of defending themselves, the only thing which remained for them to do was, what is here stated, to crave the protection of their masters. The same explanation is equally applicable to the case of handmaids. Their condition was indeed shameful and degrading; but there is no reason why we should be ashamed of, or offended at, being compared to slaves,

provided God is our defender, and takes our lives under his guardianship; God, I say, who purposely disarms us and strips us of all worldly aid, that we may learn to rely upon his grace, and to be contented with it alone. It having been anciently a capital crime for bondmen to carry a sword or any other weapon about them, and as they were exposed to injuries of every description, their masters were wont to defend them with so much the more spirit, when anyone causelessly did them violence. Nor can it be doubted that God, when he sees us placing an exclusive dependence upon his protection, and renouncing all confidence in our resources, will, as our defender, encounter and shield us from all the molestation that shall be offered to us.—*John Calvin*

Observe the covenant name, "Jehovah our God": it is sweet to wait upon a covenant God. Because of that covenant he will show mercy to us; but we may have to wait for it. "Until that he have mercy upon us:". God hath his time and season, and we must wait until it cometh. For the trial of our faith our blessed Lord may for awhile delay, but in the end the vision will be fulfilled. Mercy is that which we need, that which we look for, that which our Lord will manifest to us. Even those who look to the Lord, with that holy look which is here described, still need mercy, and as they cannot claim it by right they wait for it till sovereign grace chooses to vouchsafe it. Blessed are those servants whom their Master shall find so doing. Waiting upon the Lord is a posture suitable both for earth and heaven: it is, indeed, in every place the right and fitting condition for a servant of the Lord. Nor may we leave the posture so long as we are by grace dwellers in the realm of mercy. It is a great mercy to be enabled to wait for mercy, so much the more spirit, when anyone causelessly did them violence. Nor can it be doubted that God, when he sees us placing an exclusive dependence upon his protection, and renouncing all confidence in our own resources, will, as our defender, encounter and shield us from all the molestation that shall be offered to us.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 2. Hand. With the hand we demand, we promise, we call, dismiss, threaten, entreat, supplicate, deny, refuse, interrogate, admire, reckon, confess, repent; express fear, express shame, express doubt; we instruct, command, unite, encourage, swear, testify, accuse, condemn, acquit, insult, despise, defy, disdain, flatter, applaud, bless, abase, ridicule, reconcile, recommend, exalt, regale, gladden, complain, afflict, discomfort, discourage, astonish; exclaim, indicate silence, and what not? with a variety and a multiplication that keep pace with the tongue.—*Michael de Montaigne, 1533-1592.*

Verse 2. Masters. It is said of Mr. George Herbert, that divine poet, that, to satisfy his independency upon all others, and to quicken his diligence in God's service, he used in his ordinary speech, when he made mention of the blessed name of Jesus, to add, "my Master." And, without any doubt, if men were unfeignedly of his mind, their respects would be more to Christ's command, to Christ's will, to Christ's pleasure.—From Spencer's *"Things New and Old."*

Verse 2. Our eyes wait. Here the Psalmist uses another word: it is the eye waiting. What is the

reason of the second word? Now he leaves the similitude in the first line; for in the first line it is thus,—“As the eyes of servants look, and the eyes of a maiden look”; here it is the eye waits. There is good reason: to wait is more than to look: to wait is to look constantly, with patience and submission, by subjecting our affections and wills and desires to God's will; that is to wait, David in the second part, in the second line, gives a better word, he betters his copy. There is the duty of a Christian, to better his example; the eyes of servants look, David's eyes shall wait: “So our eyes wait”. It is true, indeed this word is not in the original, therefore you may observe it is in a small letter in your Bibles, to note that it is a word of necessity, added for the supply of the sense, because the Holy Ghost left it not imperfect, but more perfect, that lie put not in the verb; because it is left to every man's heart to supply a verb to his own comfort, and a better he cannot than this. And that this word must be added appears by the next words: “until that he have mercy upon us”. To look till he have mercy on us is to wait; so there is good reason why this word is added. If we look to the thing begged—“mercy”—it is so precious that we may wait for it. It was “servants” that he mentioned, and it is their duty to wait upon their masters; they wait upon their trenchers at meat; they wait when they go to bed and when they rise; they wait in every place. Therefore, because he had mentioned the first word, he takes the proper duty; there is nothing more proper to servants than waiting, and if we are the servants of God we must wait. There is good reason in that respect, because it is a word so significant, therefore the Spirit of God varies it; he keeps not exactly to the line, “So do our eyes look, “but he puts it, “So do our eyes wait.”—*Richard Holdsworth*.

Verse 3. —*Have mercy upon us, O Lord, have mercy upon us!* Note how a godly man speaks. He does not say, “Have mercy upon me, O Lord have mercy upon me! because I am disgraced; “but, “Have mercy upon us, O Lord, for we are filled with contempt!” The godly man is not so grieved for his own and individual contempt as he is for the general contempt of the good and faithful. There is an accord of the godly, not only in the cross, but also in groanings, and in the invocation of divine grace.—*Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verse 3. *For we are exceedingly filled.* The Hebrew word here used means “to be saturated”; to have the appetite fully satisfied—as applied to one who is hungry or thirsty. Then it comes to mean to be entirely full, and the idea here is, that as much contempt had been thrown upon them as could be: they could experience no more.—*Albert Barnes*.

Verse 3. *We are exceedingly filled with contempt.* Men of the world regard the Temple Pilgrims and their religion with the quiet smile of disdain, wondering that those who have so much to engage them in a present life should be weak enough to concern themselves about frames and feelings, about an unseen God, and unknown eternity; and this is a trial they find it hard to bear. Their soul, too, is filled exceedingly with the scorning of those that are at ease. The prosperous of their neighbours declare that they have found the world a generous and happy scene to all who deserve its gifts. Poverty and

sorrow they attribute to unworthiness alone. "Let them exert themselves" is the unfeeling cry; "let them bestir themselves instead of praying, and with them as with us it will soon be well"; and these words of harsh and unfeeling ignorance are like poison to the wounds of the bleeding heart. They have further "the contempt of the proud" to mourn; of those who give expression to their fierce disdain by assailing them with words of contumely, and who seek to draw them by reproaches both from peace and from piety. These are still the trials of Zion's worshippers: silent contempt, open misrepresentation, fierce opposition. Religion, their last comfort, is despised; peace, their first desire, is denied. Anxious to devote themselves in the spirit of humble and earnest piety to the duties of their appointed sphere, they find enemies in open outcry and array against them. But God is their refuge, and to him they go.—*Robert Nisbet*.

Verses 3,4. The second strophe takes up the "have mercy upon us," as it were in echo. It begins with a "Kyrie eleison", which is confirmed in a crescendo manner after the form of steps.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

Verse 4. *Exceedingly filled*, or perhaps, "has long been filled." (Comp. Ps 120:6). This expression, together with the earnestness of the repeated prayer, "Be gracious unto us", shows that the "scorn" and "contempt" have long pressed upon the people, and their faith has accordingly been exposed to a severe trial. The more remarkable is the entire absence of anything like impatience in the language of the psalm.—*J.J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verse 4. *The scorning of those that are at ease.* When men go on prosperously, they are apt wrongfully to trouble others, and then to shout at them in their misery, and to despise the person and cause of God's people. This is the sure effect of great arrogancy and pride. They think they may do what they please; they have no changes, therefore they fear not God, but put forth their hands against such as be at peace with them (Ps 4:19,20); whilst they go on prosperously and undisturbed, they cannot abstain from violence and oppression. This is certainly pride, for it is a lifting up of the heart above God and against God and without God. And they do not consider his providence, which alternately lifts up and eases down, that adversity may not be without a cordial, nor prosperity without a curb and bridle. When men sit fast, and are well at ease, they are apt to be insolent and scornful. Riches and worldly greatness make men insolent and despisers of others, and not to care what burdens they impose upon them; they are entrenched within a mass of wealth and power and greatness, and so think none can call them to an account.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 4. *Those that are at ease.* The word always means such as are recklessly at their ease, the careless ones, such as those whom Isaiah bids, "rise up, tremble, be troubled; for many days and years shall ye be troubled" (Ps 32:9-11). It is that luxury and ease which sensualise the soul, and make it dull, stupid, hard hearted.—*Edward Bonyer Pusey* (1800—), in "*The Minor Prophets*".

Verse 4. *Those that are at ease*, who are regardless of the troubles of others. and expect none of

their own.—*James G. Murphy.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Whole Psalm. We have here,

1. The prayer of dependence, Ps 123:2.
2. The prayer of apprehension: "Unto thee", etc.
3. The spirit of obedience: "As the eyes of servants:" etc.
4. The patience of the saints: "Until he have mercy upon us."

—*R. Nisbet.*

Whole Psalm. Eyes and no eyes.

1. EYES.

- (a) Upward, in confidence, in prayer, in thought.
- (b) "Unto," in reverence, watchfulness, obedience.
- (c) Inward, producing a cry for mercy.

2. No EYES.

- (a) NO sight of the excellence of the godly.
- (b) No sense of their own danger: "at ease."
- (c) No humility before God: "proud."
- (d) No uplifted eyes in hope, prayer, expectation.

Verse 1. The eyes of faith.

1. Need uplifting.
2. See best upward.
3. Have always something to see upward.
4. Let us look up, and so turn our eyes from too much introspection and retrospection.

Verse 1.

1. The language of Adoration: "Thou that dwellest in the heavens."
2. The language of Confession.
 - (a) Of need.
 - (b) Of Helplessness.
3. The language of Supplication: "Unto thee," etc.
4. The language of Expectation; as shown in Ps 123:2.—*G.R.*

Verse 2. (Ps 121:4 with this verse.) Two beholds.

1. God's watchful eye over us.
2. The saint's watchful eye upon God.

Verse 2. "Our eyes wait upon the Lord our God."

1. What it is to wait with the eye.

2. What peculiar aspect of the Lord suggests such waiting: "Jehovah our God." The covenant God is the trusted God.

3. What comes of such waiting—"mercy."

Verse 2. The guiding hand.

1. A beckoning hand—to go near.

2. A directing hand—to go here and there.

3. A quiescent hand—to remain where we are.—*G.R.*

Verse 2. Homely metaphors, or what may be learned from maids and their mistresses.

Verse 3 (first portion). The Sinner's Litany. The Saint's Entreaty.

Verse 3 (second portion). The world's contempt, the abundance of it, the reason of it, the bitterness of it, the comfort under it.

Verses 3, 4.

1. The occasion of the prayer: the contempt of men. This is often the most difficult to bear.

(a) Because it is most unreasonable. Why ridicule men for yielding to their own convictions of what is right?

(b) Most undeserved. True religion injures no man, but seeks the good of all.

(c) Most profane. To reproach the people of God because they are his people is to reproach God himself.

2. The subject of the prayer.

(a) The prayer: is not for justice, which might be desired, but for mercy.

(b) The plea: "For we are," etc. The reproaches of men are an encouragement to look for special help from God. The harp hung upon the willows sends forth its sweetest tones. The less it is in human hands the more freely it is played upon by the Spirit of God.—*G.R.*

Verse 4. *Those that are at ease.*

1. Explain their state: "at ease."

2. Show their ordinary state of mind: "proud."

3. Denounce their frequent sin: scorn of the godly.

4. Exhibit their terrible danger.

Psalm 124

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. A Song of degrees of David. Of course the superfine critics have pounced upon this title as inaccurate, but we are at liberty to believe as much or as little of their assertions as we may please. They declare that there are certain ornaments of language in this little ode which were unknown in the Davidic period. It may be so; but in their superlative wisdom they have ventured upon so many other questionable statements that we are not bound to receive this dictum. Assuredly the manner of the song is very like to David's, and we are unable to see why he should be excluded from the authorship. Whether it be his composition or no, it breathes the same spirit as that which animates the unchallenged songs of the royal composer.

DIVISION. This short Psalm contains an acknowledgement of favour received by way of special deliverance (1-5), then a grateful act of worship in blessing Jehovah (6, 7), and, lastly, a declaration of confidence in the Lord for all future time of trial. May our experience lead us to the same conclusion as the saints of David's time. From all confidence in man may we be rescued by a holy reliance upon our God.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, now may Israel say.* The opening sentence is abrupt, and remains a fragment. By such a commencement attention was aroused as well as feeling expressed: and this is ever the way of poetic fire—to break forth in uncontrollable flame. The many words in italics in our authorized version will show the reader that the translators did their best to patch up the passage, which, perhaps, had better have been left in its broken grandeur, and it would then have run thus:—"Had it not been Jehovah! He was for us, oh let Israel say! Had it not been Jehovah! He who was for us when men rose against us." The glorious Lord became our ally; he took our part, and entered into treaty with us. If Jehovah were not our protector where should we be? Nothing but his power and wisdom could have guarded us from the cunning and malice of our adversaries; therefore, let all his people say so, and openly give him the honour of his preserving goodness. Here are two "ifs," and yet there is no "if" in the matter. The Lord was on our side, and is still our defender, and will be so from henceforth, even for ever. Let us with holy confidence exult in this joyful fact: We are far too slow in declaring our gratitude, hence the exclamation which should be rendered, "O let Israel say." We murmur without being stirred up to it, but our thanksgiving needs a spur, and it is well when some warm hearted friend bids us say what we feel. Imagine what would have happened if the Lord had left us, and then see what has happened because he has been faithful to us. Are not all the materials of a song spread before us? Let us sing unto the Lord.

Verse 2. *If it had not been the Lord who was on our side, when men rose up against us.* When all men combined, and the whole race of men seemed set upon stamping out the house of Israel, what

must have happened if the covenant Lord had not interposed? When they stirred themselves, and combined to make an assault upon our quietude and safety, what should we have done in their rising if the Lord had not also risen? No one who could or would help was near, but the bare arm of the Lord sufficed to preserve his own against all the leagued hosts of adversaries. There is no doubt as to our deliverer, we cannot ascribe our salvation to any second cause, for it would not have been equal to the emergency; nothing less than omnipotence and omniscience could have wrought our rescue. We set every other claimant on one side, and rejoice because the Lord was on our side.

Verse 3. *Then they had swallowed us up quick, when their wrath was kindled against us.* They were so eager for our destruction that they would have made only one morsel of us, and have swallowed us up alive and whole in a single instant. The fury of the enemies of the church is raised to the highest pitch, nothing will content them but the total annihilation of God's chosen. Their wrath is like a fire which is kindled, and has taken such firm hold upon the fuel that there is no quenching it. Anger is never more fiery than when the people of God are its objects. Sparks become flames, and the furnace is heated seven times hotter when God's elect are to be thrust into the blaze. The cruel world would make a full end of the godly seed were it not that Jehovah bars the way. When the Lord appears, the cruel throats cannot swallow, and the consuming fires cannot destroy. Ah, if it were not Jehovah, if our help came from all the creatures united, there would be no way of escape for us: it is only because the Lord liveth that his people are alive.

Verse 4. *Then the waters had overwhelmed us.* Rising irresistibly, like the Nile, the flood of opposition would soon have rolled over our heads. Across the mighty waste of waters we should have cast an anxious eye, but looked in vain for escape. The motto of a royal house is, "Tossed about but not submerged": we should have needed an epitaph rather than an epigram, for we should have been driven by the torrent and sunken, never to rise again. The stream had gone over our soul. The rushing torrent would have drowned our soul, our hope, our life. The figures seem to be the steadily rising flood, and the hurriedly rushing stream. Who can stand against two such mighty powers? Everything is destroyed by these unconquerable forces, either by being submerged or swept away. When the world's enmity obtains a vent it both rises and rushes, it rages and rolls along, and spares nothing. In the great water floods of persecution and affliction who can help but Jehovah? But for him where would we be at this very hour? We have experienced seasons in which the combined forces of earth and hell must have made an end of us had not omnipotent grace interfered for our rescue.

Verse 5. *Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.* The figure represents the waves as proud, and so they seem to be when they overleap the bulwarks of a frail bark, and threaten every moment to sink her. The opposition of men is usually embittered by a haughty scorn which derides all our godly efforts as mere fanaticism or obstinate ignorance. In all the persecutions of the church a cruel

contempt has largely mingled with the oppression, and this is overpowering to the soul. Had not God been with us our disdainful enemies would have made nothing of us, and dashed over us as a mountain torrent sweeps down the side of a hill, driving everything before it. Not only would our goods and possessions have been carried off, but our soul, our courage, our hope would have been borne away by the impetuous assault, and buried beneath the insults of our antagonists. Let us pause here, and as we see what might have been, let us adore the guardian power which has kept us in the flood, and yet above the flood. In our hours of dire peril we must have perished had not our Preserver prevailed for our safe keeping.

Verse 6. Blessed be the Lord, who hath not given us as a prey to *their teeth*. Leaving the metaphor of a boiling flood, he compares the adversaries of Israel to wild beasts who desired to make the godly their prey. Their teeth are prepared to tear, and they regard the godly as their victims. The Lord is heartily praised for not permitting his servants to be devoured when they were between the jaws of the raging ones. It implies that none can harm us till the Lord permits: we cannot be their prey unless the Lord gives us up to them, and that our loving Lord will never do. Hitherto he has refused permission to any foe to destroy us, blessed be his name. The more imminent the danger the more eminent the mercy which would not permit the soul to perish in it. God be blessed for ever for keeping us from the curse. Jehovah be praised for checking the fury of the foe, and saving his own. The verse reads like a merely negative blessing, but no boon can be more positively precious. He has given us to his Son Jesus, and he will never give us to our enemies.

Verse 7. *Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers.* Our soul is like a bird for many reasons; but in this case the point of likeness is weakness, folly, and the ease with which it is enticed into the snare. Fowlers have many methods of taking small birds, and Satan has many methods of entrapping souls. Some are decoyed by evil companions, others are enticed by the love of dainties; hunger drives many into the trap, and fright impels numbers to fly into the net. Fowlers know their birds, and how to take them; but the birds see not the snare so as to avoid it, and they cannot break it so as to escape from it. Happy is the bird that hath a deliverer strong, and mighty, and ready in the moment of peril: happier still is the soul over which the Lord watches day and night to pluck its feet out of the net. What joy there is in this song, "our soul is escaped." How the emancipated one sings and soars, and soars and sings again. Blessed be God, many of us can make joyous music with these notes, "our soul is escaped." Escaped from our natural slavery; escaped from the guilt, the degradation, the habit, the dominion of sin; escaped from the vain deceits and fascinations of Satan; escaped from all that can destroy; we do indeed experience delight. What a wonder of grace it is! What a miraculous escape that we who are so easily misled should not have been permitted to die by the dread fowler's hand. The Lord has heard the prayer which he taught us to pray, and he hath delivered us from evil.

The snare is broken, and we are escaped. The song is worth repeating; it is well to dwell upon so great a mercy. The snare may be false doctrine, pride, lust, or a temptation to indulge in policy, or to despair, or to presume; what a high favour it is to have it broken before our eyes, so that it has no more power over us. We see not the mercy while we are in the snare; perhaps we are so foolish as to deplore the breaking of the Satanic charm; the gratitude comes when the escape is seen, and when we perceive what we have escaped from, and by what hand we have been set free. Then our Lord has a song from our mouths and hearts as we make heaven and earth ring with the notes, "the snare is broken, and we are escaped." We have been tempted, but not taken; cast down, but not destroyed; perplexed, but not in despair; in deaths oft, but still alive: blessed be Jehovah! This song might well have suited our whole nation at the time of the Spanish Armada, the church in the days of the Jesuits, and each believer among us in seasons of strong personal temptation.

Verse 8. *Our help*, our hope for the future, our ground of confidence in all trials present and to come. Is in the name of the Lord. Jehovah's revealed character is our foundation of confidence, his person is our sure fountain of strength. Who made heaven and earth. Our Creator is our preserver. He is immensely great in his creating work; he has not fashioned a few little things alone, but all heaven and the whole round earth are the works of his hands. When we worship the Creator let us increase our trust in our Comforter. Did he create all that we see, and can he not preserve us from evils which we cannot see Blessed be his name, he that has fashioned us will watch over us; yea, he has done so, and rendered us help in the moment of jeopardy. He is our help and our shield, even he alone. He will to the end break every snare. He made heaven for us, and he will keep us for heaven; he made the earth, and he will succour us ripen it until the hour cometh for our departure. Every work of his hand preaches to us the duty and the delight of reposing upon him only. All nature cries, "Trust ye in the Lord for ever, for in the Lord Jehovah there is everlasting strength." "Wherefore comfort one another with these words." The following versification of the sense rather than the words of this psalm is presented to the reader with much diffidence:

Had not the Lord, my soul may cry,
Had not the Lord been on my bide;
Had he not brought deliverance nigh,
Then must my helpless soul have died.
Had not the Lord been on my side,
My soul had been by Satan slain;
And Tophet, opening large and wide,
Would not have gaped for me in vain.
Lo, floods of wrath, and floods of hell,
In fierce impetuous torrents roll;

Had not the Lord defended well,
The waters had o'erwhelm'd my soul.
As when the fowler's snare is broke,
The bird escapes on cheerful wings;
My soul, set free from Satan's yoke,
With joy bursts forth, and mounts, and sings.
She sings the Lord her Saviour's praise;
Sings forth his praise with joy and mirth;
To him her song in heaven she'll raise,
To him that made both heaven and earth.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

TITLE. The title informs us that this sacred march was composed by king David; and we learn very clearly from the subject, that the progression referred to was the triumphant return of the king and his loyal army to Jerusalem, upon the overthrow of the dangerous rebellion to which the great mass of the people had been excited by Absalom and his powerful band of confederates.—*John Mason Good.*

Whole Psalm. This psalm is ascribed to David. No reference is made to any specific danger and deliverance. There is a delightful universality in the language, which suits it admirably for an anthem of the redeemed, in every age and in every clime. The people of God still live in a hostile territory. Traitors are in the camp, and there are numerous foes without. And the church would soon be exterminated, if the malice and might of her adversaries were not restrained and defeated by a higher power. Hence this ode of praise has never become obsolete. How frequently have its strains of adoring gratitude floated on the breeze! What land is there, in which its outbursting gladness has not been heard! It has been sung upon the banks of the Jordan and the Nile, the Euphrates and the Tigris. It has been sung upon the banks of the Tiber and the Rhine, the Thames and the Forth. It has been sung upon the banks of the Ganges and the Indus, the Mississippi and the Irrawady. And we anticipate a period when the church, surmounting all her difficulties, and victory waving over her banners, shall sing this psalm of praise in every island and continent of our globe. The year of God's redeemed must come. The salvation of Christ shall extend to the utmost extremities of earth. And when this final emancipation takes place, the nations will shout for joy, and praise their Deliverer in psalms, and hymns, and spiritual songs.—*N. McMichael.*

Whole Psalm. In the year 1582, this psalm was sung on a remarkable occasion in Edinburgh. An imprisoned minister, John Durie, had been set free, and was met and welcomed on entering the town by two hundred of his friends. The number increased till he found himself in the midst of a company

of two thousand, who began to sing as they moved up the long High Street, "Now Israel may say, "etc. They sang in four parts with deep solemnity, all joining in the well known tune and psalm. They were much moved themselves, and so were all who heard; and one of the chief persecutors is said to have been more alarmed at this sight and song than at anything he had seen in Scotland.—*Andrew A. Bonar*, in "*Christ and His Church in the Book of Psalms*," 1859.

Verse 1. *The Lord...on our side.* Jehovah is on the side of his people in a spiritual sense, or otherwise it would be bad for them. God the Father is on their side; his love and relation to them engage him to be so; hence all those good things that are provided for them and bestowed on them; nor will he suffer any to do them hurt, they being as dear to him as the apple of his eye; hence he grants them his gracious presence, supports them under all their trials and exercises, supplies all their wants, and keeps them by his power, and preserves them from all their enemies; so that they have nothing to fear from any quarter. Christ is on their side; he is the Surety for them, the Saviour of them; has taken their part against all their spiritual enemies, sin, Satan, the world, and death; has engaged with them and conquered them: he is the Captain of their salvation, their King at the head of them, that protects and defends them here, and is their friend in the court of heaven; their Advocate and interceding High priest there, who pleads their cause against Satan, and obtains every blessing for them. The Spirit of Jehovah is on their side, to carry on his work in them; to assist them in their prayers and supplications; to secure them from Satan's temptations; to set up a standard for them when the enemy comes in like a flood upon them; and to comfort them in all their castings down; and to work them up for, and bring them safe to heaven: but were this not the case, what would become of them!—*John Gill*.

Verse 1. *Israel.* The "Israel" spoken of in this psalm may be Israel in the house of Laban, in whose person the Midrash Tehillim imagines the Psalm to be said. There are certainly some of its phrases which acquire an appropriate meaning from being interpreted in this connection.—*H.T. Armfield*.

Verses 1-4. Such abrupt and unfinished expressions in the beginning of the psalm indicate the great joy and exultation that will not suffer the speaker to finish his sentences.—*Robert Bellarmine*.

Verses 1-2. The somewhat paraphrastic rendering of these verses (with the unnecessary interpolation of the words in italics in the Authorised Version) greatly weaken their force and obscure their meaning. There is far more meant and expressed than simply that God gave the Israelites the victory over their enemies. The psalm is typico prophetic. It sets forth the condition of the church in this world, surrounded by enemies, implacable in their hatred, maddened by rage, and bent on her destruction. It gives assurance of her preservation, and continuous triumph, because Jehovah is her God. It foretells the future, full, and final destruction of all her enemies. It reechoes the song sung on the shores of the Red Sea. In it are heard the notes of the New Song before the great white throne. The praise and thanksgiving are to hwhy, the revealed oyhla, whose "eternal power and Godhead

are understood by the things that are made:"—to, hwhy, the revealed ydvla, whom the fathers knew as the Almighty, from the great things which he did for them:—to hwhy, the God who has made a covenant with his people, the Redeemer. It is ladvy, the chosen people of God, the holy nation, the peculiar treasure to him above all peoples, and thus become, as the Rabbins say, "Odium generis gumant, "against whom oda (not men, but man collectively) rose up and sought to destroy. It is ladvy, God's chosen, the people of the covenant, that with the full delight of a personal "my, "joy in God and sings, "But that Jehovah, was zgl, ours!" Tame and frigid is the rendering—"was on our side." Jehovah was theirs; that, their safety: that, their blessedness: that, their joy.—*Edward Thomas Gibson*, 1818-1880.

Verses 1,2.

1. God was on our side; he took our part, espoused our cause, and appeared for us. He was our helper, and a very present help, a help on our side, nigh at hand. He was with us; not only for us, but among us, and commander-in-chief of our forces.

2. That God was Jehovah; there the emphasis lies. If it had not been Jehovah himself, a God of infinite power and perfection, that had undertaken our deliverance, our enemies would have overpowered us. Happy the people therefore whose God is Jehovah, a God all sufficient. Let Israel say this to his honour, and resolve never to forsake him.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verses 1, 2, 8. These three things will I bear on my heart, O Lord: "The Lord was on our side, "this for the past: "The snare is broken, " for the present; "Our help is in the name of the Lord, "this for the future. I will not and I cannot be fainthearted, whether in my contest with Satan, in my intercourse with the world, or in the upheavings of my wicked heart, so long as I hold this "threefold cord" in my hand, or rather, am held by it.—*Alfred Edersheim*.

Verse 2. *If it had not been the LORD*, etc. This repetition is not in vain. For whilst we are in danger, our fear is without measure; but when it is once past, we imagine it to have been less than it was indeed. And this is the delusion of Satan to diminish and obscure the grace of God. David therefore with this repetition stirreth up the people to more thankfulness unto God for his gracious deliverance, and amplifies the dangers which they had passed. Whereby we are taught how to think of our troubles and afflictions past, lest the sense and feeling of God's grace vanish out of our minds.—*Martin Luther*.

Verse 2. *Men rose up against us.* It may seem strange that these wicked and wretched enemies, monsters rather than men, should be thus moderately spoken of, and have no other name than this of men given them, which of all others they least deserved, as having in them nothing of man but outward show and shape, being rather beasts, yea, devils in the form and fashion of men, than right men. But hereby the church would show that she did leave the further censuring of them unto God their righteous Judge; and would also further amplify their wickedness, who being men, did yet in

their desires and dispositions bewray a more than beastly immanity and inhumanity.—*Daniel Dyke* (—1614?) in "*Comfortable Sermons upon the 124th Psalme*," 1617.

Verse 3. *Then they had swallowed us up quick.* The metaphor may be taken from famished wild beasts attacking and devouring men (comp. v. 5); or the reference may be to the case of a man shut up alive in a sepulchre (Pr 1:12) and left there to perish, or (Nu 16:80) swallowed up by an earthquake.—*Daniel Cresswell.*

Verse 3. Then they had swallowed us up. The word implies eating with insatiable appetite; every man that eateth must also swallow; but a glutton is rather a swallower than an eater. He throws his meat whole down his throat, and eats (as we may say) without chewing. The rod of Moses, turned into a serpent, "swallowed up" the rods of the Egyptian sorcerers. The word is often applied to express oppression (Ps 35:25): "Let them not say in their hearts, Ah, so would we have it: let them not say, We have swallowed him up": that is, we have made clear riddance of him; he is now a gone man for ever. The ravenous rage of the adversary is described in this language.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3. *Quick.* Not an adverb, "quickly," but an adjective, alive. As greedy monsters, both of the land and of the deep, sometimes swallow their food before the life is out of it, so would the enemies of the Church have destroyed her as in a moment, but for divine interposition.—*William S. Plumer.*

Verse 3. Objection. But what may the reason thereof be? May a man say, that thus the godly shall always prevail and be never overthrown by their enemies, but overcome them rather? Experience doth teach us that they are fewer in number than the wicked are, that they are weaker for power and strength, that they are more simple for wit and policy, and that they are more careless for, diligence and watchfulness than their adversaries be: how, then, comes it to pass that they have the upper hand? Answer. The Prophet Ezra doth declare it unto us in the 8th chapter of his prophecy, and the 10th verse thereof, it is in few words "because the Lord is with them and for them."

For, first, he is stronger than all, being able to resist all power that is devised against him and his, and to do whatsoever he will both in heaven and earth.

2. He is wiser than all, knowing how to prevent them in all their ways, and also how to bring matters to pass for the good of his people.

3. He is more diligent than all, to stand, as it were, upon the watch, and to take his advantage when it is offered him, for "He that keepeth Israel doth neither slumber nor sleep."

4. Lastly, he is happier than all to have good success in all his enterprises, for he doth prosper still in all things which he doth take in hand and none can resist a thought of his; yea, the very "word which goeth out of his mouth doth accomplish that which he wills, and prosper in the thing where unto he doth send it." In war, all these four things are respected in a captain that will still overcome: first, that he be strong; secondly, that he be wise; thirdly, that he be diligent; and, lastly, that he be fortunate; for the victory goeth not always with the strong, nor always with the wise, nor always with the diligent,

nor always with the fortunate; but sometimes with the one of them, and sometimes with the other: Outlook, where all four do concur together there is always the victory, and therefore seeing all of them are in God, it is no marvel though those whose battles he doth fight, do always overcome and get the victory.—*Thomas Stint*, 1621.

Verses 4, 5. A familiar, but exceedingly apt and most significant figure. Horrible is the sight of a raging conflagration; but far more destructive is a river overflowing its banks and rushing violently on: for it is not possible to restrain it by any strength or power. As, then, he says, a river is carried along with great impetuosity, and carries away and destroys whatever it meets with in its course; thus also is the rage of the enemies of the church, not to be withstood by human strength. Hence, we should learn to avail ourselves of the protection and help of God. For what else is the church but a little boat fastened to the bank, which is carried away by the force of the waters? or a shrub growing on the bank, which without effort the flood roots up? Such was the people of Israel in the days of David compared with the surrounding nations. Such in the present day is the church compared with her enemies. Such is each one of us compared with the power of the malignant spirit. We are as a little shrub, of recent growth and having no firm hold: but he is like the Elbe, overflowing, and with great force overthrowing all things far and wide. We are like a withered leaf, lightly holding to the tree; he is like the north wind, with great force rooting up and throwing down the trees. How, then, can we withstand or defend ourselves by our own power?—*Martin Luther*.

Verses 4, 5. First the "waters"; then "the stream" or torrent; then "the proud waters, "lifting up their heads on high. First the waters overwhelm us; then the torrent goes over our soul; and then the proud waters go over our soul. What power can resist the rapid floods of waters, when they overspread their boundaries, and rush over a country? Onward they sweep with resistless force, and men and cattle, and crops and houses, are destroyed. Let the impetuous waters break loose, and, in a few minutes, the scene of life, and industry, and happiness, is made a scene of desolation and woe. Perhaps there is an allusion here to the destruction of the Egyptians in the Red Sea. The floods fell upon them, the depths covered them: they sank into the bottom as a stone. Had God not stretched forth his hand to rescue the Israelites, their enemies would have overwhelmed them. Happy they who, in seasons of danger, have Jehovah for a hiding place.—*N. McMichael*.

Verse 5. *Then the proud waters had gone over our soul.* The same again, to note the greatness both of the danger and of the deliverance. And it may teach us not lightly to pass over God's great blessings, but to make the most of them.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 5.

"When winds and seas do rage,
And threaten to undo? me,
Thou dost their wrath assuage,

If I but call unto thee.
A mighty storm last night
Did seek my soul to swallow;
But by the peep of light
A gentle calm did follow.
What need I then despair
Though ills stand round about me;
Since mischiefs neither dare
To bark or bite without thee?"
—*Robert Herrick, 1591-1674.*

Verses 6, 7. Two figures are again employed, in order to show how imminent was the destruction, had there been no divine interposition. The first is that of a savage beast which was formerly used. But an addition is made, to describe the urgency of the danger. The wild beast was not only lying in wait for them; he was not merely ready to spring upon his prey; he had already leaped upon it: he had actually seized it: it was even now between his teeth. What a graphic description! A moment's delay, and all help would have been in vain. But Jehovah appears on the ground. He goes up to the ferocious beast, and takes out the trembling prey from between his bloody jaws. The danger is imminent; but nothing is too hard for the Lord. "My soul is among lions." "What time I am afraid I will trust in thee." "He shall send from heaven, and save me from the reproach of him that would swallow me up." The second figure is that of a fowler. The fowler has prepared his snare in a skilful manner. The bird enters it, unconscious of danger: the net is thrown over it; and in an instant its liberty is lost. There it lies, the poor bird, its little heart throbbing wildly, and its little wings beating vainly against the net. It is completely at the mercy of the fowler, and escape is impossible. But again the Lord appears, and his presence is safety. He goes up to the net, lifts it from the ground; the bird flies out, lights on a neighbouring tree, and sings among the branches. "Surely he shall deliver thee from the snare of the fowler." God rescues his people from the craft and subtlety of their enemies, as he does from their open violence.—N. McMichael.

Verses 6, 7. We were delivered,

1. Like a lamb out of the very jaws of a beast of prey: God "hath not given us as a prey to their teeth"; intimating that they had no power against God's people, but what was given them from above. They could not be a prey to their teeth unless God gave them up, and therefore they were rescued, because God would not suffer them to be ruined.

2. Like "a bird, "a little bird, the word signifies a sparrow, "out of the snare of the fowler." The enemies are very subtle and spiteful, they lay snares for God's people, to bring them into sin and trouble, and to hold them there. Sometimes they seem to have prevailed so far as to gain their point, the children

of God are taken in the snare, and are as unable to help themselves out as any weak and silly bird is; and then is God's time to appear for their relief; when all other friends fail, then God breaks the snare, and turns the counsel of the enemies into foolishness: "The snare is broken, and so we are delivered."—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 7. *Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers*, etc. Various snares are placed for birds, by traps, birdlime, guns, etc.: who can enumerate all the dangers of the godly, threatening them from Satan, and from the world? Ps 91:3: Ho 5:1.—"We are delivered, "not by our own skill or cunning, but by the grace and power of God only: so that every device is made vain, and freedom is preserved.—*Martin Geier*.

Verse 7. *Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers*, etc. I am quite sure that there is not a day of our lives in which Satan does not lay some snare for our souls, the more perilous because unseen; and if seen, because perhaps unheeded and despised. And of this, too, I am equally sure, that if any one brings home with him at night a conscience void of offence towards God and man, it is in no might nor strength of his own, and that if the Lord had not been his guide and preserver he would have been given over, nay, he would have given himself over, as a prey to the devourer's teeth. I believe there are few even of God's saints who have not had occasion, in some season of sore temptation, when Satan has let loose all his malice and might, and poured in suggestion upon suggestion and trial upon trial, as he did on Job, and they have been ready to faint, if not to fall by the ways then, perhaps, in a moment when they looked not for it, Satan has departed, foiled and discomfited, and with his prey snatched out of his hands, and they, too, have had gratefully to own, "Our soul is escaped as a bird out of the snare of the fowlers; tie snare is broken, and we are escaped." Yes! depend upon it, our best and only hope, "is in the name of the Lord, who made heaven and earth."—*Barton Bouchier*.

Verse 7. *Our soul is escaped as a bird*. The snare of the fowler was the lime-twigs of this world; our soul was caught in them by the feathers, our affections: now, indeed, we are escaped; but the Lord delivered us.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 7. *As a bird out of the snare of the fowlers*. The soul is surrounded by many dangers.

1. It is ensnared by worldliness. One of the most gigantic dangers against which God's people have specially to guard—an enemy to all spirituality of thought and feeling.

2. It is ensnared by selfishness—a foe to all simple-hearted charity, to all expansive generosity and Christian philanthropy.

3. It is ensnared by unbelief—the enemy of prayer, of ingenuous confidence, of all personal Christian effort. These are not imaginary dangers. We meet them in everyday life. They threaten us at every point, and often have we to lament over the havoc they make in our hearts.—*George Barlow*, in a "*Homiletic Commentary on the Book of Psalms*," 1879.

Verse 7. *The snare is broken.* It is as easy for God to deliver his people out of their enemies' hands, even when they have the godly in their power, as to break a net made of thread or yarn, wherewith birds are taken.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 7. *The snare is broken, and we are escaped.* Our life lieth open always to the snares of Satan, and we as silly birds are like at every moment to be carried away, notwithstanding the Lord maketh a way for us to escape; yea, when Satan seemeth to be most sure of us, by the mighty power of God the snares are broken and we are delivered. Experience we have hereof in those who are inwardly afflicted and with heaviness of spirit grievously oppressed, that when they seem to be in utter despair, and ready now, as you would say, to perish, yet even at the last pinch, and in the uttermost extremity cometh the sweet comfort of God's Holy Spirit and raiseth them up again. When we are most ready to perish, then is God most ready to help. "Except the Lord had holpen me, "saith David, "my soul had almost dwelt in silence." And this again do we mark for the comfort of the weak conscience. It is Satan's subtlety whereby commonly he disquiets many, that because carnal corruption is in them he would therefore bear them in hand that they are none of Christ's. In this he plays the deceiver; he tries us by the wrong rule of perfect sanctification; this is the square that ought to be laid to Christ's members triumphant in heaven, and not to those who are militant on earth. Sin remaining in me will not prove that therefore I am not in Christ, otherwise Christ should have no members upon earth; but grace working that new disposition which nature could never effect proves undoubtedly that we are in Christ Jesus.—*Thomas Stint.*

Verse 8. *Our help is in the name of the LORD, who made heaven and earth.* He hath made the earth where the snare lies, so that he can rightfully destroy the snare as laid unlawfully in his domain; he hath made the heaven, the true sphere of the soaring wings of those souls which he has delivered, so that they may fly upwards from their late prison, rejoicing. He came down to earth himself, the Lord Jesus in whose name is our help, that lie might break the snare; be returned to heaven, that we might fly "as the doves to their windows" (Isa 60:8), following where lie showed the way.—*Richard Rolle, of Hampole (1340), in "Neale and Littledale."*

Verse 8. *Our help is in the name of the Lord.* The fairest fruits of our by past experience is to glorify God by confidence in him for time to come, as here.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 8. *The Lord who made heaven and earth.* As if the Psalmist had said, As long as I see heaven and earth I will never distrust. I hope in that God which made all these things out of nothing; and therefore as long as I see those two great standing monuments of his power before me, heaven and earth, I will never be discouraged. So the apostle: 1Pe 4:19, "Commit the keeping of your souls to him in well doing, as unto a faithful Creator." O Christian! remember when you trust God you trust an almighty Creator, who is able to help, let your case be never so desperate. God could create when he had nothing to work upon, which made one wonder; and he could create when he had nothing to

work with, which is another wonder. What is become of the tools wherewith he made the world? Where is the trowel wherewith he arched the heaven? and the spade wherewith he digged the sea? What had God to work upon, or work withal when he made the world? He made it out of nothing. Now you commit your souls to the same faithful Creator.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 8. The Romans in a great distress were put so hard to it, that they were fain to take the weapons out of the temples of their gods to fight with them; and so they overcame. And this ought to be the course of every good Christian, in times of public distress, to fly to the weapons of the church, prayers and tears. The Spartans' walls were their spears, the Christian's walls are his prayers. His help standeth in the name of the Lord who hath made both heaven and earth.—*Edmund Calamy*.

Verse 8. The French Protestants always begin their public worship with the last verse of this Psalm, and there is no thought more encouraging and comfortable.—*Job Orton, 1717-1783*.

Verse 8. *Our help is in the name of the Lord*, etc. These are the words of a triumphing and victorious faith, "Our help standeth in the name of the Lord, which made heaven and earth": as if he said, the Maker of heaven and earth is my God, and my helper. We see whither he flieth in his great distress. He despairs not, but cries unto the Lord, as one yet hoping assuredly to find relief and comfort. Rest thou also in this hope, and do as he did. David was not tempted to the end he Should despair; think not thou, therefore, that thy temptations are sent unto thee that thou shouldest be swallowed up with sorrow and desperation: if thou be brought down to the very gates of hell, believe that the Lord will surely raise thee up again. If so thou be bruised and broken, know it is the Lord that will help thee again. If thy heart be full of sorrow and heaviness, look for comfort from him, who said, that a troubled spirit is a sacrifice unto him: (Ps 51:17) Thus he setteth the eternal God, the Maker of heaven and earth, against all troubles and dangers, against the floods and overflowings of all temptations, and swalloweth up, as it were with one breath all the raging furies of the whole world, and of hell itself, even as a little drop of water is swallowed up by a mighty flaming fire: and what is the world with all its force and power, in respect of him that made heaven and earth!—*Thomas Stint*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. *The LORD who was on our side*. Who is he? Why on our side? How does he prove it? What are we bound to do?

Verses 1-3. Regard the text,

1. From the life of Jacob or Israel.
2. From the history of the nation.
3. From the annals of the church.
4. From our personal biography.

Verses 1-5.

1. What might have been.
2. Why it has not been.

Verses 1-5.

1. What the people of God would have been if the Lord had not been on their side.
 - (a) What if left to their enemies? Ps 124:2,3. Israel left to Pharaoh and his host in the time of Moses: left to the Caananites in the time of Joshua: to the Midianites in the time of Gideon: Judah to the Assyrians in the time of Hezekiah: "Then they had swallowed us up," etc.
 - (b) What if left to themselves? "The stream had gone over our soul": Ps 124:4, 5.
2. What the people of God are with the Lord on their side.
 - (a) All the designs of their enemies against them are frustrated.
 - (b) Their inward sorrow is turned into joy.
 - (c) Both their inward and then outward troubles work together for their good.—*G. R.*

Verse 2, 3.

1. To swallow us alive—the desire of our wrathful enemies.
2. To save us alive—the work of our faithful God.

Verse 6.

1. The Lamb.
2. The Lion.
3. The Lord.

Verse 6.

1. They would gladly devour us.
2. They cannot devour unless the Lord will.
3. God is to be praised since he does not permit them to injure us.

Verse 6.

1. The ill will of men against the righteous.
 - (a) For their spoliation.
 - (b) For their destruction: "As a prey to their teeth."
2. The goodwill of God. "Blessed be the Lord, "etc.
 - (a) What it supposes—that good men, in a measure and for a time, may be given into the hands of the wicked.
 - (b) What it affirms—that they are not given entirely into their hands:—*G.R.*

Verse 7.

1. The soul ensnared.
 - (a) By whom? Wicked men are fowlers. By Satan. "Satan, the fowler, who betrays Unguarded souls a thousand ways."

(b) How? By temptations—to pride, worldliness, drunkenness, error, or lust, according to the tastes and habits of the individual.

2. The soul escaped: "Our soul is escaped, "etc. "The snare is broken, "not by ourselves, but by the hand of God.—*G.R.*

Verse 7.

1. A bird.
2. A snare.
3. A capture.
4. An escape.

Verse 8. Our Creator, our Helper. Special comfort to be drawn from creation in this matter.

Verse 8.

1. The Helper: "The Lord, who made heaven and earth, "who in his works has given ample proofs of what he can do.
2. The helped. "Our help" is,
 - (a) Promise in his name.
 - (b) Sought in his name: these make it ours.—*G.R.*

Verse 8.

1. We have help. As troubled sinners, as dull scholars, as trembling professors, as inexperienced travellers, as feeble workers.
2. We have help in God's name. In his perfections—"They shall put my name upon the children of Israel." In his Gospel—"A chosen vessel to bear my name." In his authority—"In the name of Jesus Christ rise up, "etc.
3. Therefore we exert ourselves.—*W.J.*

WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED TWENTY FOURTH PSALM

Comfortable sermons upon the 124 psalme. Being thankfull Remembrances for God's wonderfull deliverance of us from the late gunpowder treason. Preached before the Lady Elizabeth Her Grace, at Combe. By Daniel, Dike, Bachelor in Divinity... London; ...1635 also 1617. *Quarto.* Of no value whatever.

An Exposition on the 124, 125, 126. Psalmes called the Psalmes of Degrees, or The Churches Deliverance. Plainly set forth for the benefit of God's Church. By *Thomas Stint*.... London: 1621. *8vo.* Excessively rare.

Psalm 125

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. A Song of Degrees. Another step is taken in the ascent, another station in the pilgrimage is reached: certainly a rise in the sense is here perceptible, since full assurance concerning years to come is a higher form of faith than the ascription of farther escapes to the Lord. Faith has praised Jehovah for past deliverances, and t, ere she rises to a confident jury in the present and future safety of believers. She asserts that they shall forever secure who trust themselves with the Lord. We can imagine the pilgrims chanting this song when perambulating the city walls.

We do not assert that David wrote this Psalm, but we have as much ground for doing so as others have for declaring that it was written after the captivity. It would seem provable that all the Pilgrim Psalms were composed, or, at least, compiled by the same writer, and as some of them are certainly by David, there is too conclusive reason for taking away the rest from him.

DIVISION. First we have a song of holy confidence (Ps 125:1-2); then a promise, Ps 125:3; followed by a prayer, Ps 125:4; and a note of warning.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *They that trust in the LORD shall be as mount Zion.* The emphasis lies upon the object of their trust, namely, Jehovah the Lord. What a privilege to be allowed to repose in God! How condescending is Jehovah to become the confidence of his people! To trust elsewhere is vanity; and the more implicit such misplaced trust becomes the more bitter will be the ensuing disappointment; but to trust in the living God is sanctified common sense which needs no excuse, its result shall be its best vindication. There is no conceivable reason why we should not trust in Jehovah, and there is every possible argument for so doing; but, apart from all argument, the end will prove the wisdom of the confidence. The result of faith is not occasional and accidental; its blessing comes, not to some who trust, but to all who trust in the Lord. Trusters in Jehovah shall be as fixed, firm, and stable as the mount where David dwelt, and where the ark abode. To move mount Zion was impossible: the mere supposition was absurd. Which cannot be removed, but abideth for ever. Zion was the image of eternal steadfastness,—this hill which, according to the Hebrew, "sits to eternity, "neither bowing down nor moving to and fro. Thus doth the trusting worshipper of Jehovah enjoy a restfulness which is the mirror of tranquillity; and this not without cause, for his hope is sure, and of his confidence he can never be ashamed. As the Lord sitteth King for ever, so do his people sit enthroned in perfect peace when their trust in him is firm. This is, and is to be our portion; we are, we have been, we shall be as steadfast as the hill of God. Zion cannot be removed, and does not remove; so the people of

God can neither be moved passively nor actively, by force from without or fickleness from within. Faith in God is a settling and establishing virtue; he who by his strength setteth fast the mountains, by that same power stays the hearts of them that trust in him. This steadfastness will endure "for ever," and we may be assured therefore that no believer shall perish either in life or in death, in time or in eternity. We trust in an eternal God, and our safety shall be eternal.

Verse 2. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, so the LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever.* The hill of Zion is the type of the believer's constancy, and the surrounding mountains are made emblems of the all surrounding presence of the Lord. The mountains around the holy city, though they do not make a circular wall, are, nevertheless, set like sentinels to guard her gates. God doth not enclose his people within ramparts and bulwarks, making their city to be a prison; but yet he so orders the arrangements of his providence that his saints are as safe as if they dwelt behind the strongest fortifications. What a double security the two verses set before us! First, we are established, and then entrenched; settled, and then sentinelled: made like a mount, and then protected as if by mountains. This is no matter of poetry, it is so in fact; and it is no matter of temporary privilege, but it shall be so for ever. Date when we please, "from henceforth" Jehovah encircles his people: look on as far as we please, the protection extends "even for ever." Note, it is not said that Jehovah's power or wisdom defends believers, but he himself is round about them: they have his personality for their protection, his Godhead for their guard. We are here taught that the Lord's people are those who trust him, for they are thus described in the first verses: the line of faith is the line of grace, those who trust in the Lord are chosen of the Lord. The two verses together prove the eternal safety of the saints: they must abide where God has placed them, and God must for ever protect them from all evil. It would be difficult to imagine greater safety than is here set forth.

Verse 3. *For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.* The people of God are not to expect immunity from trial because the Lord surrounds them, for they may feel the power and persecution of the ungodly. Isaac, even in Abraham's family, was mocked by Ishmael. Assyria laid its sceptre even upon Zion itself. The graceless often bear rule and wield the rod; and when they do so they are pretty sure to make it fall heavily upon the Lord's believing people, so that the godly cry out by reason of their oppressors. Egypt's rod was exceeding heavy upon Israel, but the time came for it to be broken. God has set a limit to the woes of his chosen: the rod may light on their portion, but it shall not rest upon it. The righteous have a lot which none can take from them, for God has appointed them heirs of it by gracious entail: on that lot the rod of the wicked may fall, but over that lot it cannot have lasting sway. The saints abide for ever, but their troubles will not. Here is a good argument in prayer for all righteous ones who are in the hands of the wicked. Lest the righteous put forth their hands unto iniquity. The tendency of oppression is to drive the best of men into some hasty deed for self deliverance or vengeance. If the rack be too long used the patient sufferer may at last give way;

and therefore the Lord puts a limit to the tyranny of the wicked. He ordained that an Israelite who deserved punishment should not be beaten without measure: forty stripes save one was the appointed limit. We may therefore expect that he will set a bound to the suffering of the innocent, and will not allow them to be pushed to the uttermost extreme. Especially in point of time he will limit the domination of the persecutor, for length adds strength to oppression, and makes it intolerable; hence the Lord himself said of a certain tribulation, "except those days should be shortened, there should no flesh be saved; but for the elect's sake those days shall be shortened." It seems that even righteous men are in peril of sinning in evil days, and that it is not the will of the Lord that they should yield to the stress of the times in order to escape from suffering. The power and influence of wicked men when they are uppermost are used to lead or drive the righteous astray; but the godly must not accept this as an excuse, and yield to the evil pressure; far rather must they resist with all their might till it shall please God to stay the violence of the persecutor, and give his children rest. This the Lord here promises to do in due time.

Verse 4. *Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good, and to them that are upright in their hearts.* Men to be good at all must be good at heart. Those who trust in the Lord are good; for faith is the root of righteousness, and the evidence of uprightness. Faith in God is a good and upright thing, and its influence makes the rest of the man good and upright. To such God will do good: the prayer of the text is but another form of promise, for that which the Lord prompts us to ask he virtually promises to give. Jehovah will take off evil from his people, and in the place thereof will enrich them with all manner of good. When the rod of the wicked is gone his own rod and staff shall comfort us. Meanwhile it is for us to pray that it may be well with all the upright who are now among men. God bless them, and do them good in every possible form. We wish well to those who do well. We are so plagued by the crooked that we would pour benedictions upon the upright.

Verse 5. *As for such as turn aside unto their crooked ways, the LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.* Two kinds of men are always to be found, the upright and the men of crooked ways. Alas, there are some who pass from one class to another, not by a happy conversion, turning from the twisting lanes of deceit into the highway of truth, but by an unhappy declension leaving the main road of honesty and holiness for the bypaths of wickedness. Such apostates have been seen in all ages, and David knew enough of them; he could never forget Saul, and Ahithophel, and others. How sad that men who once walked in the right way should turn aside from it! Observe the course of the false hearted: first, they look out for crooked ways; next, they choose them and make them "their crooked ways"; and then they turn aside into them. They never intend to go back unto perdition, but only to make a curve and drop into the right road again. The straight way becomes a little difficult, and so they make a circumbendibus, which all along aims at coming out right, though it may a little deviate from precision. These people are neither upright in heart, nor good, nor trusters in Jehovah,

and therefore the Lord will deal otherwise with them than with his own people: when execution day comes these hypocrites and time servers shall be led out to the same gallows as the openly wicked. All sin will one day be expelled the universe, even as criminals condemned to die are led out of the city; then shall secret traitors find themselves ejected with open rebels. Divine truth will unveil their hidden pursuits, and lead them forth, and to the surprise of many they shall be set in the same rank with those who avowedly wrought iniquity. But peace shall be upon Israel. In fact the execution of the deceivers shall tend to give the true Israel peace. When God is smiting the unfaithful not a blow shall fall upon the faithful. The chosen of the Lord shall not only be like Salem, but they shall have salem, or peace. Like a prince, Israel has prevailed with God, and therefore he need not fear the face of man; his wrestlings are over, the blessing of peace has been pronounced upon him. He who has peace with God may enjoy peace concerning all things. Bind the first and last verses together: Israel trusts in the Lord Ps 125:1, and Israel has peace Ps 125:5.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. In the degrees of Christian virtue, this psalm represents the sixth step—the confidence which the Christian places in the Lord. "It teacheth us, while we ascend and raise our minds unto the Lord our God in loving charity and piety, not to fix our gaze upon men who are prosperous in the world with a false happiness." (Augustine.)—*H. T. Armfield, in "The Gradual Psalms,"* 1874.

Whole Psalm. This short psalm may be summed up in those words of the prophet (Isa 3:10-11), "Say ye to the righteous, that it shall be well with him. Woe unto the wicked! it shall be ill with him." Thus are life and death, the blessing and the curse, set before us often in the psalms, as well as in the law and in the prophets.—*Matthew Henry, 1662-1714.*

Verse 1. *They that trust in the LORD.* Note how he commandeth no work here to be done, but only speaketh of trust, In popery in the time of trouble men were taught to enter into some kind of religion, to fast, to go on pilgrimage, and to do such other foolish works of devotion, which they devised as an high service unto God, and, thereby thought to make condign satisfaction for sin and to merit eternal life. But here the Psalmist leadeth us the plain way unto God, pronouncing this to be the chiefest anchor of our salvation,—only to hope and trust in the Lord; and declaring that the greatest service that we can do unto God is to trust him. For this is the nature of God—to create all things of nothing. Therefore he createth and bringeth forth in death, life; in darkness, light. Now to believe this is the essential nature and most special property of faith. When God then seeth such a one as agreeth with his own nature, that is, which believeth to find in danger help, in poverty riches, in sin righteousness, and that for God's own mercy's sake in Christ alone, him can God neither hate nor forsake.—*Martin Luther (1483-1546), in "A Commentary on the Psalms of Degrees."*

Verse 1. *They that trust in the Lord.* All that deal with God must deal upon trust, and he will give comfort to those only that give credit to him, and make it appear they do so by quitting other confidences, and venturing to the utmost for God. The closer our expectations are confined to God, the higher our expectations may be raised.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1. *They that trust,* etc. Trust, therefore, in the Lord, always, altogether, and for all things.—*Robert Nisbet, in "The Songs of the Temple Pilgrims," 1863.*

Verse 1. *Shall be as mount Zion.* Some persons are like the sand—ever shifting and treacherous. See Mt 7:26. Some are like the sea—restless and unsettled. See Isa 57:20 Jas 1:6. Some are like the wind—uncertain and inconstant. See Eph 4:14. Believers are like a mountain—strong, stable, and secure. To every soul that trusts him the Lord says, "Thou art Peter."—*W. Hr. J. Page, of Chelsea, 1883.*

Verse 1. *As mount Zion,* etc. Great is the stability of a believer's felicity.—*John Trapp, 1601-1669.*

Verse 1. *Mount Zion, which cannot be removed,* etc. Lieutenant Conder, reviewing Mr. Maudslay's important exploration, says, "It is especially valuable as showing that, however the masonry may have been destroyed and lost, we may yet hope to find indications of the ancient enceinte *in the rock scarps which are imperishable.*" This is very true; for, while man can destroy what man has made, the everlasting hills smile at his rage. Yet who can hear of it without perceiving the force and sublimity of that glorious description of the immobility of believers.

"They that trust in Jehovah are as mount Zion,
Which shall not be moved, it abideth for ever."

—*James Neil, in "Palestine Explored", 1882.*

Verse 1. *Cannot be removed,* etc. They can never be removed from the Lord, though they may be removed from his house and ordinances, as sometimes David was; and from his gracious presence, and sensible communion with him; and out of the world by death: yet never from his heart's love, nor out of the covenant of his grace, which is sure and everlasting; nor out of his family, into which they are taken; nor from the Lord Jesus Christ, nor out of his hands and arms, nor from off his heart; nor from off him, as the foundation on which they are laid; nor out of a state of grace, either regeneration or justification; but such abide in the love of God, in the covenant of his grace, in the hands of his Son, in the grace wherein they stand, and in the house of God for evermore.—*John Gill, 1697-1771.*

Verse 1. *Abideth for ever.* So surely as *Mount Zion* shall never be "removed", so surely shall the church of God be preserved. Is it not strange that wicked and idolatrous powers have not joined together, dug down this mount, and carried it into the sea, that they might nullify a promise in which the people of God exult! Till ye can carry Mount Zion into the Mediterranean Sea, the church of Christ shall grow and prevail. Hear this, yet murderous Mohammedans!—*Adam Clarke, 1760-1832.*

Verse 1. *Abideth.* Literally, *sitteth*; as spoken of a mountain, "lieth" or "is situated"; but here with the

following *forever*, used in a still stronger sense.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne*, 1868.

Verses 1-2. That which is here promised the saints is a perpetual preservation of them in that condition wherein they are; both on the part of God, "he is round about them from henceforth even for ever"; and on their parts, *they shall not be removed*,—that is, from the condition of acceptation with God wherein they are supposed to be,—but they shall abide for ever, and continue therein immovable unto the end. This is a plain promise of their continuance in that condition wherein they are, with their safety from thence, and not a promise of some other good thing provided that they continue in that condition. Their being compared to mountains, and their stability, which consists in their being and continuing so, will admit no other sense. As mount Zion abides in its condition, so shall they; and as the mountains about Jerusalem continue, so doth the Lord continue his presence unto them. That expression which is used, Ps 125:2, is weighty and full to this purpose, *The LORD is round about his people from henceforth even for ever*. What can be spoken more fully, more pathetically? Can any expression of men so set forth the safety of the saints? The Lord is round about them, not to save them from this or that incursion, but from all; not from one or two evils, but from every one whereby they are or may be assaulted. He is with them, and round about them on every side that no evil shall come nigh them. It is a most full expression of universal preservation, or of God's keeping his saints in his love and favour, upon all accounts whatsoever; and that not for a season only, but it is "*henceforth*", from his giving this promise unto their souls in particular, and their receiving of it, throughout all generations, "*even for ever*."—*John Owen*, 1616-1683.

Verse 2. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem.* This image is not realised, as most persons familiar with our European scenery would wish and expect it to be realised. Jerusalem is not literally shut in by mountains, except on the eastern side, where it may be said to be enclosed by the arms of Olivet, with its outlying ridges on the north east and south west. Anyone facing Jerusalem westward, northward, or southward, will always see the city itself on an elevation higher than the hills in its immediate neighbourhood, its towers and walls standing out against the sky, and not against any high background such as that which encloses the mountain towns and villages of our own Cumbria or Westmoreland valleys. Nor, again, is the plain on which it stands enclosed by a continuous though distant circle of mountains, like that which gives its peculiar charm to Athens and Innsbruck. The mountains in the neighbourhood of Jerusalem are of unequal height, and only in two or three instances—Neby-Samwil, Er-Rain, and Tuleil el-Ful—rising to any considerable elevation. Even Olivet is only a hundred and eighty feet above the top of Mount Zion. Still they act as a shelter: they must be surmounted before the traveller can see, or the invader attack, the Holy City; and the distant line of Moab would always seem to rise as a wall against invaders from the remote east. It is these mountains, expressly including those beyond the Jordan, which are mentioned as "standing round about Jerusalem", in another and more terrible sense, when on the night of the assault of Jerusalem

by the Roman armies, they "echoed back" the screams of the inhabitants of the captured city, and the victorious shouts of the soldiers of Titus.* *Arthur Penrhyn Stanley* (1815-1881), in "Sinai and Palestine." *(Josephus. Bell. Jud 6:5,1)

Verse 2. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem.* Jerusalem is situated in the centre of a mountainous region, whose valleys have drawn around it in all directions a perfect network of deep ravines, the perpendicular walls of which constitute a very efficient system of defence.—*William M. Thomson*, in "*The Land and the Book*", 1881.

Verse 2. *As the mountains are round about Jerusalem, etc.* The mountains most emphatically stand "*round about Jerusalem*", and in doing so must have greatly safeguarded it in ancient times. We are specially told that when Titus besieged the city, he found it impossible to invest it completely until he had built a wall round the entire sides of these mountains, nearly five miles long, with thirteen places at intervals in which he stationed garrisons, which added another mile and a quarter to these vast earthworks. "The whole was completed", says the Jewish historian, "in three days; so that what would naturally have required some months was done in so short an interval as is incredible." (Josephus. Wars of the Jews. Book 5, ch. 7, section 2.) Assaults upon the city, even then, could only be delivered effectively upon its level corner to the north west, whence every hostile advance was necessarily directed in all its various sieges. To those familiar with these facts, beautifully bold, graphic, and forceful is the Psalmist's figure of the security of the Lord's people—

"The mountains are round about Jerusalem;
And Jehovah is round about his people,
Henceforth, even for evermore."

These words must have been in Hebrew ears as sublime as they were comforting, and, when sung on the heights of Zion, inspiring in the last degree.—*James Neil*.

Verse 2. *The LORD is round about his people.* It is not enough that we are compassed about with fiery walls, that is, with the sure custody, the continual watch and ward of the angels; but the Lord himself is our wall: so that every way we are defended by the Lord against all dangers. Above us is his heaven, on both sides he is as a wall, under us he is as a strong rock whereupon we stand so are we everywhere sure and safe. Now if Satan through these munitions casts his darts at us, it must needs be that the Lord himself shall be hurt before we take harm. Great is our incredulity if we hear all these things in vain.—*Martin Luther*.

Verse 2. *From henceforth, even for ever.* This amplification of the promise, taken from time or duration, should be carefully noted; for it shows that the promises made to the people of Israel pertain generally to the Church in every age, and are not to expire with that polity. Thus it expressly declares, that the Church will continuously endure in this life; which is most sweet consolation for pious minds, especially in great dangers and public calamities, when everything appears to threaten ruin and

destruction.—*D. H. Mollerus*, 1639.

Verse 3. *The rod of the wicked.* It is, *their* rod, made for them; if God scourge his children a little with it, he doth but borrow it from the immediate and natural use for which it was ordained; their rod, their judgment. So it is called their cup: "This is the portion" and potion "of their cup." Ps 11:6.—*Thomas Adams*, in "*An Exposition of the Second Epistle of Peter*," 1633.

Verse 3. *For the rod of the wicked, etc.* According to Gussetius, this is to be understood of a measuring rod; laid not on persons, but on lands and estates; and best agrees with the lot, inheritance, and estate of the righteous; and may signify that though wicked men unjustly seize upon and retain the farms, possessions, and estates of good men, as if they were assigned to them by the measuring line; yet they shall not hold them long, or always.—*John Gill*.

Verse 3. *For the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous.* No tyranny, although it appear firm and stable, is of long continuance: inasmuch as God does not relinquish the sceptre. This is manifest from the example of Pharaoh, of Saul, of Sennacherib, of Herod, and of others. Rightly, therefore, says Athanasius of Julian the Apostate, "That little cloud has quickly passed away." And how quickly beyond all human expectation the foundations of the ungodly are overthrown is fully declared in Ps 37:1-40.—*Solomon Gesner*, 1559-1605.

Verse 3. *Shall not rest*, that is to say, "lie heavy", so as to oppress, as in Isa 25:10, with a further sense of continuance of the oppression.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verse 3. *Shall not rest, etc.* The wrath of man, like water turned upon a mill, shall come on them with no more force than shall be sufficient for accomplishing God's gracious purposes on their souls: the rest, however menacing its power may be, shall be made to pass off by an opened sluice. Nevertheless the trouble shall be sufficient to try every man and to prove the truth and measure of his integrity.—*Charles Simeon* (1759-1836), in "*Horae Homileticae*."

Verse 3. *The lot of the righteous.* There is a fourfold lot belonging to the faithful.

1. The lot of the saints is the sufferings of the saints. "All that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution:" 2Ti 3:12.

2. The lot of the saints is also that light and happiness they have in this world. The lot is "fallen unto me in pleasant places; yea, I have a goodly heritage:" Ps 26:6. When David sat at he sheepfold, which was his lot, he was thus prepared for the kingdom of Israel which was given him by lot from God.

3. But more specially faith, grace, and sanctification; which give them just right and title to the inheritance of glory. Heaven is theirs now; though not in possession, yet in succession. They have the earnest of it; let them grow up to stature and perfection, and take it.

4. Lastly, they have the lot of heaven. Hell is the lot of the wicked: "Behold at evening tide trouble; and before the morning he is not. This is the portion of them that spoil us, and the lot of them that rob

us": Isa 27:14. Therefore it is said of Judas, that he went "to his own place": Ac 1:25. "Upon the wicked he shall rain snares, fire and brimstone, and an horrible tempest; this shall be the portion of their cup": Ps 11:6. But the lot of the righteous is faith, and the end of their faith the salvation of their souls. God gives them heaven, not for any foreseen worthiness in the receivers, for no worthiness of our own can make us our father's heirs; but for his own mercy and favour in Christ, preparing heaven for us, and us for heaven. So that upon his decree it is allotted to us; and unless heaven could lose God, we cannot lose heaven.

Here, then, consider how the lottery of Canaan may shadow out to us that blessed land of promise whereof the other was a type.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 3. *Lest the righteous out fort their hands unto iniquity.* Lest overcome by impatience, or drawn aside by the world's allurements or affrightments, they should yield and comply with the desires of the wicked, or seek to help themselves out of trouble by sinister practices. God (saith Chrysostom) acts like a lutanist, who will not let the strings of his lute be too slack, lest it mar the music, nor suffer them to be too hard stretched or screwed up, lest they break.—*John Trapp*, 1601-1669.

Verse 3. *Lest the righteous put forth their hands*, etc. The trial is to prove faith, not to endanger it by too sharp a pressure: *lest*, overcome by this, even the faithful put forth a hand (as in Ge 3:22), to forbidden pleasure; or (as in Ex 22:8), to contamination: through force of custom gradually persuading to sinful compliance, or through despair of good, as the Psalmist (see Ps 37:1-40 and Ps 73:1-28) describes some in his day who witnessed the prosperity of wicked men.—*The Speaker's Commentary*, 1871-1881.

Verse 4. *Do good, O Lord, unto those that be good.* The Midrash here calls to mind a Talmudic riddle:—There came a good one (Moses Ex 2:2) and received a good thing (the Thra, or Law, Pr 4:2) from the good One (God, Ps 145:9) for the good ones (Israel, Ps 125:4).—*Franz Delitzsch*, 1871.

Verse 4. *Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good.* A favourite thought with Nehemiah. See Ne 2:8,18 5:19 13:14,31: "Remember me, O my God, for good", the concluding words of his book.—*Christopher Wordsworth*, 1872.

Verse 4. *Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good.* They consult their own good best, who do most good. I may say these three things of *those who do good* (and what is serving God but doing of good? or what is doing good but serving God?). First, they shall receive true good. Secondly, they shall for ever hold the best good, the chief good; they shall not only spend their days and years in good; but when their days and years are spent, they shall have good, and a greater good than any they had, in spending the days and years of this life. They shall have good in death, they shall come to a fuller enjoyment of God, *the chief good*, when they have left and let fall the possession of all earthly goods. Thirdly, they that do good shall find all things working together for their good; if they have a loss they shall receive good by it; if they bear a cross, that cross shall bear good to

them.—*Joseph Caryl, 1602-1673.*

Verse 4. *Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good,* etc. Perhaps it may not prove unprofitable to enquire, with some minuteness, who are the persons for whom prayer is presented, and who have an interest in the Divine promises. They are brought before us under different denominations. In Ps 125:1, they are described as trusting in the Lord: in Ps 125:2, they are described as the Lord's people: in Ps 125:3, they are called the righteous: in Ps 125:4, they are called good and upright in heart: and in Ps 125:5, they are called Israel. Let us collect these terms together, and endeavour to ascertain from them, what is their true condition and character, for whose security the Divine perfections are pledged. And while a rapid sketch is thus drawn, let each breathe the silent prayer, "Search me, O God, and know my heart; try me, and know my thoughts; and see if there be any wicked Way in me, and lead me in the way everlasting."—*N. M'Michael, in "The Pilgrim Psalms," 1860.*

Verse 4. *Do good, O LORD, unto those that be good.* Believers are described as "good". The name is explained by the Spirit as implying the indwelling of the Holy Ghost and of faith. It is proof that no guile is harboured in their hearts. Prayer is made that God would visit them with goodness. This prayer incited by the Spirit amounts to a heavenly promise that they shall receive such honour.—*Henry Law, in "Family Devotion," 1878.*

Verse 4. *Them that be good.* Oh, brethren, the good in us is God in us. The inwardness makes the outwardness, the godliness the beauty. It is indisputable that it is Christ in us that makes all our Christianity. Oh, Christians who have no Christ in them—such Christians are poor, cheap imitations, and hollow shams—and Christ will, with infinite impatience, even infinite love, fling them away.—*Charles Stanord, in a Sermon preached before the Baptist Union, 1876.*

Verse 4. *Upright in their hearts.* All true excellence has its seat here. It is not the good action which makes the good man: it is the good man who does the good action. The merit of an action depends entirely upon the motives which have prompted its performance; and, tried by this simple test, how many deeds, which have wrung from the world its admiration and its glory, might well be described in old words, as nothing better than splendid sins. When the heart is wrong, all is wrong. When the heart is right, all is right.—*N. M'Michael.*

Verse 4. *Upright.* Literally, *straight*, straightforward, as opposed to all moral obliquity whatever.—*Joseph Addison Alexander (1809-1860), in "The Psalms Translated and Explained."*

Verse 5. *Such as turn aside unto their crooked ways.* This is the anxiety of the pastor in this pilgrim song. The shepherd would keep his sheep from straggling. His distress is that all in Israel are not true Israelites. Two sorts of people, described by the poet, have ever been in the church. The second class, instead of being at the trouble to "withstand in the evil day", will "put forth their hands unto iniquity". Rather than feel, they will follow the rod of the wicked. They will "turn aside unto their

crooked ways", sooner than risk temporal and material interests.—*Edward Jewitt Robinson, in "The Caravan and the Temple," 1878.*

Verse 5. *Such as turn aside unto their crooked ways.* All the ways of sin are called "*crooked ways*", and they are our own ways. The Psalmist calls them "*their crooked ways*"; that is, the ways of their own devising; whereas the way of holiness is the Lord's way. To exceed or do more; to be deficient or do less, than God requires, both these are "*crooked ways*". The way of the Lord lies straight forward, right before us. "Whoso walketh uprightly shall be saved; but he that is perverse (or *crooked*) in his ways shall fall at once": Pr 28:18. The motion of a godly man is like that of the kine that carried the ark: "Who took the straight way to the way of Bethshemesh, and went along the highway, lowing as they went, and turned not aside to the right hand or to the left": 1Sa 6:12.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 5. *Crooked ways.* The ways of sinners are "*crooked*"; they shift from one pursuit to another, and turn hither and thither to deceive; they wind about a thousand ways to conceal their base intentions, to accomplish their iniquitous projects, or to escape the punishment of their crimes; yet disappointment, detection, confusion, and misery, are their inevitable portion.—*Thomas Scott, 1747-1821.*

Verse 5. *The LORD shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.* They walked according to the prince of the air, and they shall go where the prince of the air is. God will bring forth men from their hiding places. Though they walk among the drove of his children, in procession now, yet if they also walk in by lanes of sin, God will rank them at the latter day, yea, often in this world, with the workers of iniquity. They walk after workers of iniquity here before God, and God will make manifest that it is so before he hath done with them. The reason, my brethren, why they are to be reckoned among workers of iniquity, and as walkers among them, though they sever themselves from them in respect of external conversation, is, because they agree in the same internal principle of sin. They walk in their lusts: every unregenerate man doth so. Refine him how you will, it is certain he doth in heart pursue "*crooked ways.*"—*Thomas Goodwin, 1600-1679.*

Verse 5. Sometimes God takes away a barren professor by permitting him to fall into open profaneness. There is one that hath taken up a profession of the worthy name of the Lord Jesus Christ, but this profession is only a cloak; he secretly practises wickedness; he is a glutton, or a drunkard, or covetous, or unclean. Well, saith God, I will loose the reins of this professor, I will give him up to his vile affections. I will loose the reins of his sins before him, he shall be entangled with his filthy lusts, he shall be overcome of ungodly company. Thus they that turn aside to their own crooked ways, *the Lord shall lead them forth with the workers of iniquity.*—*John Bunyan, 1628-1688.*

Verse 5. *But peace shall be upon Israel.* Do you ask, What is the peace upon Israel? I answer:—First, the peace of Israel, that is, of a believing and holy soul, is *from above*, and is higher than all the disturbances of the world; it rests upon him, and makes him calm and peaceful, and lifts

him above the world: for upon him rests the Holy Spirit, who is the Comforter; who is essential love and uncreated peace. Secondly, the peace of a believing and holy soul is *internal* for it is sent down from heaven upon his head, flows into his heart, and dwells there, and stills all agitations of mind. Thirdly, the peace of a believing and holy soul, is also *external*. It is a fountain of Paradise watering all the face of the earth: Ge 2:6: you see it in the man's face and life. Fourthly, the peace of a believing and holy soul is divine: for chiefly, it maintains peace with God. Fifthly, the peace of a believing and holy soul is *universal*: to wit, with neighbours, with God, with himself: in the body, in the eyes, in the ears, in tasting, smelling, feeling, in all the members, and in all the appetites. This peace is not disturbed by devils, the world, and the flesh, setting forth their honours, riches, pleasures. Sixthly, the peace of a believing and holy soul is peace *eternal* and never interrupted; for it flows from an eternal and exhaustless fountain, even from God himself.—*Condensed from Le Blanc, 1599-1669.*

Verse 5. *Israel.* The Israelites derived their joint names from the two chief parts of religion: Israelites, from Israel, whose prayer was his "strength" (Ho 12:3), and Jews, from Judah, whose name means "praise."—*George Seaton Bowes, in "Illustrative Gatherings," 1869.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Whole Psalm.

1. The mark of the covenant: "They that trust."
2. The security of the covenant (Ps 125:1-2).
3. The rod of the covenant (Ps 125:3).
4. The tenor of the covenant (Ps 125:4).
5. The spirit of the covenant,— "peace."

Verse 1. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 1,450: "The Immortality of the Believer."

Verses 1-2.

1. The believer's singularity: he trusts in Jehovah.
2. The believer's stability: "abideth for ever."
3. The believer's safety: "As the mountains," etc.

Verse 2. The all surrounding presence of Jehovah the glory, safety, and eternal blessedness of his people. Yet this to the wicked would be hell.

Verse 2. See "Spurgeon's Sermons," Nos. 161-2: "The Security of the Church."

Verse 2. The endurance of mercy: "From henceforth even for ever."

Verse 2. Saints hemmed in by infinite love.

1. *The City and the Girdle, or the symbols separated.*

a) Jerusalem imaging God's people. Anciently chosen; singularly honoured; much beloved; the

shrine of Deity.

b) The Mountain Girdle setting forth Jehovah: Strength; All sidedness; Sentinel through day and night.

2. *The City within the Girdle, or the symbols related.*

a) Delightful Entanglement. The view from the windows! (Jehovah "round about.") To be lost must break through God! Sound sleep and safe labour.

b) Omnipotent Circumvallation, suggesting—God's determination; Satan's dismay. This mountain ring immutable.—*W. B. Haynes, of Stafford.*

Verse 3. Observe,

1. The Permission implied. The rod of the wicked may come upon the lot of the righteous. Why?

a) That wickedness may be free to manifest itself.

b) That the righteous may be made to hate sin.

c) That the righteousness of God's retribution may be seen.

d) That the consolations of the righteous may abound. 2Co 1:5.

2. The Permanency denied: "The rod...shall *not rest*", etc. Illustrate by history of Job, Joseph, David, Daniel, Christ, martyrs, etc.

3. The Probitry tried and preserved: "Lest the righteous put forth", etc., by rebelling, sinful compromise, etc.

a) God will have it tried, to prove its worth, beauty, etc.

b) But no more than sufficiently tried.—*John Field, of Sevenoaks.*

Verses 3-4.

1. The good defined: "The upright in heart"; such as do not "turn aside", and are not "workers of iniquity."

2. The good distressed: by "the rod of the wicked."

3. The good delivered: "Do good"; fulfil thy promise (Ps 125:3).—*W. H. J. Page.*

Verse 4.

1. What it is to be good.

2. What it is for God to do us good.

Verse 5. Temporary Professors.

1. The crucial test: "They turn aside."

2. The crooked policy: they make crooked ways their own.

3. The crushing doom: "led forth with workers of iniquity."

Verse 5. Hypocrites.

1. Their ways: "crooked."

a) Like the way of a winding stream, seeking out the fair level, or the easy descent.

- b) Like the course of a tacking ship, which skilfully makes every wind to drive her forward.
 - c) Ways constructed upon no principle but that of pure selfishness.
2. Their conduct under trial. They "turn aside."
- a) From their religious profession.
 - b) From their former companions.
 - c) To become the worst scorers of spiritual things, and the most violent calumniators of spiritually minded men.
3. Their doom: "The Lord shall," etc.
- a) In the judgment they shall be classed with the most flagrant of sinners; "with the workers of iniquity."
 - b) They shall be exposed by an irresistible power: "The Lord shall lead them forth."
 - c) They shall meet with terrible execution with the wicked in hell.—*J. Field.*

Verse 5. (*last clause*). To whom peace belongs. To "Israel"; the chosen, the once wrestler, the now prevailing prince. Consider Jacob's life after he obtained the name of Israel; note his trials, and his security under them as illustrating this text. Then take the text as a sure promise.

Verse 5. (*last clause*). Enquire,

1. Who are the Israel?
 - a) Converted ones.
 - b) Circumcised in heart.
 - c) True worshippers.
2. What is the peace?
 - a) Peace of conscience.
 - b) Of friendship with God.
 - c) Of a settled and satisfied heart.
 - d) Of eternal glory, in reversion.
3. Why the certainty ("shall be")?
 - a) Christ has made peace for them.
 - b) The Holy Spirit brings peace to them.
 - c) They walk in the way of peace.

—*J. Field.*

WORK UPON THE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-FIFTH PSALM

For lists of Works upon the Psalms of Degrees, see note for [Psalm 119](#).

Psalm 126

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. A Song of Degrees. This is the seventh Step, and we may therefore expect to meet with some special perfection of joy in it; nor shall we look in vain. We see here not only that Zion abides, but that her joy returns after sorrow. Abiding is not enough, fruitfulness is added. The pilgrims went from blessing to blessing in their psalmody as they proceeded on their holy way. Happy people to whom ever ascent was a song, every halt a hymn. Here the trustor becomes a sower: faith works by love, obtains a present bliss, and secures a harvest of delight.

There is nothing in this psalm by which we can decide its date, further than this,—that it is a song after a great deliverance from oppression. "Turning captivity" by no means requires an actual removal into banishment to fill out the idea; rescue from any dire affliction or crushing tyranny would be fitly described as "captivity turned." Indeed, the passage is not applicable to captives in Babylon, for it is Zion itself which is in captivity and not a part of her citizens: the holy city was in sorrow and distress; though it could not be removed, the prosperity could be diminished. Some dark cloud lowered over the beloved capital, and its citizens prayed "Turn again our captivity. O Lord."

This psalm is in its right place and most fittingly follows its predecessor, for as in Ps 125:1-5, we read that the rod of the wicked shall not rest upon the lot of the righteous, we here see it removed from them to their great joy. The word "turn" would seem to be the keynote of the song: it is a Psalm of conversion—conversion from captivity; and it may well be used to set forth the rapture of a pardoned soul when the anger of the Lord is turned away from it. We will call it, "Leading captivity captive."

DIVISIONS. The Psalm divides itself into a narrative (Ps 126:1-2), a song (Ps 126:3), a prayer (Ps 126:4), and a promise (Ps 126:5-6).

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *When the Lord turned again the captivity of Zion, we were like them that dream.* Being in trouble, the gracious pilgrims remember for their comfort times of national woe which were succeeded by remarkable deliverances. Then sorrow was gone like a dream, and the joy which followed was so great that it seemed too good to be true, and they feared that it must be the vision of an idle brain. So sudden and so overwhelming was their joy that they felt like men out of themselves, ecstatic, or in a trance. The captivity had been great, and great was the deliverance; for the great God himself had wrought it: it seemed too good to be actually true: each man said to himself, "Is this a dream? O if it be a dream,

Let me sleep on, and do not wake me yet."

It was not the freedom of an individual which the Lord in mercy had wrought, but of all Zion, of the whole nation; and this was reason enough for overflowing gladness. We need not instance the histories which illustrate this verse in connection with literal Israel; but it is well to remember how often it has been true to ourselves. Let us look to the prison houses from which we have been set free. Ah, me, what captives we have been! At our first conversion what a turning again of captivity we experienced. Never shall that hour be forgotten. Joy! Joy! Joy! Since then, from multiplied troubles, from depression of spirit, from miserable backsliding, from grievous doubt, we have been emancipated, and we are not able to describe the bliss which followed each emancipation.

"When God reveal'd his gracious name
And changed our mournful state,
Our rapture seem'd, a pleasing dream,
The grace appeared so great."

This verse will have a higher fulfilment in the day of the final overthrow of the powers of darkness when the Lord shall come forth for the salvation and glorification of his redeemed. Then in a fuller sense than even at Pentecost our old men shall see visions, and our young men shall dream dreams: yea, all things shall be so wonderful, so far beyond all expectation, that those who behold them shall ask themselves whether it be not all a dream. The past is ever a sure prognostic of the future; the thing which has been is the thing that shall be: we shall again and again find ourselves amazed at the wonderful goodness of the Lord. Let our hearts gratefully remember the former loving kindnesses of the Lord: we were sadly low, sorely distressed, and completely past hope, but when Jehovah appeared he did not merely lift us out of despondency, he raised us into wondering happiness. The Lord who alone turns our captivity does nothing by halves: those whom he saves from hell he brings to heaven. He turns exile into ecstasy, and banishment into bliss.

Verse 2. *Then was our mouth filled with laughter, and our tongue with singing.* So full were they of joy that they could not contain themselves. They must express their joy and yet they could not find expression for it. Irrepressible mirth could do no other than laugh, for speech was far too dull a thing for it. The mercy was so unexpected, so amazing, so singular that they could not do less than laugh; and they laughed much, so that their mouths were full of it, and that because their hearts were full too. When at last the tongue could move articulately, it could not be content simply to talk, but it must needs sing; and sing heartily too, for it was full of singing. Doubtless the former pain added to the zest of the pleasure; the captivity threw a brighter colour into the emancipation. The people remembered this joy flood for years after, and here is the record of it turned into a song. Note the when and the then. God's when is our then. At the moment when he turns our captivity, the heart turns from its sorrow; when he fills us with grace we are filled with gratitude. We were made to be as

them that dream, but we both laughed and sang in our sleep. We are wide awake now, and though we can scarcely realize the blessing, yet we rejoice in it exceedingly. Then said they among the heathen, the Lord hath done great *things for them*. The heathen heard the songs of Israel, and the better sort among them soon guessed the cause of their joy. Jehovah was known to be their God, and to him the other nations ascribed the emancipation of his people, reckoning it to be no small thing which the Lord had thus done; for those who carried away the nations had never in any other instance restored a people to their ancient dwelling place. These foreigners were no dreamers; though they were only lookers on, and not partakers in the surprising mercy, they plainly saw what had been done, and rightly ascribed it to the great Giver of all good. It is a blessed thing when saints set sinners talking about the lovingkindness of the Lord: and it is equally blessed when the saints who are hidden away in the world hear of what the Lord has done for his church, and themselves resolve to come out from their captivity and unite with the Lord's people. Ah, dear reader, Jehovah has indeed done marvellous things for his chosen, and these "great things" shall be themes for eternal praise among all intelligent creatures.

Verse 3. *The LORD hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad.* They did not deny the statement which reflected so much glory upon Jehovah: with exultation they admitted and repeated the statement of Jehovah's notable dealings with them. To themselves they appropriated the joyful assertion; they said "The Lord hath done great things *for us*", and they declared their gladness at the fact. It is a poor modesty which is ashamed to own its joys in the Lord. Call it rather a robbery of God. There is so little of happiness abroad that if we possess a full share of it we ought not to hide our light under a bushel, but let it shine on all that are in the house. Let us avow our joy, and the reason of it, stating the "whereof" as well as the fact. None are so happy as those who are newly turned and returned from captivity; none can more promptly and satisfactorily give a reason for the gladness that is in them, the Lord himself has blessed us, blessed us greatly, blessed us individually, blessed assuredly; and because of this we sing unto his name. I heard one say the other day in prayer "whereof we desire to be glad." Strange dilution and defilement of Scriptural language! Surely if God has done great things for us we are glad, and cannot be otherwise. No doubt such language is meant to be lowly, but in truth it is loathsome.

Verse 4. *Turn again our captivity, O LORD.* Remembering the former joy of a past rescue they cry to Jehovah for a repetition of it. When we pray for the turning of our captivity, it is wise to recall former instances thereof: nothing strengthens faith more effectually than the memory of a previous experience. "The Lord hath done" harmonizes well with the prayer, "Turn again." The text shows us how wise it is to resort anew to the Lord, who in former times has been so good to us. Where else should we go but to him who has done such great things for us? Who can turn again our captivity but he who turned it before? As the streams in the south. Even as the Lord sends floods down on the dry

beds of southern torrents after long droughts, so can he fill our wasted and wearied spirits with floods of holy delight. This the Lord can do for any of us, and he can do it at once, for nothing is too hard for the Lord. It is well for us thus to pray, and to bring our suit before him who is able to bless us exceeding abundantly. Do not let us forget the past, but in the presence of our present difficulty let us resort unto the Lord, and beseech him to do that for us which we cannot possibly do for ourselves,—that which no other power can perform on our behalf. Israel did return from the captivity in Babylon, and it was even as though a flood of people hastened to Zion. Suddenly and plenteously the people filled again the temple courts. In streams they shall also in the latter days return to their own land, and replenish it yet again. Like mighty torrents shall the nations flow unto the Lord in the day of his grace. May the Lord hasten it in his own time.

Verse 5. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* Hence, present distress must not be viewed as if it would last for ever; it is not the end, by any means, but only a means to the end. Sorrow is our sowing, rejoicing shall be our reaping. If there were no sowing in tears there would be no reaping in joy. If we were never captives we could never lead our captivity captive. Our mouth had never been filled with holy laughter if it had not been first filled with the bitterness of grief. We must sow: we may have to sow in the wet weather of sorrow; but we shall reap, and reap in the bright summer season of joy. Let us keep to the work of this present sowing time, and find strength in the promise which is here so positively given us. Here is one of the Lord's shalls and wills; it is freely given both to workers, waiters, and weepers, and they may rest assured that it will not fail: "in due season they *shall* reap." This sentence may well pass current in the church as an inspired proverb. It is not every sowing which is thus insured against all danger, and guaranteed a harvest; but the promise specially belongs to sowing in tears. When a man's heart is so stirred that he weeps over the sins of others, he is elect to usefulness. Winners of souls are first weepers for souls. As there is no birth without travail, so is there no spiritual harvest without painful tillage. When our own hearts are broken with grief at man's transgression we shall break other men's hearts: tears of earnestness beget tears of repentance: "deep calleth unto deep."

Verse 6. *He.* The general assurance is applied to each one in particular. That which is spoken in the previous verse in the plural—"they", is here repeated in the singular—"he." *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him.* He leaves his couch to go forth into the frosty air and tread the heavy soil; and as he goes he weeps because of past failures, or because the ground is so sterile, or the weather so unseasonable, or his corn so scarce, and his enemies so plentiful and so eager to rob him of his reward. He drops a seed and a tear, a seed and a tear, and so goes on his way. In his basket he has seed which is precious to him, for he has little of it, and it is his hope for the next year. Each grain leaves his hand with anxious prayer that it may not be lost: he thinks little of himself, but much of his seed, and he

eagerly asks, "Will it prosper? shall I receive a reward for my labour?" Yes, good husbandman, doubtless you will gather sheaves from your sowing. Because the Lord has written doubtless, take heed that you do not doubt. No reason for doubt can remain after the Lord has spoken. You will return to this field—not to sow, but to reap; not to weep, but to rejoice; and after awhile you will go home again with nimbler step than today, though with a heavier load, for you shall have sheaves to bear with you. Your handful shall be so greatly multiplied that many sheaves shall spring from it; and you shall have the pleasure of reaping them and bringing them home to the place from which you went out weeping. This is a figurative description of that which was literally described in the first three verses. It is the turning of the worker's captivity, when, instead of seed buried beneath black earth, he sees the waving crops inviting him to a golden harvest. It is somewhat singular to find this promise of fruitfulness in close contact with return from captivity; and yet it is so in our own experience, for when our own soul is revived the souls of others are blessed by our labours. If any of us, having been once lonesome and lingering captives, have now returned home, and have become longing and labouring sowers, may the Lord, who has already delivered us, soon transform us into glad hearted reapers, and to him shall be praise for ever and ever. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN SAYINGS

TITLE. Augustine interprets the title, "A Song of Degrees, i.e. a Song of drawing upwards", of the drawing (going) up to the heavenly Jerusalem. This is right, inasmuch as the deliverance from the captivity of sin and death should in an increased measure excite those feelings of gratitude which Israel must have felt on being delivered from their corporeal captivity; in this respect again is the history of the outward theocracy a type of the history of the church.—Augustus F. Tholuck, 1856.

Whole Psalm. In its Christian aspect the psalm represents the seventh of the "degrees" in our ascent to the Jerusalem that is above. The Christian's exultation at his deliverance from the spiritual captivity of sin.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Whole Psalm. In mine opinion they go near to the sense and true meaning of the Psalm who do refer it to that great and general captivity of mankind under sin, death and the devil, and to the redemption purchased by the death and blood shedding of Christ, and published in the Gospel. For this kind of speech which the Prophet useth here is of greater importance than that it may be applied only to Jewish particular captivities. For what great matter was it for these people of the Jews, being, as it were, a little handful, to be delivered out of temporal captivity, in comparison of the exceeding and incomparable deliverance whereby mankind was set at liberty from the power of their enemies, not temporal, but eternal, even from death, Satan and hell itself? Wherefore we take this Psalm to be a prophecy of the redemption that should come by Jesus Christ, and the publishing of the gospel, whereby the kingdom of Christ is advanced, and death and the devil with all the powers of darkness

are vanquished.—*Thomas Stint, in An Exposition on Psalms 124-126, 1621.*

Whole Psalm. I believe this psalm is yet once more to be sung in still more joyous strain; once more will the glad tidings of Israel's restoration break upon her scattered tribes, like the unreal shadow of a dream; once more will the inhabitants of the various lands from among whom they come forth exclaim in adoring wonder, "The Lord hath done great things for them", when they see Israelite after Israelite and Jew after Jew, as on that wondrous night of Egypt, with their loins girded, their shoes on their feet, and their staff in their hand, hasting to obey the summons that recalls them to their own loved land!—*Barton Bouchier (1794-1865), in "Manna in the Heart."*

Whole Psalm

When, her sons from bonds redeeming,

God to Zion led the way,

We were like to people dreaming

Thoughts of bliss too bright to stay.

Fill'd with laughter, stood we gazing,

Loud our tongues in rapture sang;

Quickly with the news amazing

All the startled nations rang.

"See Jehovah's works of glory!

Mark what love for them he had!"

"Yes, FOR US! Go tell the story.

This was done, and we are glad."

Lord! thy work of grace completing

All our exiled hosts restore,

As in thirsty channels meeting

Southern streams refreshing pour.

They that now in sorrow weeping

Tears and seed commingled sow,

Soon, the fruitful harvest reaping,

Shall with joyful bosoms glow.

Tho' the sower's heart is breaking,

Bearing forth the seed to shed,

He shall come, the echoes waking,

Laden with his sheaves instead.

—*William Digby Seymour, in "The Hebrew Psalter. A New Metrical Translation," 1882.*

Verse 1. *When the Lord turned again the captivity.* As by the Lord's permission they were led into

captivity, so only by his power they were set at liberty. When the Israelites had served in a strange land four hundred years, it was not Moses, but Jehovah, that brought them out of the land of Egypt, and out of the house of bondage. In like manner it was he and not Deborah that freed them for Jabin after they had been vexed twenty years under the Canaanites. It was he and not Gideon that brought them out of the hands of the Midianites, after seven years' servitude. It was he and not Jephthah that delivered them from the Philistines and Amorites after eighteen years' oppression. Although in all these he did employ Moses and Deborah, Gideon and Jephthah, as instruments for their deliverance; and so it was not Cyrus's valour, but the Lord's power; not his policy, but God's wisdom, that, overthrowing the enemies, gave to Cyrus the victory, and put it into his heart to set his people at liberty; for he upheld his hands to subdue nations. He did weaken the loins of kings, and did open the doors before him, he did go before him, and made the crooked places straight; and he did break the brazen doors, and burst the iron bars. Isa 45:1-2.—*John Hume, in "The Jewes Deliverance," 1628.*

Verse 1. *In Jehovah's turning (to) the turning of Zion.* Meaning to return to the, or meet those returning, as it were, half way. The Hebrew noun denotes *conversion*, in its spiritual sense, and the verb God's gracious condescension in accepting or responding to it.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1. *The captivity of Zion.* I ask, first, *Why of Zion?* why not the captivity of Jerusalem, Judah, Israel? Jerusalem, Judah, Israel, were led away captives, no less than Zion. They, the greater and more general; why not the captivity of them, but of Zion? It should seem there is more in Zion's captivity than in the rest, that choice is made of it before the rest. Why? what was Zion? We know it was but a hill in Jerusalem, on the north side. Why is that hill so honoured? No reason in the world but this,—that upon it the Temple was built; and so, that Zion is much spoken of, and much made of, it is only for the Temple's sake. For whose sake it is (even for his church), that "the Lord loveth the gates of Zion more than all the dwellings of Jacob" (Ps 87:2); loveth her more, and so her captivity goeth nearer him, and her deliverance better pleaseth him, than all Jacob besides. This maketh *Zion's captivity* to be mentioned chiefly, as chiefly regarded by God, and to be regarded by his people. As we see it was: when they sat by the waters of Babylon, that which made them weep was, "When we remembered thee, O Zion"; that was their greatest grief. That their greatest grief, and this their greatest joy; *Loetati sumus*, when news came (not, saith the Psalm, *in domos nostras*, We shall go everyone to his own house, but) in *domun Domini ibimus*, "We shall go to the house of the Lord, we shall appear before the God of gods in Zion."—*Lancelot Andrews, 1555-1626.*

Verse 1. *We were like them that dream.* That is, they thought it was but mere fantasy and imagination.—*Sydraeh Simpson, 1658.*

Verse 1. *We were like them that dream.* Here you may observe that God doth often send succour and deliverance to the godly in the time of their affliction, distress, and adversity; that many times they themselves do doubt of the truth thereof, and think that in very deed they are not delivered, but

rather that they have dreamed. Peter, being imprisoned by Herod, when he was delivered by an angel, for all the light that did shine in the prison; though the angel did smite him on the side and raised him up; though he caused the chains to fall off his hands; though he spake to him three several times, *Surge, einge, circunda*;"Arise quickly, gird thyself, and cast thy garment about thee"; though he conducted him safely by the watches; and though he caused the iron gates to open willingly; yet for all this he was like unto them that dream. "For he wist not that it was true which was done by the angel; but thought he saw a vision": Ac 11:9. When old Jacob was told by his sons that his son Joseph was alive, his heart failed, and he believed them not; but when he had heard all that Joseph had said, and when he saw the chariots that Joseph had sent, then, as it were, raised from a sleep, and awakened from a dream, his spirit revived, and, rejoicing, he cried out, "I have enough; Joseph my son is yet alive." Lorinus seems to excuse this their distrust, because they were so over-ravished with joy, that they misdoubted the true cause of their joy: like the Apostles, who having Christ after his resurrection standing before them, they were so exceedingly joyed, that rejoicing they wondered and doubted; and like the two Marys, when the angel told them of our Saviour Christ's resurrection, they returned from the sepulchre rejoicing, and yet withal fearing. It may be they feared the truth of so glad news, and doubted lest they were deceived by some apparition.—*John Hume*

Verse 1. *We were like them that dream.* We thought that we were dreaming; we could hardly believe our eyes, when at the command of Cyrus, king of the Persians, we had returned to our own land. The same thing happened to the Greeks, when they heard that their country, being conquered by the Romans, had been made free by the Roman consul, P. Quinctius Flaminius. Livy says that when the herald had finished there was more good news than the people could receive all at once. They could scarcely believe that they had heard aright. They were looking on each other wonderingly, like sleepers on an empty dream.—*John Le Clerc Clericus, 1657-1736.*

Verse 1. *We were like them that dream, etc.* In the lapse of seventy years the hope of restoration to their land, so long deferred, had mostly gone out in despair, save as it rested (in some minds) on their faith in God's promise. The policy of those great powers in the East had long been settled, viz., to break up the old tribes and kingdoms of Western Asia; take the people into far eastern countries, and *never let them return.* No nation known to history, except the Jews, ever did return to rebuild their ancient cities and homes. Hence this joyous surprise.—*Henry Cowles, in "The Psalms; with Notes," 1872.*

Verse 1. *Like them that dream.* It was no dream; it was Jacob's dream become a reality. It was the promise, "I will bring thee back into this land" (Ge 28:15), fulfilled beyond all their hope.—*William Kay, in "The Psalms, with Notes, chiefly exegetical," 1871.*

Verse 1. *We were like them that dream.* The words should rather be translated, "*We are like unto those that are restored to health.*" The Hebrew word signifies to recover, or, to be restored to health.

And so the same word is translated in Isa 38:1-22, when Hezekiah recovered, he made a psalm of praise, and said, "O Lord, by these things men live, and in all these things is the life of my spirit: so wilt thou recover me, and make me to live." It is the same word that is used here. Thus Cajetan, Shindior, and others would have it translated here; and it suits best with the following words, "Then were our mouths filled with laughter, and our tongues with praise." When a man is in a good dream, his mouth is not filled with laughter, nor his tongue with praise: if a man be in a bad dream, his mouth is not filled with laughter, nor his tongue with praise; but when a man is restored to health after a great sickness, it is so.—*William Bridge*, 1600-1670.

Verse 2. *Then was our mouth filled with laughter*, etc. We must earnestly endeavour to learn this practice, or at the least to attain to some knowledge thereof; and we must raise up ourselves with this consideration—that the gospel is nothing else but laughter and joy. This joy properly pertaineth to captives, that is, to those that feel the captivity of sin and death; to the fleshy and tender hearts, terrified with the feeling of the wrath and judgment of God. These are the disciples in whose hearts should be planted laughter and joy, and that by the authority of the Holy Ghost, which this verse setteth forth. This people was in Zion, and, after the outward show of the kingdom and priesthood, did mightily flourish; but if a man consider them according to the spirit, he shall see them to be in miserable captivity, and that their tongue is full of heaviness and mourning, because their heart is terrified with the sense of sin and death. This is Moses' tongue or Moses' mouth, full of wormwood and of the bitterness of death; wherewith he designs to kill none but those which are too lively and full of security. But they who feel their captivity shall have their mouths filled with laughter and joy: that is, redemption and deliverance from sin and death shall be preached unto them. This is the sense and meaning of the Holy Ghost, that the mouth of such shall be filled with laughter, that is, their mouth shall show forth nothing else but great gladness through the inestimable consolations of the gospel, with voices of triumph and victory by Christ, overcoming Satan, destroying death, and taking away sins. This was first spoken unto the Jews; for this laughter was first offered to that people, then having the promises. Now he turneth to the Gentiles, whom he calleth to the partaking of this laughter.—*Martin Luther*.

Verse 2. *Then was our mouth filled with laughter*, etc. It was thus in the valley of Elah, where Goliath fell, and Philistia fled. It was thus at Baal Perazim. It was thus when one morning, after many nights of gloom, Jerusalem arose at dawn of day, and found Sennacherib's thousands a camp of the dead. And it has all along been the manner of our God.

"The Lord has wrought mightily
In what he has done for us;
And we have been made glad."

Ever do this till conflict is over! Just as thou dost with the streams of the south, year by year, so do

with us—with all, with each. And we are confident thou wilt; we are sure that we make no vain boast when we sing this psalm as descriptive of the experience of all thy pilgrims and worshippers.—*Andrew A. Bonar, in "Christ and his Church in the Book of Psalms," 1859.*

Verse 2. *Then was our mouth filled with laughter.* They that were laughed at, now laugh, and a new song is put into their mouths. It was a laughter of joy in God, not scorn of their enemies.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 2. *Mouth, tongue.* Lorinus, the Jesuit, hath observed that the Psalmist nominates the mouth and tongue in the singular, not *mouths* and *tongues* in the plural; because all the faithful and the whole congregation of the Jews *univoce*, with one voice, with one consent, and, as it were, with one mouth, did praise and glorify the Lord.—*John Hume.*

Verse 2. *And our tongue with singing.* Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks; and if the heart be glad the tongue is glib. Joy cannot be suppressed in the heart, but it must be expressed with the tongue.—*John Hume.*

Verse 2. *Then said they among the heathen.* And what is it they said? It is to the purpose. In this (as in many others) the heathens' saying cannot be mended. This they say: 1. That they were no quotidian, or common things; but "*great*". 2. Then, these great things they ascribe not to *chance*; that they *happened* not, but were "*done*". 3. Then, "*done*" by *God himself*: they see God in them. 4. Then, not done by God at random, without any particular aim; but *purposely* done *for them*. 5. And yet, there is more in *magnificavit facere* (if we look well). For, *magna fecit* would have served all this; but in saying "*magnificavit facere*", they say *magnificet illos, ut magna faceret pro illis*. He magnified them, or set greatly by them, for whom he would bring to pass so great a work. This said they among the "heathen." And it is pity the "*heathen*" said it, and that the Jew's themselves spake not these words first. But now, finding the "*heathen*" so saying; and finding it was all true that they said, they must needs find themselves bound to say at least as much; and more they could not say; for more cannot be said. So much then, and no less than they. And this addeth a degree to the *dicebant*,—that the sound of it was so great among *the heathen* that it made an *echo* even in Jewry itself.—*Lancelot Andrews.*

Verse 2. *The Lord hath done great things. He multiplied to do great things;* so the Chaldee, Syriac, and Arabic versions render it; and the history of this deliverance makes it good.—*Thomas Hodges, in a Sermon entitled "Sion's Hallelujah," 1660.*

Verses 2-3. There is this great difference between the praise which the heathen are forced to give to God, and that which the Lord's people heartily offer unto him: the one doth speak as having no interest nor share in the mercy; the other do speak as they to whom the mercy is intended, and wherein they have their portion with others: *He hath done great things for them*, say the heathen: but, *he hath done great things for us*, say the Lord's people.—*David Dickson, 1583-1662.*

Verse 3. *The Lord hath done great things for us, etc.* This verse is the marrow of the whole psalm, occasioned by the return of God's people out of Babel's captivity into their own country. Their deliverance was so great and incredible that when God brought it to pass they were as men in a dream, thinking it rather a dream, and a vain imagination, than a real truth. 1. Because it was so great a deliverance from so great and lasting a bondage, it seemed too good to be true. 2. It was sudden and unexpected, when they little thought or hoped for it...3. All things seemed desperate, nothing more unlikely, or impossible rather. 4. The manner was so admirable (without the counsel, help, or strength of man: nay, it was beyond and against all human means); that they doubt whether these things be not the dreams of men that are awake.—*Thomas Taylor (1576-1632), in "A Mappe of Pwme."*

Verse 3. *For us.* What were we, might Sion say (who were glad to lick the dust of the feet of our enemies), that the Lord of heaven and earth should look so graciously upon us? The meanness of the receiver argues the magnificence of the giver. "Who am I, that the mother of my Lord should visit me?" this was a true and religious compliment of devout Elizabeth. The best of men are but the children of dust, and grandchildren of nothing. And yet for the Lord to do *great things* for us! this yet *greatens* those "*great things*". Was it because *we were his church*? It was his super abounding grace to select us out of others, as it was our greater gracelessness, above all others, so to provoke him, as to force him to throw us into captivity. Or was it because *our humiliation*, in that disconsolate condition, did move him to so great compassion? Alas! there was a choice of nations whom he might have taken in our room, that might have proved far more faithful than we have been for the one half of those favours we have enjoyed. Or was it for *his covenant's sake* with our forefathers? Alas! we had forfeited that long since, again and again, we know not how often. Wherefore, when we remember ourselves, we cannot but make this an aggravation of God's "*great things*", that he should do them *for us, FOR US*, so very, very unworthy.—*Malachiah or Matthew Harris, in a Sermon entitled "Brittaines Hallelujah," 1639.*

Verse 4. *Turn again our captivity, O LORD.* A prayer for the perfecting of their deliverance. Let those that are returned to their own land be eased of their burdens which they are yet groaning under. Let those that remain in Babylon have their hearts stirred up, as ours were, to take the benefit of the liberty granted. The beginnings of mercy are encouragements to us to pray for the completing of it. While we are here in this world, there will still be matter for prayer, even when we are most furnished with matter for praise. When we are free, and in prosperity ourselves, we must not be unmindful of our brethren that are in trouble and under restraint.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 4. *Turn again our captivity.* As Israel of old prayed that he would bring all their brethren scattered abroad in captivity back to their own land in one full stream, multitudinous, joyous, mighty, like the waters of Nile or Euphrates pouring over the parching fields of the south in the hot, dry

summertime; so now should the members of Christ's church ever pray that all that profess and call themselves Christians may be led into the way of truth, and hold the faith in unity of spirit, in the bond of peace, and in righteousness of life.—*J. W. Burgon, in "A Plain Commentary," 1859.*

Verse 4. The Psalmist cries—

"Turn our captivity, O Jehovah,
As aqueducts in the Negeb."

This Negeb, or South Country, the region stretching below Hebron, being comparatively dry and without water, was doubtless irrigated by a system of small artificial channels. The words of the Psalmist imply that it is as easy for God to turn Israel back from Babylonian bondage to their own land, as for the horticulturist to direct the waters of the spring to any part of the land he chooses along the channels of the aqueducts.—*James Neil.*

Verse 4. *As the streams in the south.* Then shall our captivity be perfectly changed, even as *the rivers or waters in the south*, which by the mighty work of God were dried up and utterly consumed. Whether ye understand here the Red Sea, or else the river of Jordan, it matters little. The similitude is this: Like as by the mighty hand thou broughtest to pass miraculously that the waters were dried up and consumed, so dry up, O Lord, and bring to nothing all our captivity. Some do interpret this verse otherwise; that is, Turn our captivity, O Lord, as the rivers in the south, which in the summer are dried up in the desert places by the heat of the sun, but in the winter are filled up again with plenty of water.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 4. *Streams.* The Hebrew word for "*streams*" means strictly a river's bed, the channel which holds water when water is there, but is often dry. Naturally there is joy for the husbandman when those valley beds are filled again with flowing waters. So, the prayer is, let thy people return joyfully to their fatherland.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 4. *As the streams in the south.* Some render it, *As the mighty waters in the south.* Why would they have their captivity turned like those mighty floods in the south? The reason is this, because the south is a dry country, where there are few springs, scarce a fountain to be found in a whole desert. What, then, are the waters they have in the south, in those parched countries? They are these mighty strong torrents, which are caused by the showers of heaven: so the meaning of that prayer in the psalm is, that God would suddenly turn their captivity. Rivers come suddenly in the south: where no spring appears, nor any sign of a river, yet in an hour the water is up and the streams overflow. As when Elijah sent his servant toward the sea, in the time of Ahab, he went and looked, and said, "there is nothing"; that is, no show of rain, not the least cloud to be seen; yet presently the heavens grew black, and there was a great rain: 1Ki 18:44. Thus let our captivity be turned thus speedily and suddenly, though there be no appearance of salvation, no more than there is of a fountain in the sandy desert, or of rain in the clearest of heavens, yet bring salvation for us. We use to say of things

beyond our supply, Have we a spring of them? or can we fetch them out of the clouds? So though no ground appears whence such rivers should flow, yet let our salvation be as rivers in the south, as rivers fetched out of the clouds, and dropped in an instant immediately from the heavens.—*Joseph Caryl*, 1602-1673.

Verses 4-6. The saints are oft feeding their hopes on the carcasses of their slain fears. The time which God chose and the instrument he used to give the captive Jews their gaol delivery and liberty to return home were so incredible to them when it came to pass (like Peter whom the angel had carried out of prison, Ac 12:1-25), it was some time before they could come to themselves and resolve whether it was a real truth, or but a pleasing dream. Now see, what effect this strange disappointment of their fears had upon their hope for afterward. It sends them to the throne of grace for the accomplishment of what was so marvellously begun. "The Lord hath done great things for us; whereof we are glad. Turn again our captivity, O Lord": Ps 126:3-4. They have got a handhold by this experiment of his power and mercy, and they will not now let him go till they have more; yea, their hope is raised to such a pitch of confidence, that they draw a general conclusion from this particular experience for the comfort of themselves or others in any future distress: "They that sow in tears shall reap in joy", etc., Ps 126:5-6.—*William Gumall*, 1617-1679.

Verse 5. *They that sow in tears.* I never saw people sowing in tears exactly, but have often known them to do it in fear and distress sufficient to draw them from any eye. In seasons of great scarcity, the poor peasants part in sorrow with every measure of precious seed cast into the ground. It is like taking bread out of the mouths of their children; and in such times many bitter tears are actually shed over it. The distress is frequently so great that government is obliged to furnish seed, or none would be sown. Ibrahim Pasha did this more than once within my remembrance, copying the example, perhaps, of his great predecessor in Egypt when the seven years famine was ended. The thoughts of this psalm may likewise have been suggested by the extreme danger which frequently attends the farmer in his ploughing and sowing. The calamity which fell upon the husbandmen of Job when the oxen were ploughing, and the asses feeding beside them, and the Sabeans fell upon them and took them away, and slew the servants with the edge of the sword (Job 1:14-15), is often repeated in our day. To understand this you must remember what I have just told you about the situation of the arable lands in the open country; and here again we meet that verbal accuracy: the sower "*goes forth*"—that is, from the village. The people of Ibel and Khiem, in Merj' Aiyun, for example, have their best grain growing fields down in the 'Ard Hfileh, six or eight miles from their homes, and just that much nearer the lawless border of the desert. When the country is disturbed, or the government weak, they cannot sow these lands except at the risk of their lives. Indeed, they always *go forth* in large companies, and completely armed, ready to drop the plough and seize the musket at a moment's warning; and yet, with all this care, many sad and fatal calamities overtake the men who

must thus sow in tears. And still another origin may be found for the thoughts of the psalm in the extreme difficulty of the work itself in many places. The soil is rocky, impracticable, overgrown with sharp thorns; and it costs much painful toil to break up and gather out the rock, cut and burn the briars, and to subdue the stubborn soil, especially with their feeble oxen and insignificant ploughs. Join all these together, and the sentiment is very forcibly brought out, that he who labours hard, in cold and rain, in fear and danger, in poverty and in want, casting his precious seed into the ground, will surely come again, at harvest time, with rejoicing, and bearing his sheaves with him.—*W.M. Thomson.*

Verse 5. *They that sow in tears shalt reap in joy*, etc. This promise is conveyed under images borrowed from the instructive scenes of agriculture. In the sweat of his brow the husbandman tills his land, and casts the seed into the ground, where for a time it lies dead and buried. A dark and dreary winter succeeds, and all seems to be lost; but at the return of spring universal nature revives, and the once desolate fields are covered with corn which, when matured by the sun's heat, the cheerful reapers cut down, and it is brought home with triumphant shouts of joy. Here, O disciple of Jesus, behold an emblem of lily present labour and thy future reward! Thou "sowest", perhaps, in "tears"; thou doest thy duty amidst persecution, and affliction, sickness, pain, and sorrow; you labour in the Church, and no account is made of thy labours, no profit seems likely to arise from them. Say, thou must thyself drop into the dust of death, and all the storms of that winter must pass over thee, until thy form shall be perished, and thou shalt see corruption. Yet the day is coming when thou shalt "reap in joy", and plentiful shall be thy harvest. For thus thy blessed Master "went forth weeping", a man of sorrows and acquainted with grief, "bearing precious seed" and sowing it around him, till at length his own body was buried, like a grain of wheat, in the furrow of the grave. But he arose, and is now in heaven, from whence he shall "doubtless come again with rejoicing", with the voice of the archangel and the trump of God, "bringing his sheaves with him". Then shall every man receive the fruit of his works, and have praise of God.—*George Horne (1730-1792), in "A Commentary on the Psalms."*

Verse 5. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* They sow *in faith*; and God will bless that seed: it shall grow up to heaven, for it is sown in the side of Jesus Christ who is in heaven. "He that believeth on God", this is the seed; "shall have everlasting life" (Joh 5:24); this is the harvest. *Qui credit quod non videt, videbit quod credit*, —he that believes what he doth not see; this is the seed: shall one day see what he hath believed; this is the harvest.

They sow *in obedience*: this is also a blessed seed, that will not fail to prosper Wheresoever it is cast. "If ye keep my commandments"; this is the seed: "ye shall abide in my love" (Joh 15:10); this is the harvest. (Ro 6:22), "Ye are become servants to God, and have your fruit unto holiness"; this is the sowing: "and the end everlasting life"; this is the reaping. *Obedientia in tetrīs, regnabit in coelis*, —he that serves God on earth, and sows the seed of obedience, shall in heaven reap the harvest of a

kingdom.

They sow *in repentance*; and this seed must needs grow up to blessedness... Many saints have now reaped their crop in heaven, that sowed their seed in tears. David, Mary Magdalene, Peter: as if they had made good the proverb, "No coming to heaven with dry eyes." Thus nature and God differ in their proceedings. To have a good crop on earth, we desire a fair seedtime; but here a wet time of sowing shall bring the best harvest in the barn of heaven. "Blessed are they that mourn"; this is the seeding: "for they shall be comforted" (Mt 5:4); this is the harvest.

They sow in renouncing the world, and adherence to Christ; and they reap a great harvest. "Behold", saith Peter to Christ, "we have forsaken all, and followed thee" (Mt 19:27); this is the seeding. "What shall we have therefore?" What? "You shall sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel" (Mt 19:28-29); all that you have lost shall be centupled to you: "and you shall inherit everlasting life"; this is the harvest. "Sow to yourselves in righteousness, and reap in mercy": Ho 10:12.

They sow *in charity*. He that sows this seed shall be sure of a plentiful crop. "Whosoever shall give to drink to one of these little ones a cup of cold water only"—a little refreshing—"in the name of a disciple; verily I say unto you, he shall in no wise lose his reward": Mt 10:42. But if he that giveth a little shall be thus recompensed, then "he that soweth bountifully shall reap bountifully": 2Co 9:6. Therefore spare abroad with a full hand, like a seeds man in a broad field, without fear. Doth any think he shall lose by his charity? No worldling, when he sows his seed, thinks he shall lose his seed; he hopes for increase at harvest. Do you dare trust the ground and not God? Sure God is a better paymaster than the earth: grace doth give a larger recompense than nature. Below thou mayest receive forty grains for one; but in heaven, (by the promise of Christ,) a hundred fold: a "measure heaped, and shaken, and thrust together, and yet running over." "Blessed is he that considereth the poor"; this is the seeding: "the Lord shall deliver him in the time of trouble" (Ps 41:1); this is the harvest.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 5. *They that sow in tears*, etc. Observe two things here.

1. That the afflictions of God's people are as sowing in tears.

(a) In sowing ye know there is great pains. The land must be first tilled and dressed; and there is pains in casting the seed into it; and then it takes a great dressing all the year, before it be set in the barnyard.

(b) It requires great charges, too, and therefore it is called "precious seed." For ye know that seed corn is aye dearest.

(c) There is also great hazard; for corn, after it is sown, is subject to many dangers. And so it is with the children of God in a good cause.

2. Then after the seed time follows the harvest, and that comes with joy. There be three degrees of the happiness of God's children, in reaping of fruits.

(a) In the first fruits. Even when they are enduring anything for the Gospel of Christ, it carries contentment and fruit with it.

(b) After the first fruits, then come sheaves to refresh the husbandman, and to assure him that the full harvest is coming. The Lord now and then gives testimony of a full deliverance to his own people, especially of the deliverance of Sion, and lets them taste of the sheaves which they have reaped.

(c) And lastly, they get the full harvest; and that is gotten at the great and last day. Then we get peace without trouble, joy without grief, profit without loss, pleasure without pain; and then we have a full sight of the face of God.—*Alexander Henderson.*

Verse 5. *They that sow in tears shall reap in joy.* Gospel tears are not lost; they are seeds of comfort: while the penitent doth pour out tears, God pours in joy. If thou wouldst be cheerful, saith Chrysostom, be sad. It was the end of Christ's anointing and coming into the world, that he might comfort them that mourn: Isa 61:3. Christ had the oil of gladness poured on him, as Chrysostom saith, that he might pour it on the mourner; well then might the apostle call it "a repentance not to be repented of": 2Co 7:10 ...Here is sweet fruit from a bitter stock: Christ caused the earthen vessels to be filled with water, and then turned the water into wine: Joh 2:9. So when the eye, that earthen vessel, hath been filled with water brim full, then Christ will turn the water of tears into the wine of joy. Holy mourning, saith St. Basil, is the seed out of which the flower of eternal joy doth grow.—*Thomas Watson* (-1690?), in "*The Beatitudes.*"

Verse 5. *They that sow in tears shall reap.* We must take notice of the reapers: "They shall reap." Which *they*? They that did sow; they shall, and none but they shall. They shall; and good reason they should, because it was they that did sow. And though some that have sown in tears do complain of the lateness or thinness of the harvest, that they have not reaped in joy, as is here promised; know that some grounds are later than others, and in some years the harvest falleth later than in others, and that God, who is the Lord of the harvest, in his good time will ripen thy joy, and thou shalt reap it: and in the meantime, if we try it narrowly, we shall find the cause in ourselves, both of the lateness of our joy, because we were too late in sowing our tears; and of the thinness of our joy, because we did sow our tears too thin. And if after our sowing of tears we find no harvest of joy at all, we may be well assured that either our seed was not good, or else some of the mischances are come upon them, which came upon the seed that came to no good in the thirteenth of Matthew.—*Walter Balcanqual*, in "*a Sermon preached at St. Marice Spittle,*" 1623.

Verse 5. *They that sow in tears*, etc. I saw in seedtime a husbandman at plough in a very rainy day. Asking him the reason why he would not rather leave off than labour in such foul weather, his answer was returned me in their country rhythm:—

"Sow beans in the mud,

And they'll come up like a wood."

This could not but remind me of David's expression, "*They that sow in tears shall reap in joy*", etc.—*Thomas Fuller* (1608-1661), in "*Good Thoughts in Worse Times*."

Verse 5. *Sow in tears.* There are tears which are themselves the seed that we must sow; tears of sorrow for sin, our own and others; tears of sympathy with the afflicted church; and tears of tenderness in prayer and under the word.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 5. *Shall reap in joy.* This spiritual harvest comes not alike soon to all, no more than the other which is outward doth. But here the comfort, whoever hath a seed time of grace pass over his soul shall have his harvest time also of joy: this law God hath bound himself to as strongly as to the other, which "is not to cease while the earth remaineth" (Ge 8:22); yea, more strongly; for that was to the world in general, not to every country, town, or field in particular, for some of these may want a harvest, and yet God may keep his word: but God cannot perform his promise if any one particular saint should everlastingly go without his reaping time. And therefore you who think so basely of the gospel and the professors of it, because at present their peace and comfort are not come, should know that it is on the way to them, and comes to stay everlastingly with them; whereas your peace is going from you every moment, and is sure to leave you without any hope of returning to you again. Look not how the Christian begins, but ends. The Spirit of God by his convictions comes into the soul with some terrors, but it closes with peace and joy. As we say of the month of March, it enters like a lion, but goes out like a lamb. "Mark the perfect man, and behold the upright: for the end of that man is peace": Ps 37:37.—*William Gumall*.

Verses 5-6. In my little reading and small experience, I have found that corn sown in dear years and times of scarcity hath yielded much more increase than at other times; so that presently after much want, there hath followed great plenty of grain, even beyond expectation.—*Humphrey Hardwick*, in a Sermon entitled "*The Difficulty of Sion's Deliverance and Reformation*," 1644.

Verses 5-6. Mind we the undoubted certainty of our harvest verified by divers absolute positive asseverations in the text: "*he shall reap*"; "*he shall come again*"; "*he shall bring his sheaves with him*." Here's no item of contingency or possibility, but all absolute affirmations; and you know heaven and earth shall pass away, but a jot of God's word shall not fail. Nothing shall prevent the harvest of a labourer in Sion's vineyard.—*Humphrey Hardwick*.

Verses 5-6. In a fuller, deeper sense, the sower in tears is the Man of sorrows himself. Believers know him thus. He has accomplished, in the sore travail of his soul, the seed time of affliction which is to bear its satisfying harvest when he shall again appear as the reaper of his own reward. He will fill his bosom with sheaves in that day of joy. The garner of his gladness will be filled to overflowing. By how much his affliction surpassed the natural measure of human grief, when he underwent for our sakes the dread realities of death and judgment; by so much shall the fulness of his pure delight as the eternal blesser of his people excel their joy (yet what a measure, too, is there!) whose sum of

blessedness is to be for ever with the Lord.—*Arthur Pridham, in "Notes and Reflections on the Psalms,"* 1869.

Verse 6. *He that goeth forth and weepeth, bearing precious seed, etc.* This is very expressive of a gospel minister's life; he goeth forth with the everlasting gospel which he preaches; he sows it as precious seed in the church of God; he waters it with tears and prayers; the Lord's blessing accompanies it; the Lord crowns his labours with success; he has seals to his ministry; and at the last day he shall doubtless come again with joy from the grave of death *bringing his sheaves with him*; and will, in the new Jerusalem state, be addressed by his Lord with, "Well done, good and faithful servant, enter thou into the joy of thy Lord."—*Samuel Eyles Pierce (1746-1829?), in "The Book of Psalms, an Epitome of the Old Testament Scripture."*

Verse 6. *He may go forth, he may go forth, and weep, bearing (his) load of seed. He shall come, he shall come with singing, bearing sheaves.* The emphatic combination of the finite tense with the infinitive is altogether foreign from our idiom, and very imperfectly represented, in the ancient and some modern versions, by the active participle (*venientes venient*, coming they shall come), which conveys neither the peculiar form nor the precise sense of the Hebrew phrase. The best approximation to the force of the original is Luther's repetition of the finite tense, *he shall come, he shall come*, because in all such cases the infinitive is really defined or determined by the term which follows, and in sense, though not in form, assimilated to it.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 6.

"Though he go, though he go, and be weeping,
While bearing some handfuls of seed;
He shall come, he shall come with bright singing,
While bearing his plentiful sheaves."

—*Ben Tehillim, in "The Book of Psalms, in English Blank Verse,"* 1883.

Verse 6. *Goeth forth.* The church must not only keep this seed in the store house, for such as come to enquire for it; but must send her sowers forth to cast it among those who are ignorant of its value, or too indifferent to ask it at her hands. She must not sit weeping because men will not apply to her, but must go forth and bear the precious seed to the unwilling, the careless, the prejudiced, and the profligate.—*Edwin Sidney, in "The Pulpit,"* 1840.

Verse 6. *Weeping* must not hinder sowing: when we suffer ill we must be doing well.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 6. *Precious seed.* Seed corn is always dearest; and when other corn is dear, then it is very dear; yet though never so dear, the husbandman resolves that he must have it; and he will deprive his own belly, and his wife and children of it, and will sow it, going out "*weeping*" with it. There is also great hazard; for corn, after it is sown, is subject to many dangers. And so is it, indeed, with the

children of God in a good cause. Ye must resolve to undergo hazards also, in life, lands, movables, or whatsoever else ye have in this world: rather hazard all these before either religion be in hazard, or your own souls.—*Alexander Henderson.*

Verse 6. *Precious seed.* Aben Ezra, by the words rendered *precious seed*, or, as they may be, *a draught of seed*, understands the vessel in which the sower carries his seed, the seed basket, from whence he draws and takes out the seed, and scatters it; see Am 9:13: so the Targum, "bearing a tray of sowing corn."—*John Gill.*

Verse 6. *Precious seed.* Faith is called "*precious seed*": *quod tatum est charum est.* Seed was accounted precious when all countries came unto Egypt to buy corn of Joseph, and truly faith must needs be precious, seeing that when Christ comes he shall hardly "find faith upon the earth": Lu 18:8. The necessity of faith is such, that therefore it must need be precious; for as the material seed is the only instrumental means to preserve the life of man; for all the spices, honey, myrrh, nuts, and almonds, gold and silver, that were in Canaan, were not sufficient for Jacob and his children's sustenance; but they were forced to repair unto Egypt for corn, that they might live and not die; even so, without faith the soul is starved; it is the food of it; for, "the just man liveth by his faith": Ga 3:11.—*John Hume.*

Verse 6. *Sheaves.* The psalm which begins with "dream" and ends with "sheaves" invites us to think of Joseph; Joseph, "in whom", according to S. Ambrose's beautiful application, "there was revealed the future resurrection of the Lord Jesus, to whom both his eleven disciples did obeisance when they saw him gone into Galilee, and to whom all the saints shall on their resurrection do obeisance, bringing forth the fruit of good works, as it is written, "He shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing his sheaves with him."—*H. T. Armfield.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1.

1. Sunny memories of what the Lord did, "he turned again the captivity", etc.
2. Singular impressions,—we could not believe it to be true.
3. Special discoveries—it was true, abiding, etc.

Verse 1. A comparison and a contrast.

1. The saved like them that dream.
 - a) In the strangeness of their experience.
 - b) In the ecstasy of their joy.
2. The saved unlike them that dream.
 - a) In the reality of their experience. Dreams are unsubstantial things, but "the Lord turned"—an actual fact.

b) In their freedom from disappointment. No awakening to find it "but a dream": see Isa 29:8.

3. In the endurance of their joy. The joy of dreams is soon forgotten, but this is "everlasting joy."—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 2. Sainly laughter. What creates it, and how it is justified.

Verse 2. *Recipe for holy laughter.*

1. Lie in prison a few weeks.
2. Hear the Lord turning the key.
3. Follow him into the high road.
4. Your sky will burst with sunshine, and your heart with song and laughter.
5. If this recipe is thought too expensive, try *keeping in the high road.*—*W. B. H.*

Verses 2-3.

1. Reports of God's doings.
2. Experience of God's doings.

Verses 2-3.

1. The Lord does great things for his people.
2. These great things command the attention of the world.
3. They inspire the joyful devotion of the saints.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 3. *The LORD hath done great things for us.* In this acknowledgment and confession there are three noteworthy points of thankfulness.

1. That they were "*great things*" which were done.
2. Who it was who did them: "*the Lord.*"
3. That they are done: not against us, but "*for us.*"

—*Alexander Henderson, 1583-1646.*

Verse 4. Believers, rejoicing in their own deliverance, solicitous for a flood of prosperity to overflow the church. See the connection, Ps 126:1-3. Remark,

1. The doubting and despondent are too concerned about themselves, and too busy seeking comfort, to have either solicitude or energy to spare for the church's welfare; but the joyful heart is free to be earnest for the church's good.
2. Joyful believers, other things being equal, know more of the constraining power of Christ's love, which makes them anxious for his glory and the success of his cause.
3. The joyful can appreciate more fully the contrast of their condition to that of the undelivered, and for their sake cannot fail to be anxious for the church through whose ministry their deliverance comes.
4. The joyful are, in general, the most believing and the most hopeful; their expectation of success leads them to prayer, and impels them to effort.—*J. F.*

Verse 4.

1. The dried up Christian.
2. His unhappy condition.
3. His one hope.
4. Result when realized.

Verse 5. *The Christian Husbandman.*

1. Illustrate the metaphor. The husbandman has a great variety of work before him; every season and every day brings its proper business. So the Christian has duties in the closet, in the family, in the church, in the world, etc., etc.
2. Whence it is that many Christians sow in tears.
 - a) It may be owing to the badness of the soil.
 - b) The inclemency of the season.
 - c) The malice and opposition of enemies.
 - d) Past disappointments.
3. What connection there is between sowing in tears and reaping in joy.
 - a) A joyful harvest, by God's blessing, is the natural consequence of a dripping seed time.
 - b) God, who cannot lie, hath promised it.
4. When this joyful harvest may be expected. It must not be expected in our wintry world, for there is not sun enough to ripen it. Heaven is the Christian's summer. When you come to reap the fruits of your present trials, you will bless God, who made you sow in tears. *Improvement.*
 - a) How greatly are they to blame who in this busy time stand all the day idle!
 - b) How greatly have Christians the advantage of the rest of the world!
 - c) Let the hope and prospect of this joyful harvest support us under all the glooms and distresses of this vale of tears.—*Outline of a Sermon by Samuel Lavington, 1726-1807.*

Verse 5. Two pictures. The connecting "shall."**Verse 5.**

1. There must be sowing before reaping.
2. What men sow they will reap. If they sow precious seed, they will reap precious seed.
3. In proportion as they sow they will reap. "He that soweth sparingly", etc.
4. The sowing may be with sorrow, but the reaping will be with joy.
5. In proportion to the sorrow of sowing will be the joy of reaping.—*G. R.*

Verse 6. In the two parts of this verse we may behold a threefold antithesis or opposition; in the *progress*,

1. A sojourning: "He that now goeth on his way."
2. A sorrowing: "weeping."

3. A sowing: "and beareth forth good seed." In the regress there are three opposites unto these.

1. Returning: "He shall doubtless come again."

2. A Rejoicing: "with joy."

3. A Reaping: "and bring his sheaves with him."

—*John Hume.*

Verse 6. "Doubtless." Or the reasons why our labour cannot be in vain in the Lord.

Verse 6. *Bringing his sheaves with him.* The faithful sower's return to his Lord. Successful, knowing it, personally honoured, abundantly recompensed.

Verse 6. See "Spurgeon's Sermons" No. 867: "Tearful Sowing and Joyful Reaping."

Verse 6.

1. The sorrowful sower.

a) His activity—"he goeth forth."

b) His humility—"and weepeth."

c) His fidelity—"bearing precious seed."

2. The joyful reaper.

a) His certain harvest time—"shall doubtless come again."

b) His abundant joy—"with rejoicing."

c) His rich rewards—"bringing his sheaves with him."

—*W. H. J. P.*

WORK UPON THE HUNDRED AND TWENTY-SIXTH PSALM

The Jews' deliverance out of Babylon, and the mystery of our Redemption: *Plainely demonstrated in ten Sermons upon the 126. Psalme.* ...Preached in Yorkshire, By John Hume, Minister of the Word ... London...1628 4to.

Psalm 127

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. A Song of Degrees for Solomon. It was meet that the builder of the holy house should be remembered by the pilgrims to its sacred shrine. The title probably indicates that David wrote it for his wise son, in whom he so greatly rejoiced, and whose name Jedidiah, or "beloved of the Lord", is introduced into the second verse. The spirit of his name, "Solomon, or peaceable", breathes through the whole of this most charming song. If Solomon himself was the author, it comes fitly from him who

reared the house of the Lord. Observe how in each of these songs the heart is fixed upon Jehovah only. Read the first verses of these Psalms, from Psalm 120 to the present song, and they run thus: "I cried unto the Lord", "I will lift up mine eyes to the hills", "Let us go unto the house of the Lord." "Unto thee will I lift up mine eyes", "If it had not been the Lord", "They that trust in the Lord." "When the Lord turned again the captivity." The Lord and the Lord alone is thus lauded at each step of these songs of the ascents. O for a life whose every halting place shall suggest a new song unto the Lord!

SUBJECT. God's blessing on his people as their one great necessity and privilege is here spoken of. We are here taught that builders of houses and cities, systems and fortunes, empires and churches all labour in vain without the Lord; but under the divine favour they enjoy perfect rest. Sons, who are in the Hebrew called "builders", are set forth as building up families under the same divine blessing, to the great honour and happiness of their parents. It is THE BUILDER'S PSALM. "Every house is builded by some man, but he that built all things is God", and unto God be praise.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Except the LORD build the house, they labour in vain that build it.* The word vain is the keynote here, and we hear it ring out clearly three times. Men desiring to build know that they must labour, and accordingly they put forth all their skill and strength; but let them remember that if Jehovah is not with them their designs will prove failures. So was it with the Babel builders; they said, "Go to, let us build us a city and a tower"; and the Lord returned their words into their own bosoms, saying, "Go to, let us go down and there confound their language." In vain they toiled, for the Lord's face was against them. When Solomon resolved to build a house for the Lord, matters were very different, for all things united under God to aid him in his great undertaking: even the heathen were at his beck and call that he might erect a temple for the Lord his God. In the same manner God blessed him in the erection of his own palace; for this verse evidently refers to all sorts of house building. Without God we are nothing. Great houses have been erected by ambitious men; but like the baseless fabric of a vision they have passed away, and scarce a stone remains to tell where once they stood. The wealthy builder of a Non such Palace, could he revisit the glimpses of the moon, would be perplexed to find a relic of his former pride: he laboured in vain, for the place of his travail knows not a trace of his handiwork. The like may be said of the builders of castles and abbeys: when the mode of life indicated by these piles ceased to be endurable by the Lord, the massive walls of ancient architects crumbled into ruins, and their toil melted like the froth of vanity. Not only do we now spend our strength for nought without Jehovah, but all who have ever laboured apart from him come under the same sentence. Trowel and hammer, saw and plane are instruments of vanity unless the Lord be the Master builder.

Except the LORD keep the city, the watchman waketh but in *vain*. Around the wall the sentinels pace

with constant step; but yet the city is betrayed unless the alert Watcher is with them. We are not safe because of watchmen if Jehovah refuses to watch over us. Even if the guards are wakeful, and do their duty, still the place may be surprised if God be not there. "I, the Lord, do keep it", is better than an army of sleepless guards. Note that the Psalmist does not bid the builder cease from labouring, nor suggest that watchmen should neglect their duty, nor that men should show their trust in God by doing nothing: nay, he supposes that they will do all that they can do, and then he forbids their fixing their trust in what they have done, and assures them that all creature effort will be in vain unless the Creator puts forth his power, to render second causes effectual. Holy Scripture endorses the order of Cromwell—"Trust in God, and keep your powder dry": only here the sense is varied, and we are told that the dried powder will not win the victory unless we trust in God. Happy is the man who hits the golden mean by so working as to believe in God, and so believing in God as to work without fear. In Scriptural phrase a dispensation or system is called a house. Moses was faithful as a servant over all his house; and as long as the Lord was with that house it stood and prospered; but when he left it, the builders of it became foolish and their labour was lost. They sought to maintain the walls of Judaism, but sought in vain: they watched around every ceremony and tradition, but their care was idle. Of every church, and every system of religious thought, this is equally true: unless the Lord is in it, and is honoured by it, the whole structure must sooner or later fall in hopeless ruin. Much can be done by man; he can both labour and watch; but without the Lord he has accomplished nothing, and his wakefulness has not warded off evil.

Verse 2. *It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows.* Because the Lord is mainly to be rested in, all carking care is mere vanity and vexation of spirit. We are bound to be diligent, for this the Lord blesses; we ought not to be anxious, for that dishonours the Lord, and can never secure his favour. Some deny themselves needful rest; the morning sees them rise before they are rested, the evening sees them toiling long after the curfew has tolled the knell of parting day. They threaten to bring themselves into the sleep of death by neglect of the sleep which refreshes life. Nor is their sleeplessness the only index of their daily fret; they stint themselves in their meals, they eat the commonest food, and the smallest possible quantity of it, and what they do swallow is washed down with the salt tears of grief, for they fear that daily bread will fail them. Hard earned is their food, scantily rationed, and scarcely ever sweetened, but perpetually smeared with sorrow; and all because they have no faith in God, and find no joy except in hoarding up the gold which is their only trust. Not thus, not thus, would the Lord have his children live. He would have them, as princes of the blood, lead a happy and restful life. Let them take a fair measure of rest and a due portion of food, for it is for their health. Of course the true believer will never be lazy or extravagant; if he should be he will have to suffer for it; but he will not think it needful or right to be worried and miserly. Faith brings calm with it, and banishes the disturbers who both by day and by night murder peace.

"For so he giveth his beloved sleep." Through faith the Lord makes his chosen ones to rest in him in happy freedom from care. The text may mean that God gives blessings to his beloved in sleep, even as he gave Solomon the desire of his heart while he slept. The meaning is much the same: those whom the Lord loves are delivered from the fret and fume of life, and take a sweet repose upon the bosom of their Lord. He rests them; blesses them while resting; blesses them more in resting than others in their moiling and toiling. God is sure to give the best thing to his beloved, and we here see that he gives them sleep—that is a laying aside of care, a forgetfulness of need, a quiet leaving of matters with God: this kind of sleep is better than riches and honour. Note how Jesus slept amid the hurly burly of a storm at sea. He knew that he was in his Father's hands, and therefore he was so quiet in spirit that the billows rocked him to sleep: it would be much oftener the same with us if we were more like HIM. It is to be hoped that those who built Solomon's temple were allowed to work at it steadily and joyfully. Surely such a house was not built by unwilling labourers. One would hope that the workmen were not called upon to hurry up in the morning nor to protract their labours far into the night; but we would fain believe that they went on steadily, resting duly, and eating their bread with joy. So, at least, should the spiritual temple be erected; though, truth to tell, the workers upon its walls are all too apt to grow cumbered with much serving, all too ready to forget their Lord, and to dream that the building is to be done by themselves alone. How much happier might we be if we would but trust the Lord's house to the Lord of the house! What is far more important, how much better would our building and watching be done if we would but confide in the Lord who both builds and keeps his own church!

Verse 3. *Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD.* This points to another mode of building up a house, namely, by leaving descendants to keep our name and family alive upon the earth. Without this what is a man's purpose in accumulating wealth! To what purpose does he build a house if he has none in his household to hold the house after him? What boots it that he is the possessor of broad acres if he has no heir? Yet in this matter a main is powerless without the Lord. The great Napoleon, with all his sinful care on this point, could not create a dynasty. Hundreds of wealthy persons would give half their estates if they could hear the cry of a babe born of their own bodies. Children are a heritage which Jehovah himself must give, or a man will die childless, and thus his house will be unbuilt. And the fruit of the womb is his reward, or a reward from God. He gives children, not as a penalty nor as a burden, but as a favour. They are a token for good if men know how to receive them, and educate them. They are "doubtful blessings" only because we are doubtful persons. Where society is rightly ordered children are regarded, not as an incumbrance, but as an inheritance; and they are received, not with regret, but as a reward. If we are over crowded in England, and so seem to be embarrassed with too large an increase, we must remember that the Lord does not order us to remain in this narrow island, but would have us fill those boundless regions

which wait for the axe and the plough. Yet even here, with all the straits of limited incomes, our best possessions are our own dear offspring, for whom we bless God every day.

Verse 4. *As arrows are in the hand of a mighty man; so are children of the youth.* Children born to men in their early days, by God's blessing become the comfort of their riper years. A man of war is glad of weapons which may fly where he cannot: good sons are their father's arrows speeding to hit the mark which their sires aim at. What wonders a good man can accomplish if he has affectionate children to second his desires, and lend themselves to his designs! To this end we must have our children in hand while they are yet children, or they are never likely to be so when they are grown up; and we must try to point them and straighten them, so as to make arrows of them in their youth, lest they should prove crooked and unserviceable in after life. Let the Lord favour us with loyal, obedient, affectionate offspring, and we shall find in them our best helpers. We shall see them shot forth into life to our comfort and delight, if we take care from the very beginning that they are directed to the right point.

Verse 5. *Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.* Those who have no children bewail the fact; those who have few children see them soon gone, and the house is silent, and their life has lost a charm; those who have many gracious children are upon the whole the happiest. Of course a large number of children means a large number of trials; but when these are met by faith in the Lord it also means a mass of love, and a multitude of joys. The writer of this comment gives it as his own observation, that he has seen the most frequent unhappiness in marriages which are unfruitful; that he has himself been most grateful for two of the best of sons; but as they have both grown up, and he has no child at home, he has without a tinge of murmuring, or even wishing that he were otherwise circumstanced, felt that it might have been a blessing to have had a more numerous family: he therefore heartily agrees with the Psalmist's verdict herein expressed. He has known a family in which there were some twelve daughters and three sons, and he never expects to witness upon earth greater domestic felicity than fell to the lot of their parents, who rejoiced in all their children, as the children also rejoiced in their parents and in one another. When sons and daughters are arrows, it is well to have a quiver full of them; but if they are only sticks, knotty and useless, the fewer of them the better. While those are blessed whose quiver is full, there is no reason to doubt that many are blessed who have no quiver at all; for a quiet life may not need such a warlike weapon. Moreover, a quiver may be small and yet full; and then the blessing is obtained. In any case we may be sure that a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of children that he possesseth.

They shall not be ashamed, but they shall speak with the *enemies in the gate*. They can meet foes both in law and in fight. Nobody cares to meddle with a man who can gather a clan of brave sons about him. He speaks to purpose whose own sons make his words emphatic by the resolve to carry out their father's wishes. This is the blessing of Abraham, the old covenant benediction, "Thy seed

shall possess the gate of his enemies"; and it is sure to all the beloved of the Lord in some sense or other. Doth not the Lord Jesus thus triumph in his seed? Looked at literally, this favour cometh of the Lord: without his will there would be no children to build up the house, and without his grace there would be no good children to be their parent's strength. If this must be left with the Lord, let us leave every other thing in the same hands. He will undertake for us and prosper our trustful endeavours, and we shall enjoy a tranquil life, and prove ourselves to be our Lord's beloved by the calm and quiet of our spirit. We need not doubt that if God gives us children as a reward he will also send us the food and raiment which he knows they need. He who is the father of a host of spiritual children is unquestionably happy. He can answer all opponents by pointing to souls who have been saved by his means. Converts are emphatically the heritage of the Lord, and the reward of the preacher's soul travail. By these, under the power of the Holy Ghost, the city of the church is both built up and watched, and the Lord has the glory of it.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

TITLE. *"A Song of Degrees for Solomon."* This Psalm has Solomon's name prefixed to the title, for the purpose that the very builder of the Temple may teach us that he availed nothing to build it without the help of the Lord.—*The Venerable Bede (672-3-735), in Neale and Littledale.*

Whole Psalm. Viewed as one of the "Degrees" in Christian virtue, the ninth, the Psalm is directed against self reliance.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Whole Psalm. The steps or degrees in this Psalm, though distinctly marked, are not so regular as in some others.

The twice repeated *"in vain"* of Ps 127:1 may be regarded as the motto or "degree" for Ps 127:2. The correspondence between the two clauses in Ps 127:1 is also very striking. It is as if, on entering on some spiritual undertaking, or even in referring to the present state of matters, the Psalmist emphatically disclaimed as *vain* every other interposition or help than that of Jehovah. And of this *"in vain"* it is well constantly to remind ourselves, especially in seasons of activity and in times of peace; for then we are most liable to fall into the snare of this vanity.

The next "degree" is that of success and prosperity (Ps 127:3-4), which is ascribed to the same Jehovah whose help and protection constituted the commencement and continuance, as now the completion of our well being. Hence also Ps 127:5 goes not beyond this, but contemplates the highest symbol of full security, influence, and power, in the figurative language of the Old Testament, which St. Augustine refers to "spiritual children, shot forth like arrows into all the world."—*Alfred Edersheim, in "The Golden Diary of Heart Converse with Jesus in the Book of Psalms," 1877.*

Whole Psalm. Solomon, the wisest and richest of kings, after having proved, both from experience and careful observation, that there was nothing but vanity in the life and labours of man, comes to

this conclusion, that there is nothing better for a man in this life than that he should moderate his cares and labours, enjoy what he has, and fear God and keep his commandments: to this end he directs all that is debated in the Book of Ecclesiastes. Very similar are the argument and intention of the Psalm; the authorship of which is ascribed to Solomon in the Inscription, and which there is no reason to doubt. Nor would it be safe, either to call in doubt any inscription without an urgent reason, or to give any other sense to the letter I than that of *authorship*, unless it be meant that all the inscriptions are uncertain. Again, if the collectors of the Psalms added *titles* according to their own opinion and judgment, there would be no reason why they should have left so many Psalms without any title. This Psalm, therefore, is *Solomon's*, with whose genius and condition it well agrees, as is clear from *Ecclesiastes*, with which it may be compared, and from many *proverbs* on the same subject...The design is, to draw men away from excessive labours and anxious cares; and to excite godliness and faith in Jehovah. To this the Psalm manifestly tends: for since men, desirous of the happiness and stability of their houses, are unable to secure this by their own endeavours, but need the blessing of God, who gives prosperity with even lighter labours to those that fear him; it is their duty to put a limit to their labours and cares, and to seek the favour of God, by conforming their life and conduct to his will, and confiding in him.—*Hermalt Venema*, 1697-1787.

Verse 1. *Except the LORD build.* It is a fact that Nb, *ben*, a son, and tk, *bath*, a daughter, and tyb, *beith*, a house, come from the same root, tnk, *banah*, to build; because sons and daughters build up a household, or constitute a *family*, as much and as really as stones and timber constitute a building. Now it is true that unless the good hand of God be upon us we cannot prosperously build a place of worship for his name. Unless we have his blessing, a dwelling house cannot be comfortably erected. And if his blessing be not on our children, the house (the family) may be built up; but instead of its being the house of God, it will be the synagogue of Satan. All marriages that are not under God's blessing will be a private and public curse.—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 1. *Except the LORD build the house,* etc. He does not say, Unless the Lord consents and is willing that the house should be built and the city kept: but, "Unless the Lord *build*; unless he *keep*." Hence, in order that the building and keeping may be prosperous and successful, there is necessary, not only the consent of God, but also his working is required: and that working without which nothing can be accomplished, that may be attempted by man. He does not say, Unless the Lord help; but unless the Lord build, unless he keep; i.e., Unless he do all himself. He does not say, To little purpose he labours and watches; but to no purpose he labours, both the builder and the keeper. Therefore, all the efficacy of labours and cares is dependent on the operation and providence of God; and all human strength, care, and industry is in itself vain. It should be noticed, that he does not say, Because the Lord builds the house he labours in vain who builds it, and, because the Lord keeps the city the watchman waketh in vain: but, If the Lord do not build the house, if he do not keep the city; he

labours in vain who builds the house; lie waketh in vain who keeps the city. He is far from thinking that the care and human labour, which is employed in the building of houses and keeping of cities, is to be regarded as useless, because the Lord builds and keeps; since it is then the more especially useful and effectual when the Lord himself is the builder and keeper. The Holy Spirit is not the patron of lazy and inert men; but he directs the minds of those who labour to the providence and power of God.—*Wolfgang Musculus*, 1497-1563.

Verse 1. *Except the LORD build the house.* On the lintel of the door in many an old English house, we may still read the words, *Nisi Dominus frustra*—the Latin version of the opening words of the Psalm. Let us also trust in him, and inscribe these words over the portal of "the house of our pilgrimage"; and beyond a doubt all will be well with us, both in this world and in that which is to come.—*Samuel Cox*, in "*The Pilgrim Psalms*," 1874.

Verse 1. *Except the LORD build the house*, etc. In the beginning of the contest with Britain, when we were sensible of danger, we had daily prayers in this room for the Divine protection. Our prayers, sir, were heard, and they were graciously answered. All of us who were engaged in the struggle must have observed frequent instances of a superintending Providence in our favour. To that kind Providence we owe this happy opportunity of consulting in peace on the means of establishing our future national felicity. And have we now forgotten this powerful Friend? or do we imagine we no longer need his assistance? I have lived for a long time *81 years*; and the longer I live the more convincing proofs I see of this truth, that God governs in the affairs of man. And if a sparrow cannot fall to the ground without his notice, is it probable that an empire can rise without his aid? We have been assured, sir, in the sacred writings, that "Except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it." I firmly believe this; and I also believe that without his concurring aid we shall proceed in this political building no better than the builders of Babel: we shall be divided by our little, partial, local interests; our prospects will be confounded; and we ourselves shall become a reproach and a byword down to future ages. And what is worse, mankind may hereafter, from this unfortunate instance, despair of establishing government by human wisdom, and leave it to chance, war, or conquest. I therefore beg leave to move that henceforth prayers, imploring the assistance of Heaven and its blessing on our deliberations, be held in this assembly every morning before we proceed to business; and that one or more of the clergy of this city be requested to officiate in that service.—*Benjamin Franklin: Speech in Convention for forming a Constitution for the United States*, 1787.

Verse 1. Note, how he puts first the building of the house, and then subjoins the keeping of the city. He advances from the part to the whole; for the city consists of houses.—*Wolfgang Musculus*.

Verse 1. *Except the LORD keep the city*, etc. Fires may break out in spite of the watchmen; a tempest may sweep over it; bands of armed men may assail it; or the pestilence may suddenly come into it, and spread desolation through its dwellings.—*Albert Barnes* (1798-1870), in "*Notes on the*

Psalms."

Verse 1. One important lesson which Madame Guyon learned from her temptations and follies was that of her entire dependence on Divine grace. "I became", she says, "deeply assured of what the prophet hath said, *"Except the Lord keep the city, the watchman waketh but in vain."* When I looked to thee, O my Lord? thou wast my faithful keeper; thou didst continually defend my heart against all kinds of enemies. But, alas! when left to myself, I was all weakness. How easily did my enemies prevail over me! Let others ascribe their victories to their own fidelity: as for myself, I shall never attribute them to anything else than thy paternal care. I have too often experienced, to my cost, what I should be without thee, to presume in the least on any wisdom or efforts of my own. It is to thee, O God, my Deliverer, that I owe everything! And it is a source of infinite satisfaction, that I am thus indebted to thee."—*From the Life of Jeanne Bouvier de la Mothe Guyon, 1648-1717.*

Verse 1.

If God build not the house, and lay
The groundwork sure—whoever build,
It cannot stand one stormy day.
If God be not the city's shield,
If he be not their bars and wall,
In vain is watchtower, men, and all.
Though then thou wak'st when others rest,
Though rising thou prevent'st the sun,
Though with lean care thou daily feast,
Thy labour's lost, and thou undone;
But God his child will feed and keep,
And draw the curtains to his sleep.

—*Phineas Fletcher, 1584-1650.*

Verse 2. *It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, etc.* The Psalmist is exhorting to give over undue and anxious labour to accomplish our designs. The phrases in the Hebrew are "making early to rise" and "making late to sit"—not "up", but *down*. This means an artificial lengthening of the day. The law of work is in our nature. The limitations of effort are set forth in nature. In order that all may be accomplished by the human race which is necessary to be done for human progress, all men must work. But no man should work beyond his physical and intellectual ability, nor beyond the hours which nature allots. No net result of good to the individual or to the race comes of any artificial prolonging of the day at either end. Early rising, eating one's breakfast by candlelight, and prolonged vigils, the scholar's "midnight oil", are a delusion and a snare. Work while it is day. When the night comes, rest. The other animals do this, and, as races, fare as well as this anxious human race. The

bread of sorrows means the bread of toil, of wearisome effort. Do what you ought to do, and the Lord will take care of that which you cannot do. Compare Pr 10:22: "The blessing of the Lord, it maketh rich, and he addeth no sorrow with it," which means, "The blessing of Jehovah maketh rich, and toil can add nothing thereto." Compare also Mt 6:25: "Take no thought *be not anxious* for your life," etc. For so he giveth his beloved sleep. The "for" is not in the original. "So" means "with just the same result" or "all the same", or "without more trouble." That is the signification of the Hebrew word as it occurs. "*His beloved*" may work and sleep; and what is needed will be provided just as certainly as if they laboured unduly, with anxiety. It has been suggested that the translation should be "*in sleep*". While they are sleeping, the Heavenly Father is carrying forward his work for them. Or, while they wake and work, the Lord gives to them, and so he does when they rest and sleep.—*Charles F. Deems, in "The Study", 1879.*

Verse 2. The Lorries Temple was built without any looking unto or dependence on man; all human wisdom and confidence was rejected on the whole; the plan was given by the Lord God himself; the model of it was in Solomon's possession; nothing was left to the wit or wisdom of men; there was no reason to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows, whilst engaged in this good work; no, I should conceive it was a season of grace to such as were employed in the building; somewhat like what it was with you and me when engaged in God's holy ordinances. I should conceive the minds of the workmen at perfect peace, their conversation together much on the grand subject of the Temple, and its intention as referring to the glorious Messiah, its grand and glorious antitype. I should conceive their minds were wholly disencumbered from all carking cares. They did not rise early without being refreshed in body and mind; they did not sit up late as though they wanted; they were not careful how they should provide for their families; they were, as the beloved of the Lord, perfectly contented; they enjoyed sweet sleep and refreshment by it, this was from the Lord; he giveth his beloved ones sleep.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce.*

Verse 2. *It is vain*, etc. Some take this place in a more particular and restrained sense; as if David would intimate that all their agitations to oppose the reign of Solomon, though backed with much care and industry, should be fruitless; though Absalom and Adonijah were tortured with the care of their own ambitious designs, yet God would give Jedidiah, or his beloved, rest; that is, the kingdom should safely be devolved upon Solomon, who took no such pains to court the people, and to raise himself up into their esteem as Absalom and Adonijah did. The meaning is, that though worldly men fare never so hardly, beat their brains, tire their spirits, rack their consciences, yet many times all is for nothing; either God doth not give them an estate, or not the comfort of it. But his beloved, without any of these racking cares, enjoy contentment; if they have not the world, they have sleep and rest; with silence submitting to the will of God, and with quietness waiting for the blessing of God. Well, then, acknowledge the providence that you may come under the blessing of it: labour without God cannot

prosper; against God and against his will in his word, will surely miscarry.—*Thomas Manton*, 1620-1677.

Verse 2. *It is vain for you to rise up early, to sit up late, to eat the bread of sorrows: for so he giveth his beloved sleep.* No prayer without work, no work without prayer.

By caring and fretting,

By agony and fear,

There is of God no getting,

But prayer he will hear.

—*From J.P. Lange's Commentary on James*, 1862.

Verse 2. *Eat the bread of sorrows.* Living a life of misery and labours, fretting at their own disappointments, eaten up with envy at the advancement of others, afflicted overmuch with losses and wrongs. There is no end of all their labours. Some have died of it, others been distracted and put out of their wits; so that you are never like to see good days as long as you cherish the love of the world, but will still lie under self tormenting care and trouble of mind, by which a man grates on his own flesh.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 2. *So he giveth his beloved sleep.* hnv wdykyl Nty Nk. These latter words are variously rendered, and sufficiently obscurely, because all take this Nk as a particle of comparison, which does not seem to be in place here: some even omit it altogether. But Nk also signifies "*well*", "*rightly*": 2Ki 7:9 Nu 27:7. Why should we not render it here, "*He giveth to His beloved to sleep well*": i.e., While those who, mistrusting God, attribute all things to their own labour, do not sleep well; for truly they "*rise early and sit up late*"; he gives to his beloved this grace, that reposing in his fatherly care and goodness, they fully enjoy their sleep, as those who know that such anxious labour is not necessary for them: or, "*Truly, he giveth to his beloved sleep*"; "as Kn may be the same as Nka. But hnv may betaken for hnvb, and rendered, "*Truly, he giveth to his beloved in sleep*"; "viz., that he should be refreshed by this means.—*Louis De Dieu*, 1590-1642.

Verse 2. (*last clause*). The sentence may be read either, he will give sleep to his beloved, or, he will give in sleeping; that is, he will give them those things which unbelievers labour to acquire by their own industry. The particle Nk, *ken, thus*, is put to express certainty; for with the view of producing a more undoubted persuasion of the truth—that God gives fool to his people without any great care on their part—which seems incredible and a fiction, Solomon points to the thing as it were with the finger. He indeed speaks as if God nourished the slothfulness of his servants by his gentle treatment; but as we know that men are created with the design of their being occupied, and as in the subsequent Psalm we shall find that the servants of God are accounted happy when they eat the labour of their hands, it is certain that the word *sleep* is not to be understood as implying slothfulness, but a placid labour, to which true believers subject themselves by the obedience of faith. Whence

proceeds this so great ardour in the unbelieving, that they move not a finger without a tumult or bustle, in other words, without tormenting themselves with superfluous cares, but because they attribute nothing to the providence of God! The faithful, on the other hand, although they lead a laborious life, yet follow their vocations with composed and tranquil minds. Thus their hands are not idle, but their minds repose in the stillness of faith, as if they were asleep.—*John Calvin, 1509-1564.*

Verse 2. *He giveth his beloved sleep.* It is a *peculiar rest*, it is a rest peculiar to sons, to saints, to heirs, to beloved ones. "So he gives *his beloved rest*", or as the Hebrew hath it, dearling, or dear beloved, quiet rest, without care or sorrow. The Hebrew word *akv, shena*, is written with a, a quiet dumb letter, which is not usual, to denote the more quietness and rest. This rest is a crown that God sets only upon the head of saints; it is a gold chain that he only puts about his children's necks; it is a jewel that he only hangs between his beloved's breasts: it is a flower that he only sticks in his darlings' bosoms. This rest is a tree of life that is proper and peculiar to the inhabitants of that heavenly country; it is children's bread, and shall never be given to dogs.—*Thomas Brooks, 1608-1680.*

Verse 2. (*last clause*). As the Lord gave a precious gift to his *beloved*, the first Adam, while he *slept*, by taking a rib from his side, and by building there from a woman, Eve, his bride, the Mother of all living; so, while Christ, the Second Adam, the true Jedidiah, the Well beloved Son of God, was sleeping in death on the cross, God formed for him, in his death, and by his death,—even by the life giving streams flowing from his own precious side,—the Church, the spiritual Eve, the Mother of all living; and gave her to him as his bride. Thus he *built* for him in his *sleep* the spiritual Temple of his Church.—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 2. Quiet sleep is the gift of God, and it is the love of God to give quiet sleep.

1. *'Tis God's gift* when we have it: quiet sleep does revive nature as the dew or small rain does refresh the grass. Now, as the prophet speaks (Jer 14:22), "Are there any of the gods of the heathen can cause rain, or can the heavens give showers?" so it may be said: Are there any of the creatures in earth or heaven that can give sleep? That God which gives showers of rain must give hours of rest: peaceable repose is God's peculiar *gift*.

2. *'Tis God's love* when he gives it, "*for so he giveth his beloved sleep*"; that is, sleep with quietness: yea, the Hebrew word, *shena*, for *sleep*, being with *aleph*, a quiet or resting letter, otherwise than is usual, it signifies the greater quietness in time of sleep. And whereas some apply the peace only to Solomon, who was called Jedidiah, the beloved of the Lord, to whom God gave sleep; the Septuagint turns the Hebrew word plurally, so *God giveth his beloved ones sleep*; to his saints in general God gives quiet sleep as a token of his love; yea, in the times of their greatest peril. Thus Peter in prison when he was bound with chains, beset with soldiers, and to die the next day, yet see how fast he was found asleep (Ac 12:6-7): "The same night Peter was sleeping, and behold the angel of the Lord

came upon him, and a light shined in the prison", yet Peter slept till the angel smote him on the side and raised him up: so God "gives his beloved sleep", and let his beloved give him the honour; and the rather because *herein God answers our prayer, herein God fulfils his promise.*

Is it not *our prayer* that God would prevent fear, and afford refreshing sleep? and is it not God's answer when in sleep he doth sustain us? "I cried (says David) unto the Lord with my voice, and he heard me out of his holy hill. I laid me down and slept, for the Lord sustained me": Ps 3:4-3.

Is it not *God's promise* to vouchsafe sleep free from frights? "When thou liest down, thou shalt not be afraid: yea, thou shalt lie down, and thy sleep shall be sweet": Pr 3:24. Hence God's servants while they are in the wilderness and woods of this world, they sleep safely, and devils as wild beasts can do them no harm. Eze 34:25. Have we through God's blessing this benefit, let us abundantly give praise and live praise unto God hereupon. Yea, large praise belongs to the Lord for quiet sleep from men of all sorts.—*Philip Goodwin, in "The Mystery of Dreams," 1658.*

Verse 2. *So he giveth his beloved sleep.* The world would give its favourites power, wealth, distinction; God gives "*sleep.*" Could he give anything better? To give sleep when the storm is raging; to give sleep when conscience is arraying a long catalogue of sins; to give sleep when evil angels are trying to overturn our confidence in Christ; to give sleep when death is approaching, when judgment is at hand—oh! what gift could be more suitable? what more worthy of God? or what more precious to the soul? But we do not mean to enlarge upon the various senses which might thus be assigned to the gift. You will see for yourselves that sleep, as denoting repose and refreshment, may be regarded as symbolising "the rest which remaineth for the righteous", which is the gift of God to his chosen. "Surely he giveth his beloved sleep", may be taken as parallel to what is promised in Isaiah—"Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on thee." Whatever you can understand by the "peace" in the one case, you may also understand by the "*sleep*" in the other. But throughout the Old and New Testaments, and especially the latter, sleep, as you know, is often put for death. "He slept with his fathers" is a common expression in the Jewish Scriptures. To "sleep in Jesus" is a common way of speaking of those who die in the faith of the Redeemer.

Suppose, then, we take the "*sleep*" in our text as denoting death, and confine our discourse to an illustration of the passage under this one point of view. "*Surely he giveth his beloved sleep.*" What an aspect will this confer on death—to regard it as God's gift—a gift which he vouchsafes to those whom he loves! It is not "he *sendeth* his beloved sleep", which might be true whilst God himself remained at a distance; it is "he *giveth* his beloved sleep"; as though God himself brought the sleep, and laid it on the eyes of the weary Christian warrior. And if God himself have to do with the dissolution, can we not trust him that he will loosen gently the silver cord, and use all kindness and tenderness in "taking down the earthly house of this tabernacle"? I know not more comforting words than those of our text, whether for the being uttered in the sickroom of the righteous, or breathed over their graves. They

might almost take the pain from disease, as they certainly do the dishonour from death. What is bestowed by God as a "gift on his beloved" will assuredly occupy his care, his watchfulness, his solicitude; and I conclude, therefore, that he is present, in some special and extraordinary sense when the righteous lie dying; ay, and that he sets his seal, and plants his guardianship where the righteous lie dead. "O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory?" Let the saint be but constant in the profession of godliness, and his last hours shall be those in which Deity himself shall stand almost visibly at his side, and his last resting place that which he shall shadow with his wings. Sickness may be protracted and distressing; "earth to earth, ashes to ashes, dust to dust," may be plaintively breathed over the unconscious dead; but nothing in all this lengthened struggle, nothing in all this apparent defeat, can harm the righteous man—nay, nothing can be other than for his present good and his eternal glory, seeing that death with all its accompaniments is but joy—God's gift to his beloved. Dry your tears, ye that stand around the bed of the dying believer, the parting moment is almost at hand—a cold damp is on the forehead—the eye is fixed—the pulse too feeble to be felt—are you staggered at such a spectacle? Nay! let faith do its part! The chamber is crowded with glorious forms; angels are waiting there to take charge of the disembodied soul; a hand gentler than any human is closing those eyes; and a voice sweeter than any human is whispering—"*Surely the Lord giveth his beloved sleep.*"—Henry Melvill (1798-1871), in a Sermon entitled "*Death the Gift of God.*"

Verse 2. *For so he giveth his beloved sleep.* One night I could not rest, and in the wild wanderings of my thoughts I met this text, and communed with it: "*So he giveth his beloved sleep.*" In my reverie, as I was on the border of the land of dreams, I thought I was in a castle. Around its massive walls there ran a deep moat. Watchmen paced the walls both day and night. It was a fine old fortress, bidding defiance to the foe; but I was not happy in it. I thought I lay upon a couch; but scarcely had I closed my eyes, ere a trumpet blew, "To arms! To arms!" and when the danger was overpast, I lay me down again. "To arms! To arms!" once more resounded, and again I started up. Never could I rest. I thought I had my armour on, and moved about perpetually clad in mail, rushing each hour to the castle top, aroused by some fresh alarm. At one time a foe was coming from the west; at another from the east. I thought I had a treasure somewhere down in some deep part of the castle, and all my care was to guard it. I dreaded, I feared, I trembled lest it should be taken from me. I awoke, and I thought I would not live in such a tower as that for all its grandeur. It was the castle of discontent, the castle of ambition, in which man never rests. It is ever, "To arms! To arms!" There is a foe here, or a foe there. His dear loved treasure must be guarded. Sleep never crossed the drawbridge of the castle of discontent. Then I thought I would supplement it by another reverie. I was in a cottage. It was in what poets call a beautiful and pleasant place, but I cared not for that. I had no treasure in the world; save one sparkling jewel on my breast: and I thought I put my hand on that and went to sleep,

nor did I wake till morning light. That treasure was a quiet conscience and the love of God—"the peace that passeth all understanding." I slept, because I slept in the house of content, satisfied with what I had. Go, ye overreaching misers! Go, ye grasping, ambitious men! I envy not your life of inquietude. The sleep of statesmen is often broken; the dream of the miser is always evil; the sleep of the man who loves gain is never hearty; but God "*giveth*", by contentment, "*his beloved sleep*."—*C.H.S.*

Verse 2. *He giveth his beloved sleep.*

Of all the thoughts of God that are
Borne inward unto souls afar,
Along the Psalmist's music deep,
Now tell me if that any is,
For gift or grace surpassing this—
"He giveth his beloved sleep."

—*Elizabeth Barrett Browning*, 1809-1861.

Verse 3. *Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD.* There is no reason, therefore, why you should be apprehensive for your families and country; there is no reason why you should weary yourselves with such great and such restless labour. God will be with you and your children, since they are his heritage. -*Thomas Le Blanc*.

Verse 3. *Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD.* That is, to many God gives children in place of temporal good. To many others he gives houses, lands, and thousands of gold and silver, and with them the womb that beareth not; and these are their inheritance. The poor man has from God a number of children, without lands or money; these are his inheritance; and God shows himself their father, feeding and supporting them by a chain of miraculous providences. Where is the *poor man* who would give up his *six children* with the prospect of having *more*, for the *thousands* or *millions* of him who is the *centre* of his *own existence*, and has neither *root* nor *branch* but his forlorn solitary self upon the face of the earth? Let the fruitful family, however poor, lay this to heart: *Children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.* And he who gave them will feed them; for it is a fact, and the maxim formed on it has never failed, "Wherever God sends mouths, he sends meat." "Murmur not", said an Arab to his friend, "because thy family is large; know that it is for *their* sakes that God feeds *thee*."—*Adam Clarke*.

Verse 3. *Children are an heritage of the LORD.* The Hebrew seems to imply that children are an heritage belonging to the Lord, and not an heritage given by the Lord, as most English readers appear to take it. The Targum likewise bears this out.—*H. T. Armfield*.

Verse 3. *Children are an heritage of the LORD*, etc. The Psalmist speaks of what children are unto godly and holy parents, for unto such only is any blessing given by God as a reward, and the

Psalmist expressly speaks of blessings which God gives his beloved ones, and this blessing of children he makes to be the last and greatest. It is also as certain that he speaks of children as supposed to be holy and godly; for otherwise they are not a reward, but a curse, and a sorrow to him that begat them. The Psalm was made, as appears by the title of it, "*of or for Solomon*", and therefore, as it is more than probable, was penned, as that other Psalm, the 72nd, which bears the same title, by David the father, of and for Solomon his son, who was, for his father's sake, "the beloved of God." (2Sa 12:24-25), and upon whom the sure covenant and mercies of David were entailed, together with his kingdom. And what is said in this Psalm, in the verses before, fitly agrees to him, for he it was who was to build God's house, to keep and preserve Jerusalem the city, and the kingdom in peace, and to have rest, or as the Psalmist calls it (Ps 127:3), quiet sleep given him by God from all his enemies round about him. And for this, compare the prophecy of him (1Ch 22:9-10) with the instructions here given him in the three first verses of this Psalm, and ye will see how fitly this Psalm concerns him.—*Thomas Goodwin.*

Verse 3. *Children are an heritage of the LORD.* Hence note, 'tis one of the greatest outward blessings to have a family full of dutiful children. To have many children is the next blessing to much grace. To have many children about us is better than to have much wealth about us. To have store of these olive plants (as the Psalmist calls them) round about our table is better than to have store of oil and wine upon our table. We know the worth of dead, or rather lifeless treasures, but who knows the worth of living treasures? Every man who hath children hath not a blessing in them, yet children are a blessing, and some have many blessings in one child. Children are chiefly a blessing to the children of God. "*Lo, children are an heritage of the LORD: and the fruit of the womb is his reward.*" But are not houses and lands, gold and silver, an heritage bestowed by the Lord upon his people? Doubtless they are, for the earth is his, and the fulness of it, and he gives it to the children of men. But though all things are of God, yet all things are not alike of him: children are more of God than houses and lands.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 3. *Children!*—might one say as the word was uttered—I left mine in my distant home, in poverty, their wants and numbers increasing, with the means of providing for their comfort daily narrowing. Even should my life be prolonged, they will be children of want, but with sickness and warnings of death upon me, they will soon be helpless and friendless orphans. Yes I but will God be neglectful of his own heritage? will he turn a gift into a sorrow? Poor as thou art, repine not at the number of thy children. Though lions lack thou shalt not, if thou seekest him; and know that it may be even for their sakes that he feedeth thee. If even thou wouldst not part with one of them for thousands of gold and silver, believe that he who is the fountain of all tenderness regards them with yet deeper love, and will make them now, in thy hour of trial, a means of increasing thy dependence on him, and soon thy support and pride.

Children!—might another say, as the Psalm referred to them—on their opening promise the breath of the destroyer has been poured. They are ripening visibly for the grave, and their very smile and caress cause my wounded heart to bleed anew. Yes, mourner; but *God's heritage!* may he not claim his own? They are in safe keeping when in his, and will soon be restored to thee in the better land, where death will make them ministering angels at his throne; nay, they will be the first to welcome thee to its glories, to love and worship with thee throughout eternity.

Children! this word to a third, of an even sadder and more anxious spirit, might seem like the planting of a dagger in his heart. His children have forsaken their father's God. Their associates were the vain and vicious; their pleasures were the pleasures of folly and shame; their lives barren of all promise, their souls destitute of all purpose, and steeled against all reproof. True, but the heritage of the Lord still. Hast thou, sorrowing parent, asked him for wisdom to keep it for him? Have due thought, prayer, watchful and holy living been expended on that heritage of God? No culture, no harvest in the soil; no prayer, no blessing from the soul. "Train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not depart from it", is a promise that though sometimes, yet but seldom has missed fulfilment. Bring them to Jesus, and, unchanged in his tenderness, he will still lay his hands upon them and bless them.—*Robert Nisbet.*

Verse 3. *The fruit of the womb is his reward.* John Howard Hinton's daughter said to him as she knelt by his death bed:—"There is no greater blessing than for children to have godly parents." "And the next", said the dying father, with a beam of gratitude, "for parents to have godly children."—*Memoir in Baptist Handbook, 1875.*

Verse 4. *As arrows.* Well doth David call children "*arrows*"; for if they be well bred, they shoot at their parents' enemies; and if they be evil bred, they shoot at their parents.—*Henry Smith. 1560-1591.*

Verse 4. *As arrows.* Children are compared to "*arrows*". Now, we know that sticks are not by nature arrows; they do not grow so, but they are made so; by nature they are knotty and rugged, but by art they are made smooth and handsome. So children by nature are rugged and untoward, but by education are refined and reformed, made pliable to the divine will and pleasure.—*George Swinnock, 1627-1673.*

Verse 4. *As arrows.* "Our children are what we make them. They are represented *As arrows in the hand of a mighty man*, and *arrows* go the way we aim them."

Verse 4. *As arrows.* In a collection of *Chinese Proverbs and Apophthegms*, subjoined to *Hau Kiou Chooan*, or, *The Pleasing History*, I find a proverb cited from *Du Halde*, which seems full to our purpose. It is this:—"When a son is born into a family, a bow and arrow are hung before the gate." To which the following note is added: "As no such custom appears to be literally observed, this should seem to be a metaphorical expression, signifying that a new protector is added to the family", equivalent to that of the Psalms,—"*as arrows*", etc.—*James Merrick (1720-1769), in "Annotations on*

the Psalms."

Verse 4. *Children of the youth are arrows in the hand*, which, with prudence, may be directed aright to the mark, God's glory, and the service of their generation; but afterwards, when they are gone abroad in the world, they are arrows out of the hand; it is too late to bend them then. But these "*arrows in the hand*" too often prove arrows in the heart, a constant grief to their godly parents, whose grey hairs they bring with sorrow to the grave.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 4. *Children of the youth. Sons of youth, i.e.*, born while their parents are still young. See Ge 37:2 Isa 54:6. The allusion is not only to their rigour Ge 49:3, but the value of their aid to the parent in declining age.—*Joseph Addison Alexander*.

Verse 4. *Children of the youth.* If the right interpretation is commonly given to this phrase, this Psalm greatly encourages early marriages. It is a growing evil of modern times that marriages are so often deferred till it is highly improbable that in the course of nature the father can live to mould his offspring to habits of honour and virtue.—*William Swan Plumer (1802-1880), in "Studies in the Book of Psalms."*

Verse 5. *Happy is the man that hath his quiver full of them.* Dr. Guthrie used to say, "I am rich in nothing but children." They were eleven in number.

Verse 5. *Quiver full.* Many children make many prayers, and many prayers bring much blessing.—*German Proverb*.

Verse 5. The Rev. Moses Browne had twelve children. On one remarking to him, "Sir, you have just as many children as Jacob", he replied, "Yes, and I have Jacob's God to provide for them."—*G. S. Bowes*.

Verse 5. I remember a great man coming into my house, at Waltham, and seeing all my children standing in the order of their age and stature, said, "These are they that make rich men poor." But he straight received this answer, "Nay, my lord, these are they that make a poor man rich; for there is not one of these whom we would part with for all your wealth." It is easy to observe that none are so grippe and hard fisted as the childless; whereas those, who, for the maintenance of large families, are inured to frequent disbursements, find such experience of Divine providence in the faithful management of their affairs, as that they lay out with more cheerfulness what they receive. Wherein their care must be abated when God takes it off from them to himself; and, if they be not wanting to themselves, their faith gives them ease in casting their burden upon him, who hath more power and more right to it, since our children are more his than our own. He that feedeth the young ravens, can he fail the best of his creatures?—*Joseph Hall, 1574-1656*.

Verse 5. *They shall not be ashamed, etc.* Able enough he shall be to defend himself, and keep off all injuries, being fortified by his children; and if it happen that he hath a cause depending in the gate, and to be tried before the judges, he shall have the patronage of his children, and not suffer in his

plea for want of advocates; his sons will stand up in a just cause for him.—*William Nicholson* (1671), in *"David's Harp Strung and Tuned."*

Verse 5. *But they shall speak.* "*But destroy*" is the marginal version, and is here much more emphatic than the rendering "*speak.*" For this sense see 2Ch 22:10. Others refer it to litigation, when they shall successfully defend the cause of their parents. But as I do not see how their number or rigour could add weight to their evidence in a judicial cause, I prefer the sense given.—*Benjamin Boothroyd*, 1768-1836.

Verse 5. *With the enemies in the gate.* Probably the Psalmist alludes here to the defence of a besieged city; the gate was very commonly the point of attack, and the taking of it rendered the conquest of the place easy: compare Ge 22:17 23:60.—*Daniel Cresswell* (1776-1844), in *"The Psalms...with Critical and Explanatory Notes,"* 1843.

Verse 5.

This is the pride, the glory of a man,
To train obedient children in his house,
Prompt on his enemies to avenge his wrongs,
And with the father's zeal in honour high
To hold his friends.

—*Sophocles' "Antigone." R. Potter's Translation.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1.

1. The human hand without the hand of God is in vain.
2. The human eye without the eye of God is in vain.

—Or—

1. God is to be acknowledged in all our works.
 - a) By seeking his direction before them.
 - b) By depending upon his help in them.
 - c) By giving him the glory of them.
2. In all our cares.
 - a) By owning our short sight.
 - b) By trusting to his foresight.—*G. R.*

Verse 1. (first part).—Illustrate the principles:

1. In building up character.
2. In constructing plans of life and of work.
3. In framing schemes of happiness.

4. In rearing a hope of eternal life.
5. In raising and enlarging the church.—*J. F.*

Verses 1-2.

1. What we may not expect: namely, God to work without our building, watching, etc.
2. What we may expect: Failure if we are without God.
3. What we should not do: Fret, worry, etc.
4. What we may do: So trust as to rest in peace.

Verse 2. (with Ps 126:2). The labour of the law contrasted with the laughter of the gospel.

Verse 2. *The bread of sorrows.*

1. When God sends it, it is good to eat it.
2. When we bake it ourselves, it is vain to eat it.
3. When the devil brings it, it is deadly meat.

Verse 2. (*last clause*).—Blessings that come to us in sleep.

1. Renewed health and vigour of body.
2. Mental repose and refreshment.
3. Sweeter thoughts and holier purposes.
4. Providential gifts. The rains fall, the fruits of the earth grow and ripen, the mill wheel goes round, the ship pursues her voyage, etc., while we slumber. Often when we are doing nothing for ourselves God is doing most.—*W. H. J.P.*

Verse 2. (*last clause*). See "Spurgeon's Sermons," No. 12: "The Peculiar Sleep of the Beloved."

Verse 3. Sermon by Thomas Manton. Works: vol. 18. pp. 84-95. *Nichol's Edition.*

Verses 3-5. Children. Consider:

1. The effects of receiving them as a heritage from the Lord.
 - a) Parents will trust in the Lord for their provision and safety.
 - b) Will regard them as a sacred trust from the Lord, of whose care they must render an account.
 - c) Will train them up in the fear of the Lord.
 - d) Will often consult God concerning them.
 - e) Will render them up uncomplainingly when the Lord calls them to himself by death.
2. The effects of their right training.
 - a) They become the parents' joy.
 - b) The permanent record of the parents' wisdom.
 - c) The support and solace of the parents' old age.
 - d) The transmitters of their parents' virtues to another generation; for well trained children become, in their turn, wise parents.—*J. F.*

Verse 4. The spiritual uses of children.

1. When they die in infancy, awakening parents.
2. When they go home from Sunday school carrying holy influences.
3. When they become converted.
4. When they grow up and become useful men and women.

Verses 4-5.

1. The dependence of children upon parents.
 - a) For safety. They are in their quiver.
 - b) For direction. They are sent forth by them.
 - c) For support. They are in the hands of the mighty.
2. The dependence of parents upon children.
 - a) For defence. Who will hear a parent spoken against?
 - b) For happiness. "A wise son maketh", etc. Children elicit some of the noblest and most tender emotions of human nature. Happy is the Christian minister who with a full quiver can say, "Here am I, and the children which thou hast given me."—*G. R.*

Verse 6. "The Reward of Well doing Sure." Sermon by Henry Melvill, in "The Pulpit," 1856.

Psalm 128

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. *A Song of Degrees.* There is an evident ascent from the last Psalm: that did but hint at the way in which a house may be built up, but this draws a picture of that house built, and adorned with domestic bliss through the Lord's own benediction. There is clearly an advance in age, for here we go beyond children to children's children; and also a progress in happiness, for children which in the last Psalm were arrows are here Olive plants, and instead of speaking "with the enemies in the gate" we done with "peace upon Israel." Thus we rise step by step, and sing as we ascend.

SUBJECT. It is a family hymn, a song for a marriage, or a birth, or for any day in which a happy household has met to praise the Lord. Like all the songs of degrees, it has an eye to Zion and Jerusalem, which are both expressly mentioned, and it closes like Psalms 125, 130, and 131, with an allusion to Israel. It is a short Psalm, but exceedingly full and suggestive. Its poetry is of the highest order. Perhaps in no country can it be better understood than in our own, for we above all nations delight to sing of "Home, sweet home."

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord.* The last Psalm ended with a blessing,—for the word there translated "happy" is the same as that which is here rendered "blessed": thus the two songs are joined by a catch word. There is also in them a close community of subject. The fear of God is the corner stone of all blessedness. We must reverence the ever blessed God before we can be blessed ourselves. Some think that this life is an evil, an infliction, a thing upon which rests a curse; but it is not so; the God fearing man has a present blessing resting upon him. It is not true that it would be to him "something better not to be." He is happy now, for he is the child of the happy God, the ever living Jehovah; and he is even here a joint heir with Jesus Christ, whose heritage is not misery, but joy. This is true of every one of the God fearing, of all conditions, in all ages: each one and every one is blessed. Their blessedness may not always be; seen by carnal reason, but it is always a fact, for God himself declares that it is so; and we know that those whom he blesses are blessed indeed. Let us cultivate that holy filial fear of Jehovah which is the essence of all true religion;—the fear of reverence, of dread to offend, of anxiety to please, and of entire submission and obedience. This fear of the Lord is the fit fountain of holy living: we look in vain for holiness apart from it: none but those who fear the Lord will ever walk in his ways.

That walketh in his ways. The religious life, which God declares to be blessed, must be practical as well as emotional. It is idle to talk of fearing the Lord if we act like those who have no care whether there be a God or no, God's ways will be our ways if we have a sincere reverence for him: if the heart is joined unto God, the feet will follow hard after him. A man's heart will be seen in his walk, and the blessing will come where heart and walk are both with God. Note that the first Psalm links the benediction with the walk in a negative way, "Blessed is the man that walketh not", etc.; but here we find it in connection with the positive form of our conversation. To enjoy the divine blessing we must be active, and walk; we must be methodical, and walk in certain ways; and we must be godly, and walk in the Lord's ways. God's ways are blessed ways; they were cast up by the Blessed One, they were trodden by him in whom we are blessed, they are frequented by the blessed, they are provided with means of blessing, they are paved with present blessings, and they lead to eternal blessedness: who would not desire to walk in them?

Verse 2. *For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.* The general doctrine in Ps 128:1 here receives a personal application: note the change to the second person: "thou shalt eat", etc. This is the portion of God's saints,—to work, and to find a reward in so doing. God is the God of labourers. We are not to leave our worldly callings because the Lord has called us by grace: we are not promised a blessing upon romantic idleness or unreasonable dreaming, but upon hard work and honest industry. Though we are in God's hands we are to be supported by our own hands. He will give us daily bread, but it must be made our own by labour. All kinds of labour are here included; for if one toils by the sweat of his brow, and another does so by the sweat of his brain, there is no difference in the blessing; save

that it is generally more healthy to work with the body than with the mind only. Without God it would be vain to labour; but when we are labourers together with God a promise is set before us. The promise is that labour shall be fruitful, and that he who performs it shall himself enjoy the recompense of it. It is a grievous ill for a man to slave his life away and receive no fair remuneration for his toil: as a rule, God's servants rise out of such bondage and claim their own, and receive it: at any rate, this verse may encourage them to do so. "The labourer is worthy of his hire." Under the Theocracy the chosen people could see this promise literally fulfilled; but when evil rulers oppressed them their earnings were withheld by churls, and their harvests were snatched away from them by marauders. Had they walked in the fear of the Lord they would never have known such great evils. Some men never enjoy their labour, for they give themselves no time for rest. Eagerness to get takes from them the ability to enjoy. Surely, if it is worth while to labour, it is worth while to eat of that labour. "Happy shalt thou be", or, Oh, thy happinesses. Heaped up happinesses in the plural belong to that man who fears the Lord. He is happy, and he shall be happy in a thousand ways. The context leads us to expect family happiness. Our God is our household God. The Romans had their Lares and Penates, but we have far more than they in the one only living and true God. *And it shall be well with thee*, or, *good for thee*. Yes, good is for the good; and it shall be well with those who do well.

"What cheering words are these!

Their sweetness who can tell?

In time, and to eternal days,

'Tis with the righteous well."

If we fear God we may dismiss all other fear. In walking in God's ways we shall be under his protection, provision, and approval; danger and destruction shall be far from us: all things shall work our good. In God's view it would not be a blessed thing for us to live without exertion, nor to eat the unearned bread of dependence: the happiest state on earth is one in which we have something to do, strength to do it with, and a fair return for what we have done. This, with the divine blessing, is all that we ought to desire, and it is sufficient for any man who fears the Lord and abhors covetousness. Having food and raiment, let us be there with content.

Verse 3. *Thy wife.* To reach the full of earthly felicity a man must not be alone. A helpmeet was needed in Paradise, and assuredly she is not less necessary out of it. He that findeth a wife findeth a good thing. It is not every man that feareth the Lord who has a wife; but if he has, she shall share in his blessedness and increase it. Shall be as a fruitful vine. To complete domestic bliss children are sent. They come as the lawful fruit of marriage, even as clusters appear upon the vine. For the grapes the vine was planted; for children was the wife provided. It is generally well with any creature when it fulfils its purpose, and it is so far well with married people when the great design of their union is brought about. They must not look upon fruitfulness as a burden, but as a blessing. Good wives

are also fruitful in kindness, thrift, helpfulness, and affection: if they bear no children, they are by no means barren if they yield us the wine of consolation and the clusters of comfort. Truly blessed is the man whose wife is fruitful in those good works which are suitable to her near and dear position. By the sides of thine house. She keeps to the house: she is a home bird. Some imagine that she is like a vine which is nailed up to the house wall; but they have no such custom in Palestine, neither is it pleasant to think of a wife as growing up by a wall, and as bound to the very bricks and mortar of her husband's dwelling. No, she is a fruitful vine, and a faithful housekeeper; if you wish to find her, she is within the house: she is to be found both inside and outside the home, but her chief usefulness is in the inner side of the dwelling, which she adorns. Eastern houses usually have an open square in the centre, and the various rooms are ranged around the sides,—there shall the wife be found, busy in one room or another, as the hour of the day demands. She keeps at home, and so keeps the home. It is her husband's house, and she is her husband's; as the text puts it—"thy wife", and "thy house"; but by her loving care her husband is made so happy that he is glad to own her as an equal proprietor with himself, for he is hers, and the house is hers too.

Thy children like olive plants round about thy table. Hundreds of times have I seen the young olive plants springing up around the parent stem, and it has always made me think of this verse. The Psalmist never intended to suggest the idea of olive plants round a table, but of young people springing up around their parents, even as olive plants surround the fine, well rooted tree. The figure is very striking, and would be sure to present itself to the mind of every observer in the olive country. How beautiful to see the gnarled olive, still bearing abundant fruit, surrounded with a little band of sturdy successors, any one of which would be able to take its place should the central olive be blown down, or removed in any other way. The notion of a table in a bower may suit a cockney in a tea garden, but would never occur to an oriental poet; it is not the olive plants, but the children, that are round about the table. Moreover, note that it is not olive *branches*, but *plants*,—a very different thing. Our children gather around our table to be fed, and this involves expenses: how much better is this than to see them pining upon beds of sickness, unable to come for their meals! What a blessing to have sufficient to put upon the table! Let us for this benefit praise the bounty of the Lord. The wife is busy all over the house, but the youngsters are busiest at meal times; and if the blessing of the Lord rest upon the family, no sight can be more delightful. Here we have the vine and the olive blended—joy from the fruitful wife, and solid comfort from the growing family; these are the choicest products earth can yield: our families are gardens of the Lord. It may help us to value the privileges of our home if we consider where we should be if they were withdrawn. What if the dear partner of our life were removed from the sides of our house to the recesses of the sepulchre? What is the trouble of children compared with the sorrow of their loss? Think, dear father, what would be your grief if you had to cry with Job, "Oh that I were as in months past, as in the days when God preserved me; when

my children were about me."

Verse 4. *Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the LORD.* Mark this. Put a *Nota Bene* against it, for it is worthy of observation. It is not to be inferred that all blessed men are married, and are fathers; but that this is the way in which the Lord favours godly people who are placed in domestic life. He makes their relationships happy and profitable. In this fashion does Jehovah bless God fearing households, for he is the God of all the families of Israel. We have seen this blessing scores of times, and we have never ceased to admire in domestic peace the sweetest of human felicity. Family blessedness comes from the Lord, and is a part of his plan for the preservation of a godly race, and for the maintenance of his worship in the land. To the Lord alone we must look for it. The possession of riches will not ensure it; the choice of a healthy and beautiful bride will not ensure it; the birth of numerous comely children will not ensure it: there must be the blessing of God, the influence of piety, the result of holy living.

Verse 5. *The Loud shall bless thee out of Zion.* A spiritual blessing shall be received by the gracious man, and this shall crown all his temporal mercies. He is one among the many who make up God's inheritance; his tent is part and parcel of the encampment around the tabernacle; and therefore, when the benediction is pronounced at the centre it shall radiate to him in his place. The blessing of the house of God shall be upon his house. The priestly benediction which is recorded in Nu 6:24-26, runs thus: "The Lord bless thee, and keep thee: the Lord make his face shine upon thee, and be gracious unto thee: the Lord lift up his countenance upon thee, and give thee peace." This is it which shall come upon the head of the God fearing man. Zion was the centre of blessing, and to it the people looked when they sought for mercy: from the altar of sacrifice, from the mercy seat, from the Shekinah light, yea, from Jehovah himself, the blessing shall come to each one of his holy people. *And thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life.* He shall have a patriot's joy as well as a patriarch's peace. God shall give him to see his country prosper, and its metropolitan city flourish. When tent mercies are followed by temple mercies, and these are attended by national mercies,—the man, the worshipper, the patriot is trebly favoured of the Lord. This favour is to be permanent throughout the good man's life, and that life is to be a long one, for he is to see his sons' sons. Many a time does true religion bring such blessings to men; and when these good things are denied them, they have a greater reward as a compensation.

Verse 6. *Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children.* This is a great pleasure. Men live their young lives over again in their grandchildren. Does not Solomon say that "children's children are the crown of old men?" So they are. The good man is glad that a pious stock is likely to be continued; he rejoices in the belief that other homes as happy as his own will be built up wherein altars to the glory of God shall smoke with the morning and evening sacrifice. This promise implies long life, and that life rendered happy by its being continued in our offspring. It is one token of the immortality of man

that he derives joy from extending his life in the lives of his descendants. And peace upon Israel. With this sweet word Psalm 126 was closed. It is a favourite formula. Let God's own heritage be at peace, and we are all glad of it. We count it our own prosperity for the chosen of the Lord to find rest and quiet. Jacob was sorely tossed about; his life knew little of peace; but yet the Lord delivered him out of all his tribulations, and brought him to a place of rest in Goshen for a while, and afterwards to sleep with his fathers in the cave of Machpelah. His glorious Seed was grievously afflicted and at last crucified; but he has risen to eternal peace, and in his peace we dwell. Israel's spiritual descendants still share his chequered conditions, but there remains a rest for them also, and they shall have peace from the God of peace. Israel was a praying petitioner in the days of his wrestling, but he became a prevailing prince, and therein his soul found peace. Yes, all around it is true—"Peace upon Israel! Peace upon Israel."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Psalm 128 follows Psalm 127 for the same reason as Psalm 2 follows Psalm 1. In both instances they are Psalms placed together, of which one begins with *ashre* (happy, very happy), and the other ends with *ashre*. In other respects Psalm 128 and 127 supplement one another. They are related to one another much as the New Testament parables of the treasure in the field and the one pearl are related. That which makes man happy is represented in Psalm 127 as a gift coming as a blessing, and in Psalm 128 as a reward coming as a blessing, that which is briefly indicated in the word *saka*, *saka*, *reward*, in Ps 127:3 being here expanded and unfolded. There it appears as a gift of grace in contrast to the God estranged self activity of man; here as a fruit of the *ora et labora*.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

Whole Psalm. It is to be observed, that here all men are spoken to as wedded; because this is the ordinary estate of most people. See 1Co 7:1-2. At this day every Jew is bound to marry at about eighteen years of age, or before twenty; else he is accounted as one that liveth in sin.—*John Trapp*.

Whole Psalm. This Psalm is an epiyalamio logos, written for the commendation, instruction, and consolation of those who are either already married or are about to enter on that kind of life. It enumerates, therefore, at the commencement, as is usual in songs of this kind, all those things which are regarded as burdens in the married life, such as the labours in seeking to provide for the whole family; the spouse, and that marriage bond, which, as it were, binds a man and seems to make him a slave, just as that character says in the comedy, "I have taken a wife; I have sold my liberty:" lastly, the education of the children, which certainly is most laborious, and requires the largest expenditure. To lighten the burden of all these things, there is added to each a blessing, or a promise, so that they might appear slight. And at the close, it subjoins in general, a spiritual promise, which easily makes light of all the labours and disquiets of the married life; even if they should be the very heaviest. The

blessing comes from Zion or the Church: for there is nothing so burdensome and difficult, but what it can be easily borne by those who are the members of the true Church, and know the sources of true consolation.—*D. H. Mollerus*.

Verse 1. *Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD*, etc. Here we have the living fountain of the blessing which rests upon the conjugal and domestic state. When worldly prudence attempts to choose a wife and form a household, it can apply its hand only to so much of the work as has its seat upon earth, and is visible to the eye of sense. It builds, so to speak, the first and the second story, adds cornice and pediment, and the fabric presents a fair appearance but it has no foundation. Whenever you see the household of a married pair continuing to defy every storm, you may be sure that it rests upon a sure foundation, lying beyond the reach of human sense, and that that foundation is the fear of the Lord. To the fear of the Lord, therefore, the holy Psalmist has wisely given a place in front of this beautiful Psalm, which celebrates the blessing that descends upon conjugal and domestic life.—*Augustus F. Tholuck*, in *"Hours of Christian Devotion,"* 1870.

Verse 1. *Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD*. There is a fear of the Lord which hath terror in it and not blessedness. The apprehension with which a warring rebel regards his triumphant and offended sovereign, or the feelings of a fraudulent bankrupt towards a stern creditor, or, a conscience stricken criminal to a righteous judge, are frequently types of men's feelings in regard to God. This evidently cannot be the *fear* which the "*blessed*" of this Psalm feel. Nor can theirs, on the other hand, be the tormenting fear of self reproach. Their fear is that which the believed revelations given of him in his Word produce. It is the fear which a child feels towards an honoured parent,—a fear to offend: it is that which they who have been rescued from destruction feel to the benefactor who nobly and at the vastest sacrifice interposed for their safety,—a fear to act unworthily of his kindness: it is that which fills the breast of a pardoned and grateful rebel in the presence of a venerated sovereign at whose throne he is permitted to stand in honour,—a fear lest he should ever forget his goodness, and give him cause to regret it. Such is the fear of the Christian now: a fear which reverence for majesty, gratitude for mercies, dread of displeasure, desire of approval, and longing for the fellowship of heaven, inspire; the fear of angels and the blessed Son; the fear not of sorrow but of love, which shrinks with instinctive recoil from doing aught that would tend to grieve, or from denying aught that would tend to honour. Religion is the grand and the only wisdom; and since the beginning, the middle, and the end of it, is the fear of the Lord, blessed is every man that is swayed by it.—*Robert Nisbet*, in *"The Songs of the Temple Pilgrims,"* 1863.

Verse 1. *Blessed is every one that feareth the Lord*. Let us take a little of the character of the blessed man. Who is it that is undaunted? "*The man that feareth God.*" Fear sounds rather contrary to blessedness; hath an air of misery; but add whom. He that "*feareth the Lord*"; that touch turns it into gold. He that so fears, fears not: he shall not be afraid; all petty fears are swallowed up in this great

fear; and this great fear is as sweet and pleasing as little fears are anxious and vexing. Secure of other things, he can say—"If my God be pleased, no matter who is displeased: no matter who despise me, if he account me his. Though all forsake me, though my dearest friends grow estranged, if he reject me not, that is my only fear; and for that I am not perplexed, I know he will not." A believer hath no fear but of the displeasure of heaven, the anger of God to fall upon him; he accounts that only terrible; but yet he doth not fear it; doth not apprehend it will fall on him, is better persuaded of the goodness of God. So this fear is still joined with trust:—"Behold the eye of the Lord is upon them that fear him, upon them that hope in his mercy": Ps 33:18.—*Robert Leighton*, 1611-1684.

Verse 1. *Blessed is every one*, etc. There is a stress on *all* ("*every one*"), teaching that no disparity of sex or condition, of rank or wealth, affects the degree of happiness granted by God to every one of his true servants in their several stations. It is to be observed, further, that whenever the fear of the Lord is mentioned in Holy Writ, it is never set by itself, as though sufficient for the consummation of our faith, but always has something added or prefixed, by which to estimate its due proportion of perfection, according as it is stated by Solomon in Pr 2:3-5.—*J. M. Neale and R. F. Littledale*; in "*A Commentary on the Psalms from Primitive and Medieval Writers*," 1860.

Verse 1. *Blessed is every one*, etc. It is a precious promise, but perhaps thou art tempted to say in thy heart, not meant for every one. Wilt thou answer against the Lord? Hear him speak in the song. He says, "*every one.*" "*Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD.*" None are excluded but those who will not walk in his ways.—*Edward Jewett Robinson*.

Verse 1. *Blessed*, etc. The, adage, "That it is best not to be born at all, or to die as soon as possible", has certainly been long since received by the common consent of almost all men. Carnal reason judges either that all mankind without exception are miserable, or that fortune is more favourable to ungodly and wicked men than to the good. To the sentiment that those are blessed who fear the Lord, it has an entire aversion. So much the more requisite, then, is it to dwell upon the consideration of this truth. Farther, as this blessedness is not apparent to the eye, it is of importance, in order to our being able to apprehend it, first to attend to the definition which will be given of it by and bye; and secondly, to know that it depends chiefly upon the protection of God. Although we collect together all the circumstances which seem to contribute to a happy life, surely nothing will be found more desirable than to be kept hidden under the guardianship of God. If this blessing is, in our estimation, to be preferred, as it deserves, to all other good things, whoever is persuaded that the care of God is exercised about the world and human affairs, will at the same time unquestionably acknowledge that what is here laid down is the chief point of happiness.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 1. *That feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways.* The fear of the Lord is the internal principle; but unless there be a corresponding expression in the outward life, what reason is there to suppose that it has any existence at all? Observe also, that there is no walking in the ways of the

Lord, until his fear be established in the heart. There can be no genuine morality apart from the fear of God. How can a man obey God while his affections are alienated from him?—*N. M'Michael*.

Verse 1. *That walketh in, his ways.* God makes blessed those that walk in his ways, because he himself walks with them. This is said concerning David, and it is explained how that companionship blessed him, 2Sa 5:10: "And David went on, and grew great, and the Lord God of hosts was with him": where the "and" may be taken as the causal particle "because." That God does indeed join himself to those who walk in his ways as companion and leader we have in 2Ch 17:3-4: "And the Lord was with Jehoshaphat, because he walked in the first ways of his father David, and sought not unto Baalim; but sought to the Lord God of his father."—*Thomas Le Blanc*.

Verse 2. *For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands,* etc. There is a fourfold literal sense here: Thou shalt live by honest, peaceful labour, not by rapine and violence on that produced by the toil of others, nor yet indolently and luxuriously; thou shalt "eat", and not penuriously stint thyself and others; thy crops shall not be blighted, but shall bring forth abundantly; and no enemy shall destroy or carry off thy harvest. And these two latter interpretations accord best with the converse punishments threatened to the disobedient by Moses. "*Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands*". But he who hates labour does not eat of it, nor can he say, "My meat is to do the will of him that sent me, and to finish his work": Joh 4:34. On the other hand, he to whom such labour is a delight, does not merely look forward in hope to the future fruits or rewards of labour, but even here and now finds sustenance and pleasure in toiling for God; so that it is "*well*" with him in the world, even amidst all its cares and troubles, and he "*shall be happy*" in that which is to come, whence sorrow is banished for ever, as it is written in the gospel: "Blessed is he that shall eat bread in the kingdom of God": Lu 14:15.—*Neale and Littledale*.

Verse 2. *Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands,* etc. This must they learn also which are married, that they must labour. For the law of nature requireth that the husband should sustain and nourish his wife and his children. For after that man and wife do know that they ought to fear God their Creator, who not only made them, but gave his blessing also unto his creature; this secondly must they know, that something they must do that they consume not their days in ease and idleness. Hesiod, the poet, giveth his counsel, that first thou shouldest get thee a house, then a wife, and also an ox to till the ground...For albeit that our diligence, care, and travail is not able to maintain our family, yet God useth such as a means by the which he will bless us.—*Martin Luther*.

Verse 2. *Thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands.* Men have dreamed fascinating dreams of removing the disabilities and limitations of the world and the evils of life, without sorrow. Poets have pictured earthly paradises, where life would be one long festival,

"Summer isles of Eden lying in dark purple spheres of sea."

But vain are all such dreams and longings. They are of human, not of Divine origin, and spring from a

root of selfishness and not of holiness. They cannot be realized in a fallen world, full of sorrow because full of sin. All blessings in man's economy are got from pains. Happiness is the flower that grows from a thorn of sorrow transformed by man's cultivation. The beautiful myth which placed the golden apples of the Hesperides in a garden guarded by dragons, is an allegory illustrative of the great human fact that not till we have slain the dragons of selfishness and sloth can we obtain any of the golden successes of life. Supposing it were possible that we could obtain the objects of our desire without any toil or trouble, we should not enjoy them. To benefit us really, they must be the growths of our own self denial and labour. And this is the great lesson which the miracles of our Lord, wrought in the manner in which they were, unfolded. They teach us that, in both temporal and spiritual things, we should not so throw ourselves upon the providence or grace of God as to neglect the part we have ourselves to act,—that God crowns every honest and faithful effort of man with success: "*Blessed is every one that feareth the LORD; that walketh in his ways. For thou shalt eat the labour of thine hands: happy shalt thou be, and it shall be well with thee.*"—Hugh Macmillan, in "*The Ministry of Nature*," 1871.

Verse 2. (*first clause*).

Labour, the symbol of man's punishment;

Labour, the secret of man's happiness.

—James Montgomery, 1771-1854.

Verse 2. *Happy shalt thou be.* Oh trust in the Lord for happiness as well as for help! All the springs of happiness are in him. Trust "in him who giveth us all things richly to enjoy"; who, of his own rich and free mercy, holds them out to us, as in his own hand, that, receiving them as his gifts, and as pledges of his love, we may enjoy all that we possess. It is his love gives a relish to all we taste, puts life and sweetness into all; while every creature leads us up to the great Creator, and all earth is a scale to heaven. He transfuses the joys that are at his own right hand into all that he bestows on his thankful children, who, having fellowship with the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, enjoy him in all and above all.—John Wesley, 1703-1791.

Verse 2. *Happy shalt thou be.* Mr. Disraeli puts these remarkable words into the mouth of one of his characters:—"Youth is a blunder; manhood a struggle; old age a regret." A sad and Cheerless view of life's progress that! It may be true, in measure, of a life separated from godliness; it certainly is not true of a life allied with godliness. Let there be "life and godliness", and then youth is not a blunder, but a wise purpose and a glowing hope; manhood is not a struggle only, but a conquest and a joy; old age is not a regret, but a rich memory and a glorious prospect.—R. P. Macmaster, in "*The Baptist Magazine*," 1878.

Verse 3. *Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine*, etc. The comparison would perhaps be brought out more clearly by arranging the verse as follows:

"Thy wife shall be in the inner part of thy house

Like a fruitful vine;

Thy children round about thy table

Like the shoots of the olive."

In the inner part, literally, "the sides of thy house", as in Am 6:10, i.e., the women's apartments, as marking the proper sphere of the wife engaged in her domestic duties, and also to some extent her seclusion, though this was far less amongst the Jews than amongst other Orientals. The "*vine*" is an emblem chiefly of *fruitfulness*, but perhaps also of dependence, as needing support; the "*olive*", of vigorous, healthy, joyous life. The same figure is employed by Euripides, Herc. Fur., 839. Med. 109S.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verse 3. *Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine*, etc. We do not remember to have met with a single instance, in the East, of vines trained *against the walls of a house*, or of olives near or about a house. Neither have we read of such instances. The passage doubtless derives its figures from the fertility of the vine, and from the appearance of the olive, or the order in which olive trees are planted. The construction would then be: "Thy wife, in the sides (interior apartments) of thy house, shall be as the fruitful vine, and thy children round about thy table, like olive plants."—*John Kitto (1504-1854), in "The Pictorial Bible."*

Verse 3. *Thy wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of thine house.* The wife is likened not to thorns or briars, nor even to oaks or to other fruits and trees, but to the vine; and also to a vine neither in a vineyard nor in a garden, but set by the walls of the house; also not barren, but fertile and fruit bearing. This admonishes husbands as well as wives of their duties. For as the walls support the vine, and defend it against the force of winds and tempests, so ought husbands, as far as is in their power, to defend their wives by their godly conversation and wholesome teachings and institutions against the pestilential wind of the old serpent; also against the injuries of evil disposed men. "He that loveth his wife loveth himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourisheth and cherisheth it, even as the Lord the Church": Eph 5:28-29. Further, the vine is exceedingly fragile wood, and not meet for any work, Eze 15:4. Husbands, therefore, should remember that they ought to behave towards their wives patiently and prudently, as with the weaker vessel; not keeping in mind the fragility of the wood, but the abundance and sweetness of the fruit. If husbands observe this, that will happen to them which Scripture says concerning the peaceful time of Solomon, "And Judah and Israel dwelt safely, every man under his vine and under his fig tree": 1Ki 4:25. Such was the married life of Abraham with Sarah, Isaac with Rebecca, Jacob with, Leah and Rachel.—*Solomon Gesner*.

Verse 3. *A fruitful vine by the sides of thine house.* It does not say *on* the sides of the house, but *by* the sides. The passage probably refers to the trellised, bowers which often lead up to the houses, and are covered with vines, the grapes, hanging over head. Sitting in these bowers is sitting under

our own vines: Mic 4:4. I have seen in Constantinople grapes hanging over the people's heads in the principal streets, the vines being trained from one side of the street to the other.—*John Gadsby, in "My Wanderings,"* 1860.

Verse 3. *By the sides of thine house.* Not on the roof, nor on the floor; the one is too high, she is no ruler; the other too low, she is no slave: but in the sides, an equal place between both.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 3. *By the sides of thine house.* The house is her proper place, for she is "the beauty of the house"; there her business lies, there she is safe. The ancients painting them with a snail under their feet, and the Egyptians denying their women shoes, and the Scythians burning the bride's chariot axle tree at her door, when she was brought to her husband's house, and the angel's asking Abraham where Sarah was (though he knew well enough), that it might be observed, she was "in the tent", do all intimate, that, by the law of nature, and by the rules of religion, the wife ought to keep at home, unless urgent necessity do call her abroad.—*Richard Steele* (—1692), in *"The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 3. As it is visible that the good man's sons being "*like olive plants round about his table*", means not that they should be like the olive plants which grew round his table, it being, I presume, a thought in Bishop Patrick that will not be defended, that the Psalmist refers to a table spread in an arbour composed of young olive trees, for we find no such arbours in the Levant, nor is the tree very proper for such a purpose; so in like manner the first clause must signify, thy wife *shall be in the sides*, or private apartments, *of thy house, fruitful as a thriving vine*: the place here mentioned (the sides of the house) referring to the wife, not to the vine; as the other (the table) refers to the children, not to the olives. Nor is this a new thought, it is a remark that Musculus and other interpreters have made. The Hebrew word, translated sides, is very well known to signify the more *private apartments* of a house, as they have also remarked; and he that reads Dr. Shaw's description of an Eastern house, must immediately see the propriety of calling the private apartments *its sides*. Such a house consists of a square court, which the doctor observes, is called *the midst* of the house: and private apartments round it, which may as properly be called *its sides* in consequence: into this middle of the house, or this quadrangle, company, he tells us, are sometimes received, in which *other authors* tell us their wives remain concealed at such times.—*Thomas Harmer, 1719-1788.*

Verse 3. *Thy children like olive plants,* etc. Follow me into the grove, and I will show you what may have suggested the comparison. Here we have hit upon a beautiful illustration. This aged and decayed tree is surrounded, as you see, by several young and thrifty shoots, which spring from the root of the venerable parent. They seem to uphold, protect, and embrace it, we may even fancy that they now bear that load of fruit which would otherwise be demanded of the feeble parent. Thus do good and affectionate children gather round the table of the righteous. Each contributes something to

the common wealth and welfare of the whole—a beautiful sight, with which may God refresh the eyes of every friend of mine.—*W. M. Thomson.*

Verse 3. Man by nature, uninfluenced by grace, is "a wild olive tree"; and the object of most parents is merely to cultivate this wild olive tree. What anxiety is there about accomplishments which, how attractive soever, are but the dying blossoms of this wild olive tree!—*Richard Cecil, 1748-1810.*

Verse 3. Although the world is carried away by irregular desires after various objects, between which it is perpetually fluctuating in its choice, God gives us in this Psalm a description of what he considers to be a blessing beyond all riches, and therefore we ought to hold it in high estimation. If a man has a wife of amiable manners as the companion of his life, let him set no less value upon this blessing than Solomon did, who, in Pr 19:14, affirms that it is God alone who gives a good wife. In like manner, if a man be a father of a numerous offspring, let him receive that goodly boon with a thankful heart.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3. Before the fall Paradise was man's home; since the fall home has been his Paradise.—*Augustus William Hare (1792-1834), and Julius Charles Hare (1795-1855), in "Guesses at Truth."*

Verse 4. As Haman caused it to be proclaimed (Es 6:9), "Thus shall it be done to the man whom the king delighteth to honour"; so here, *Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed that feareth the Lord.* He shall be blessed in his wife, and blessed in his children; so blessed in both that the Psalmist calls all to behold it, as a rare, beautiful, yea, wonderful sight: "*Behold, thus shall the man be blessed.*" And yet the man fearing God shall be blessed more than thus: his blessing shall come in the best way (Ps 128:5): "*The Lord shall bless thee out of Zion*"; his temporal mercies shall come in a spiritual way, yea, he shall have spiritual blessings: "*He shall bless thee out of Zion*"; and he shall have blessings beyond his own walls: "*Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem all the days of thy life. Yea, thou shalt see thy children's children, and peace upon Israel.*" Sometimes a good man can take no content in his family mercies because of the church's afflictions; he "prefers Jerusalem above his chief joy" (Ps 137:6), and while that is mourning he cannot but be sorrowing, though his own house be full of joy. Sometimes a man's own family is so afflicted, and his house so full of sorrow, that he cannot but mourn, even when Jerusalem rejoiceth and Zion is glad. But when a good man looks home to his own house and sees good there; when also he looks abroad to Jerusalem and sees good there too, how full is his joy! how complete is his blessedness! and, "*Behold, thus the man is blessed that feareth the Lord.*"—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 4. *Behold, that thus shall the man be blessed,* etc. It is asserted with a note commanding attention: behold it by faith in the promise; behold it by observation in the performance of the promise; behold it with assurance that it shall be so, for God is faithful; and with admiration that it should be so; for we merit no favour, no blessing from him.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 5. *Thou shalt see the good of Jerusalem*, etc. What is added concerning "the good of Jerusalem" is to be regarded as enjoining upon the godly the duty not only of seeking their own individual welfare, or of being devoted to their own peculiar interests; but rather of having it as their chief desire to see the Church of God in a flourishing condition. It would be a very unreasonable thing for each member to desire what may be profitable for itself, while in the meantime the body was neglected. From our extreme proneness to err in this respect, the prophet, with good reason, recommends solicitude about the public welfare; and he mingles together domestic blessings and the common benefits of the church in such a way as to show us that they are things joined together, and which it is unlawful to put asunder.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 6. Lord, let thy blessing so accompany my endeavours in their offspring, that all my sons may be Benaiahs, the Lord's building, and then they will all be Abners, their father's light; and that all my daughters may be Bethins, the Lord's daughters, and then they will all be Abigail's, their father's joy.—*George Swinnock*.

Verse 6. Religion is as favourable for long life as for happiness. She promotes long life by destroying those evils, the tendency of which is to limit the duration of human existence. War sweeps millions into a premature grave. Men live longer in Christian than in heathen countries. They live longer in Protestant than in Roman Catholic countries. The direct effect of true religion is to increase the period of human life. "Length of days is in her right hand."—*N. M' Michael*.

Verse 6. Connecting this with the next Psalm we find the following in a famous Scotch divine:—"Peace upon Israel." The great blessing of peace, which the Lord hath promised to his people even in this life, (for where the Lord gives mercy to any, he gives them peace also, peace and grace are inseparably joined together), this peace, I say, does not consist in this, that the people of God shall have no enemies; no, for there is an immortal and endless enmity against them. Neither does their peace consist in this, that their enemies shall not assault them; neither does it consist in this, that their enemies shall not molest or afflict them. We do but deceive ourselves if so be that we imagine, so long as we are in this our pilgrimage, and in our warfare here, if we promise to ourselves a peace of this kind; for while we live in this world, we shall still have enemies, and these enemies shall assault us, and persecute and afflict us."—*Alexander Henderson*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The universality of the blessedness of God fearing men. Circumstances, personal or relative, cannot alter the blessing; nor age, nor public opinion, nor even their own sense of unworthiness.

Verse 1. Consider:

1. The union of a right fear with a right walk.

(a) There is a wrong fear, because slavish; this never can lead to genuine obedience, which must be willingly and cheerfully rendered.

(b) But the fear of reverence and filial love will surely turn the feet to God's ways, keep them steadfast therein, and wing them with speed.

2. The blessedness of him in whom they are united.

(a) It is blessedness of life; for that is prospered.

(b) It is blessedness of domestic happiness; for where the head of a family is holy, the family is the home of peace.

(c) It is the blessedness of a holy influence in every sphere of his activity.

(d) It is deep felt heart blessedness in walking with God.

(e) And all is but a prelude to the everlasting blessedness of heaven.—*J. F.*

Verse 2. The blessedness of the righteous are first generalized, then particularized. Here they are divided into three particulars.

1. The fruit of past labours.

2. Present enjoyment.

3. Future welfare: "It shall be well with thee." Well in time; well in death; well at the last judgment; well forever.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.

1. Labour a blessing to him who fears God.

2. The fruits of labour the result of God's blessing.

3. The enjoyment of the fruits of labour a further blessing from God.

—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 2. (*first clause*). Success in life.

1. Its source—God's blessing.

2. Its channels—our own labour.

3. The measure in which it is promised—as much as we can eat. More is above the promise.

4. The enjoyment. We are permitted to eat or enjoy our labour.

Verse 2. (*second clause*). Godly happiness.

1. Follows upon God's blessing.

2. Grows out of character: "feareth the Lord."

3. Follows labour: see preceding sentence.

4. It is supported by wellbeing: see following sentence.

Verse 2. (*last clause*).

1. It shall be well with thee while thou livest.

2. It shall be better with thee when thou diest.

3. It shall be best of all with thee in eternity.

—Adapted from Matthew Henry.

Verse 3. The blessing of children.

1. They are round our table—expense, anxiety, responsibility, pleasure.

2. They are like olive plants—strong, planted in order, coming on to succeed us, fruitful for God—as the olive provided oil for the lamp.

Verse 3. A complete family picture. Here are the husband, the wife, the children, the house, the rooms in the side, the table. We should ask a blessing upon each, bless God for each, and use each in a blessed manner.

Verse 4. Domestic happiness the peculiar blessing of piety. Show how it produces and maintains it.

Verse 5. The blessing out of Zion. See Nu 6:24-26.

Verse 5. Two priceless mercies.

1. The house of God a blessing to our house. It is connected with our own salvation, edification, consolation, etc. It is our hope for the conversion of our children and servants, etc. It is the place of their education, and for the formation of helpful friendship, etc.

2. Our house a blessing to God's house. Personal interest in the church, hospitality, generosity, service, etc. Children aiding holy work. Wife useful, etc.

Verse 6. Old age blessed when

1. Life has been spent in the fear of God.

2. When it is surrounded to its close by human affection.

3. When it maintains its interest in the cause of God.

—W. H. J. P.

Verse 6. (*last clause*). Church peace—its excellence, its enemies, its friends, its fruits.

Psalm 129

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. *A Song of Degrees.* I fail to see how this is a step beyond the previous Psalm; and yet it is clearly the song of an older and more tried individual, who looks back upon a life of affliction in which he suffered all along, even from his youth. Inasmuch as patience is a higher, or at least more difficult, grace than domestic love, the ascent or progress may perhaps be seen in that direction. Probably if we knew more of the stations on the road to the Temple we should see a reason for the order of these Psalms; but as that information cannot be obtained, we must take the songs as we find them, and

remember that, as we do not now go on pilgrimages to Zion, it is our curiosity and not our necessity which is a loser by our not knowing the cause of the arrangement of the songs in this Pilgrim Psalter. **AUTHOR, ETC.** It does not seem to us at all needful to ascribe this Psalm to a period subsequent to the captivity...indeed, it is more suitable to a time when as yet the enemy had not so far prevailed as to have carried the people into a distant land. It is a mingled hymn of sorrow and of strong resolve. Though sorely smitten, the afflicted one is heart whole, and scorns to yield in the least degree to the enemy. The poet sings the trials of Israel, Ps 129:1-3; the interposition of the Lord, Ps 129:4; and the unblessed condition of Israel's foes, Ps 129:5-8. It is a rustic song, full of allusions to husbandry. It reminds us of the books of Ruth and Amos.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say.* In her present hour of trial she may remember her former afflictions and speak of them for her comfort, drawing from them the assurance that he who has been with her for so long will not desert her in the end. The song begins abruptly. The poet has been musing, and the fire burns, therefore speaks he with his tongue; he cannot help it, he feels that he must speak, and therefore "may now say" what he has to say. The trials of the church have been repeated again and again, times beyond all count: the same afflictions are fulfilled in us as in our fathers. Jacob of old found his days full of trouble; each Israelite is often harassed; and Israel as a whole has proceeded from tribulation to tribulation. "Many a time", Israel says, because she could not say how many times. She speaks of her assailants as "they", because it would be impossible to write or even to know all their names. They had straitened, harassed, and fought against her from the earliest days of her history—from her youth; and they had continued their assaults right on without ceasing. Persecution is the heirloom of the church, and the ensign of the elect. Israel among the nations was peculiar, and this peculiarity brought against her many restless foes, who could never be easy unless they were warring against the people of God. When in Canaan, at the first, the chosen household was often severely tried; in Egypt it was heavily oppressed; in the wilderness it was fiercely assailed; and in the promised land it was often surrounded by deadly enemies. It was something for the afflicted nation that it survived to say, "Many a time have they afflicted me." The affliction began early—"from my youth"; and it continued late. The earliest years of Israel and of the Church of God are spent in trial. Babes in grace are cradled in opposition. No sooner is the man child born than the dragon is after it. "It is", however, "good for a man that he bear the yoke in his youth", and he shall see it to be so when in after days he tells the tale.

Verse 2. *Many a time have they afflicted, me from my youth.* Israel repeats her statement of her repeated afflictions. The fact was uppermost in her thoughts, and she could not help soliloquizing upon it again and again. These repetitions are after the manner of poetry: thus she makes a sonnet

out of her sorrows, music out of her miseries. "*Yet they have not prevailed against me.*" We seem to hear the beat of timbrels and the clash of cymbals here: the foe is derided; his malice has failed. That "*yet*" breaks in like the blast of trumpets, or the roll of kettledrums. "Cast down, but not destroyed", is the shout of a victor. Israel has wrestled, and has overcome in the struggle. Who wonders? If Israel overcame the angel of the covenant, what man or devil shall vanquish him? The fight was oft renewed and long protracted: the champion severely felt the conflict, and was at times fearful of the issue; but at length he takes breath, and cries, "Yet they have not prevailed against me." "Many a time;" yes, "many a time", the enemy has had his opportunity and his vantage, but not so much as once has he gained the victory.

Verse 3. *The plowers plowed up on my back.* The scourgers tore the flesh as ploughmen furrow a field. The people were maltreated like a criminal given over to the lictors with their cruel whips; the back of the nation was scored and furrowed by oppression. It is a grand piece of imagery condensed into few words. A writer says the metaphor is muddled, but he is mistaken: there are several figures, like wheel within wheel, but there is no confusion. The afflicted nation was, as it were, lashed by her adversaries so cruelly that each blow left a long red mark, or perhaps a bleeding wound, upon her back and shoulders, comparable to a furrow which tears up the ground from one end of the field to the other. Many a heart has been in like case; smitten and sore wounded by them that use the scourge of the tongue; so smitten that their whole character has been cut up and scored by calumny. The true church has in every age had fellowship with her Lord under his cruel flagellations: his sufferings were a prophecy of what she would be called hereafter to endure, and the foreshadowing has been fulfilled. Zion has in this sense been ploughed as a field. They made long their furrows:—as if delighting in their cruel labour. They missed not an inch, but went from end to end of the field, meaning to make thorough work of their congenial engagement. Those who laid on the scourge did it with a thoroughness which showed how hearty was their hate. Assuredly the enemies of Christ's church never spare pains to inflict the utmost injury: they never do the work of the devil deceitfully, or hold back their hand from blood. They smite so as to plough into the man; they plough the quivering flesh as if it were clods of clay; they plough deep and long with countless furrows; until they leave no portion of the church unfurrowed or unassailed. Ah me! Well did Latimer say that there was no busier ploughman in all the world than the devil: whoever makes short furrows, he does not. Whoever balks and shirks, he is thorough in all that he does. Whoever stops work at sundown, he never does. He and his children plough like practised ploughmen; but they prefer to carry on their pernicious work upon the saints behind their backs, for they are as cowardly as they are cruel.

Verse 4. *The LORD is righteous.* Whatever men may be, Jehovah remains just, and will therefore keep covenant with his people and deal out justice to their oppressors. Here is the hinge of the condition: this makes the turning point of Israel's distress. The Lord bears with the long furrows of the

wicked, but he will surely make them cease from their ploughing before he has done with them. *He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.* The rope which binds the oxen to the plough is cut; the cord which bound the victim is broken; the bond which held the enemies in cruel unity has snapped. As in Ps 124:7 we read, "the snare is broken; we are escaped", so here the breaking of the enemies' instrument of oppression is Israel's release. Sooner or later a righteous God will interpose, and when he does so, his action will be most effectual; he does not unfasten, but cuts asunder, the harness which the ungodly use in their labour of hate. Never has God used a nation to chastise his Israel without destroying that nation when the chastisement has come to a close: he hates those who hurt his people even though he permits their hate to triumph for a while for his own purpose. If any man would have his harness cut, let him begin to plough one of the Lord's fields with the plough of persecution. The shortest way to ruin is to meddle with a saint: the divine warning is, "He that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."

Verse 5. *Let them all be confounded and turned back that hate Zion.* And so say we right heartily: and in this case *vox populi* is *vex Dei*, for so it shall be. If this be an imprecation, let it stand; for our heart says "Amen" to it. It is but justice that those who hate, harass, and hurt the good should be brought to naught. Those who confound right and wrong ought to be confounded, and those who turn back from God ought to be turned back. Loyal subjects wish ill to those who plot against their king.

"Confound their politics,

Frustrate their knavish tricks,"

is but a proper wish, and contains within it no trace of personal ill will. We desire their welfare as men, their downfall as traitors. Let their conspiracies be confounded, their policies be turned back. How can we wish prosperity to those who would destroy that which is dearest to our hearts? This present age is so flippant that if a man loves the Saviour he is styled a fanatic, and if he hates the powers of evil he is named a bigot. As for ourselves, despite all objectors, we join heartily in this commination; and would revive in our heart the old practice of Ebal and Gerizim, where those were blessed who bless God, and those were cursed who make themselves a curse to the righteous. We have heard men desire a thousand times that the gallows might be the reward of the assassins who murdered two inoffensive men in Dublin, and we could never censure the wish; for justice ought to be rendered to the evil as well as to the good. Besides, the church of God is so useful, so beautiful, so innocent of harm, so fraught with good, that those who do her wrong are wronging all mankind and deserve to be treated as the enemies of the human race. Study a chapter from the "Book of Martyrs", and see if you do not feel inclined to read an imprecatory Psalm over Bishop Bonner and Bloody Mary. It may be that some wretched nineteenth century sentimentalist will blame you: if so, read another *over him*.

Verse 6. *Let them be as the grass upon the housetops, which withereth afore it groweth up.* Grass on the housetop is soon up and soon down. It sprouts in the heat, finds enough nutriment to send up a

green blade, and then it dies away before it reaches maturity, because it has neither earth nor moisture sufficient for its proper development. Before it grows up it dies; it needs not to be plucked up, for it hastens to decay of itself. Such is and such ought to be the lot of the enemies of God's people. Transient is their prosperity; speedy is their destruction. The height of their position, as it hastens their progress, so it hurries their doom. Had they been lower in station they had perhaps been longer in being. "Soon ripe, soon rotten", is an old proverb. Soon plotting and soon rotting, is a version of the old adage which will suit in this place. We have seen grass on the rustic thatch of our own country cottages which will serve for an illustration almost as well as that which comes up so readily on the flat roofs and domes of eastern habitations. The idea is—they make speed to success, and equal speed to failure. Persecutors are all sound and fury, flash and flame; but they speedily vanish—more speedily than is common to men. Grass in the field withers, but not so speedily as grass on the housetops. Without a mower the tufts of verdure perish from the roofs, and so do opposers pass away by other deaths than fall to the common lot of men; they are gone, and none is the worse. If they are missed at all, their absence is never regretted. Grass on the housetop is a nonentity in the world: the house is not impoverished when the last blade is dried up: and, even so, the opposers of Christ pass away, and none lament them. One of the fathers said of the apostate emperor Julian, "That little cloud will soon be gone"; and so it was. Every sceptical system of philosophy has much the same history; and the like may be said of each heresy. Poor, rootless things, they are and are not: they come and go, even though no one rises against them. Evil carries the seeds of dissolution within itself. So let it be.

Verse 7. *Wherewith the mower filleth not his hand; nor he that bindeth sheaves his bosom.* When with his sickle the husbandman would cut down the tufts, he found nothing to lay hold upon: the grass promised fairly enough, but there was no fulfilment, there was nothing to cut or to carry, nothing for the hand to grasp, nothing for the lap to gather. Easterners carry their corn in their bosoms, but in this case there was nothing to bear home. Thus do the wicked come to nothing. By God's just appointment they prove a disappointment. Their fire ends in smoke; their verdure turns to vanity; their flourishing is but a form of withering. No one profits by them, least of all are they profitable to themselves. Their aim is bad, their work is worse, their end is worst of all.

Verse 8. *Neither do they which go by say, The blessing of the LORD be upon you: we bless you in the name of the LORD.* In harvest times men bless each other in the name of the Lord; but there is nothing in the course and conduct of the ungodly man to suggest the giving or receiving of a benediction. Upon a survey of the sinner's life from beginning to end, we feel more inclined to weep than to rejoice, and we feel bound rather to wish him failure than success. We dare not use pious expressions as mere compliments, and hence we dare not wish God speed to evil men lest we be partakers of their evil deeds. When persecutors are worrying the saints, we cannot say, "The blessing

of the Lord be upon you." When they slander the godly and oppose the doctrine of the cross, we dare not bless them in the name of the Lord. It would be infamous to compromise the name of the righteous Jehovah by pronouncing his blessing upon unrighteous deeds. See how godly men are roughly ploughed by their adversaries, and yet a harvest comes of it which endures and produces blessing; while the ungodly, though they flourish for a while and enjoy a complete immunity, dwelling, as they think, quite above the reach of harm, are found in a short time to have gone their way and to have left no trace behind. Lord, number me with thy saints. Let me share their grief if I may also partake of their glory. Thus would I make this Psalm my own, and magnify thy name, because thine afflicted ones are not destroyed, and thy persecuted ones are not forsaken.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. In the "degrees" of Christian virtue the Psalm corresponds to the tenth step, which is patience in adversity.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Whole Psalm. The following incident in connection with the glorious return of the Vaudois under Henri Arnaud is related in Muston's "Israel of the Alps":—"After these successes the gallant patriots took an oath of fidelity to each other, and celebrated divine service in one of their own churches, for the first time since their banishment. The enthusiasm of the moment was irrepressible; they chanted the seventy-fourth Psalm to the clash of arms; and Henri Arnaud, mounting the pulpit with a sword in one hand and a Bible in the other, preached from the Hundred and twenty-ninth Psalm, and once more declared, in the face of heaven, that he would never resume his pastoral office in patience and peace, until he should witness the restoration of his brethren to their ancient and rightful settlements."

Verse 1. *Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth.* 1. How *old* these afflictions are: "*From my youth.*" Aye, from my infancy, birth and conception. 2. There is the *frequency* and *iteration* of these afflictions. They were *oft* and many: "*many a time.*" 3. There is the grievousness of these afflictions, expressed by a comparison. "The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows." So these were old afflictions—*from her youth.* They were many a time: more times than can be numbered. And then they were grievous, even like iron ploughs, drawing deep and long furrows on their back.—*Alexander Henderson.*

Verse 1. *Many a time have they afflicted me,* etc. God had one Son, and but one Son, without sin; but never any without sorrow. We may be God's children, and yet still under persecution; his Israel, and afflicted from our youth up. We may feel God's hand as a Father upon us when he strikes us as well as when he strokes us. When he strokes us, it is lest we faint under his hand; and when he strikes us, it is that we should know his hand.—*Abraham Wright (1611-1690), in "A Practical Commentary upon the Psalms."*

Verse 1. *They.* The persecutors deserve not a name. The rich man is not named (as Lazarus is)

because not worthy: Lu 16:1-31 "They shall be written in the earth": Jer 17:13.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 1. *They.* In speaking of the enemies of Israel simply by the pronoun "*they*", without being more specific, the Psalmist aggravates the greatness of the evil more than if he had expressly named the Assyrians or the Egyptians. By not specifying any particular class of foes, he tacitly intimates that the world is filled with innumerable bands of enemies, whom Satan easily arms for the destruction of good men, his object being that new wars may arise continually on every side. History certainly bears ample testimony that the people of God had not to deal with a few enemies, but that they were assaulted by almost the whole world; and further, that they were molested not only by external foes, but also by those of an internal kind, by such as professed to belong to the Church.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 1. *They afflicted me.* Why are these afflictions of the righteous? Whence is it that he who has given up his Son to death for them, should deny them earthly blessings? Why is faith a mourner so frequently here below, and with all that heroic firmness in her aspect, and hope of glory in her eye, why needs she to be painted with so deep a sorrow on her countenance, and the trace of continual tears on her cheek? First, we reply, *for her own safety.* Place religion out of the reach of sorrow, and soon she would pine and perish. God is said to choose his people in the furnace, because they most often choose him there. It is ever from the cross that the most earnest "My God" proceeds, and never is the cry heard but he speeds forth at its utterance, who once hung there, to support, to comfort, and to save. As it is only in affliction God is *sought*, so by many it is only in affliction God is known. This, one of the kings of these worshippers of the Temple found. "When Manasseh was brought to affliction, *then* he knew that the Lord he was God": 2Ch 33:12-13.

But, further, it is only by affliction *we ourselves are known.* What is the source of that profound and obstinate indifference to divine truth which prevails among men of the world, except the proud conviction that they may dispense with it? It is only when they are crushed as the worm they are made to feel that the dust is their source; only when earthly props are withdrawn will they take hold of that arm of omnipotence which Jesus offers, and which he has offered so long in vain. While men know themselves, they *know their sin* also in affliction. What is the natural course and experience of the unbelieving of mankind? Transgression, remorse, and then forgetfulness; new transgression, new sorrow, and again forgetfulness. How shall this carelessness be broken? How convince them that they stand in need of a Saviour as the first and deepest want of their being, and that they can only secure deliverance from wrath eternal by a prompt and urgent application to him? By nothing so effectually as by affliction. God's children, who had forgotten him, arise and go to their Father when thus smitten by the scourge of sorrow; and no sooner is the penitent "*Father, I have sinned*" spoken, than they are clasped in his arms, and safe and happy in his love.

It is, further, by affliction that the *world* is known to God's children. God's great rival is the world. The lust of the flesh, pleasure; the lust of the eye, desire; the pride of life, the longing to be deemed

superior to those about us,—comprise everything man naturally covets. Give us ease, honour, distinction, and all life's good will seem obtained. *But what wilt thou do, when he shall judge thee?* This is a question fitted to alarm the happiest of the children of prosperity. What so frequently and effectually shows the necessity of piety as the sharp teachings of affliction? They show what moralists and preachers never could, that riches profit not in the day of death, that pleasures most fully enjoyed bring no soothing to the terrors which nearness to eternity presents, and that friends, however affectionate, cannot plead for and save us at the bar of God. "Miserable comforters are they all", and it is for the very purpose of inspiring this conviction, along with a belief that it is Jesus alone who can comfort in the hour of need, that affliction is sent to God's children.—*Robert Nisbet.*

Verse 1. *From my youth.* The first that ever died, died for religion; so early came martyrdom into the world.—*John Trapp.*

Verses 1-2.

1. The visible Church from the beginning of the world is one body, and, as it were, one man, growing up from infancy to riper age; for so speaketh the church here: *Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth.*

2. The wicked enemies of the church, they also are one body, one adverse army, from the beginning of the world continuing war against the church: *"Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth."*

3. As the former injuries done to the church are owned by the church, in after ages, as done against the same body, so also the persecution of former enemies is imputed and put upon the score of present persecutors: *"Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say."*

4. New experience of persecution, when they call to mind the exercise of the church in former ages, serves much for encouragement and consolation in troubles: *"Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth, may Israel now say."*

5. Albeit this hath been the endeavour of the wicked in all ages to destroy the church, yet God hath still preserved her iron age to age: *Yet they have not prevailed.*—*David Dickson.*

Verses 1-2. When the prophet says twice, *"They have afflicted me"*, *"they have afflicted me"*, the repetition is not superfluous, it being intended to teach us that the people of God had not merely once or twice to enter the conflict, but that their patience had been tried by continual exercises.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 2. *Many a time*, etc. The Christian Church may adopt the language of the Hebrew Church: *"Many a time have they afflicted me from my youth: yet they have not prevailed against me."* What afflictions were endured by the Christian Church from her youth up! How feeble was that youth! How small the number of the apostles to whom our Lord gave his gospel in charge! How destitute were they of human learning, of worldly influence, of secular power! To effect their destruction, and to frustrate their object—the glory of God and the salvation of men—the dungeon and the mine, the

rack and the gibbet, were all successively employed. The ploughmen ploughed their back, and made long their furrows. Their property was confiscated; their persons were imprisoned; their civil rights were taken from them; their heads rolled on the scaffold; their bodies were consumed at the burning pile; they were thrown, amidst the ringing shouts of the multitude, to the wild beasts of the amphitheatre. Despite, however, of every opposition, our holy religion took root and grew upward. Not all the fury of ten persecutions could exterminate it from the earth. The teeth of wild beasts could not grind it to powder; the fire could not burn it; the waters could not drown it; the dungeon could not confine it. Truth is eternal, like the great God from whose bosom it springs, and therefore it cannot be destroyed. And because Christianity is the truth, and no lie, her enemies have never prevailed against her.—*M. M'Michael*.

Verse 2. *Yet they have not prevailed against me.* The words are the same as in Ge 32:28. The blessing won by Jacob, when he wrestled with the angel, remained on his descendants. During the long night of the Captivity the faithful had wrestled in faithful prayer; now the morning had appeared, and Israel was raised to a higher stage of privilege.—*W. Kay*.

Verse 2. *Yet they have not prevailed against me.* Israel prevailed with God in wrestling with him, and therefore it is that he prevails with men also. If so be that we will wrestle with God for a blessing, and prevail with him, then we need not to fear but we shall wrestle the enemies out of it also. If we be the people of God, and persist in wrestling against his enemies, we need not fear but that we shall be victorious.—*Alexander Henderson*.

Verse 3. *The plowers plowed,* etc. There does not seem to be any need to look for an interpretation of this in scourging, or any other bodily infliction of pain; it seems to be "a figurative mode of expressing severe oppression." Roberts informs us that when, in the East, a man is in much trouble through oppressors, he says, "How they plough me and turn me up."—*Ingram Cobbin*, 1839.

Verse 3. *The plowers plowed,* etc. The great Husbandman who owns this plough (at least by whose permission this plough goes), is God. Not only is it God who makes your common ploughs to gang, and sends the gospel into a land, but it is God also who disposes and overrules this same plough of persecution. For without his license the plough cannot be yoked; and being yoked, cannot enter to gang till he direct; and he tempers the irons, so that they cannot go one inch deeper than he thinks meet. When he thinks it time to quit work, then presently he cuts their cords, so that they cannot go once about after he thinks it time to quit work. Albeit when they yoke, they resolve to have all the land upside down, yet he will let them plough no more of it than he sees meet. Now for the ploughmen of this plough, they are Satan and the evil angels; they hold the plough, and are goad men to it; and they yoke in the oxen into the plough, and drive them up with their goads. And they have a sort of music also, which they whistle into their ears, to make them go the faster; and that is the allurements and provocations of the world. And for the oxen who draw into this plough, it may be princes when

they turn persecutors of the kirk; it may be prelates; it may be politicians in the world: these are the oxen, Satan and the ill spirits inciting them, and stirring them up to go forward in their intended course. Then consider here that the plough and the ploughmen and oxen go about as God thinks meet; but what is it that they are doing in the meantime? Nothing else but preparing the ground for seed, and so the Lord employs them to prepare his people better to receive the seed of his word and of his Spirit.—*Alexander Henderson*.

Verse 3.—God fails not to sow blessings in the furrows, which the plowers plow upon the back of the church.—*Jeremy Taylor*, 1613-1667.

Verse 3. *The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.* When the Lord Jesus Christ was in his suffering state, and during his passion, these words here predicted of him were most expressly realized. Whilst he remained in the hands of the Roman soldiers they stript him of his raiment; they bound him with cords to a pillar; they flogged him. This was so performed by them, that they made ridges in his back and sides: they tore skin and flesh, and made him bare even to the bone, so that his body was like a ploughed field; the gashes made in it were like ridges made in a ploughed field; these were on his back. "*The plowers plowed upon my back: they made long their furrows.*" Whilst every part of our Lord's sorrows and sufferings is most minutely set forth in the sacred hymns, Psalms, and songs, contained in what we style the Book of Psalms, yet we shall never comprehend what our most blessed Lord, in every part of his life, and in his passion and death, underwent for us: may the Lord the Spirit imprint this fresh expression used on this subject effectually upon us. Our Lord's words here are very expressive of the violence of his tormentors and their rage against him, and of the wounds and torments they had inflicted on him. What must the feelings of our Lord have been when they made such furrows on his back, that it was all furrowed and welted with such long wounds, that it was more like a ploughed field than anything else. Blessings on him for his grace and patience, it is "with his stripes we are healed."—*Samuel Eyles Pierce*.

Verse 3. *They made long their furrows.* The apparent harshness of this figure will disappear if it be considered to refer to severe public scourgings. To those who have been so unhappy as to witness such scourgings this allusion will then appear most expressive. The long wales or wounds which the scourge leaves at each stroke may most aptly be compared either to furrows or (as the original admits) to the *ridges between the furrows*. The *furrows* made by the plough in the East are very superficial, and (although straight) are usually carried to a great length, the fields not being enclosed as in this country.—*John Kitto*, in "*The Pictorial Bible*."

Verse 4. *The LORD is righteous: he hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked;* i.e., he has put an end to their domination and tyranny over us. In the Hebrew word which is rendered "*cords*" there is a reference to the *harness* with which the oxen were fastened to the plough; and so to the *involved machinations* and *cruelities* of the enemy. The Hebrew word properly denotes thick *twisted*

cords; figuratively, intertwined wickedness; Mic 7:8. "*The cords of the wicked*", therefore, signify their power, dominion, tyranny, wickedness, and violence. These cords God is said "*to have cut*", so that he should have made an end; and, therefore "*to have cut*" for ever, so that they should never be reunited.—*Hermann Venema*.

Verse 4. *He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.* The enemies' power has been broken; God has cut asunder the cords of the wicked, has cut their gears, their traces, and so spoiled their ploughing; has cut their scourges, and so spoiled their lashing; has cut the bands of union, by which they were combined together; he has cut the bands of captivity, in which they held God's people. God has many ways of disabling Wicked men to do the mischief they design against his church, and shaming their counsels.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 4. *He hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.* He repeateth the same praise of God in delivering his church from oppression of the enemy, under the similitude of cutting the cords of the plough, which tilleth up another man's field. Whence learn, 1. The enemies of the church do no more regard her than they do the earth under their feet, and do seek to make their own advantage of her, as usurpers use to do in possessing and labouring of another man's field. "*The plowers plowed upon my back.*" 2. The Lord useth to suffer his enemies to break up the fallow ground of his people's proud and stiff hearts with the plough of persecution, and to draw deep and long furrows on them: "*They made long their furrows.*" 3. What the enemies do against the church the Lord maketh use of for maturing the church, which is his field, albeit they intend no good to God's church, yet they serve in God's wisdom to prepare the Lord's people for receiving the seed of God's word; for the similitude speaketh of their tilling of the church, but nothing of their sowing, for that is reserved for the Lord himself, who is owner of the field. 4. When the wicked have performed so much of God's husbandry as he thinketh good to suffer them, then he stoppeth their design, and looseth their plough. "*He Hath cut asunder the cords of the wicked.*"—*David Dickson*.

Verse 5. If any one be desirous to accept these words, *Let them be confounded and turned backward*, as they sound, he will devoutly explain the imprecation: that is to say, it may be an imprecation of good confusion, which leads to repentance, and of turning to God from sin: thus Bellarmine. There is a confounding by bringing grace, glory, and turning from the evil way. Thus some enemies and persecutors of the Christians have been holily confounded and turned to the faith of Christ; as St. Paul, who full of wrath and slaughter was going to Damascus that he might afflict the believers, but was graciously confounded on the road.—*Thomas Le Blanc*.

Verse 5. *Let them all be confounded.* Mr. Emerson told a convention of rationalists once, in this city, that the morality of the New Testament is scientific and perfect. But the morality of the New Testament is that of the Old. "Yes", you say; "but what of the imprecatory Psalms", A renowned professor, who, as Germany thinks, has done more for New England theology than any man since

Jonathan Edwards, was once walking in this city with a clergyman of a radical faith, who objected to the doctrine that the Bible is inspired, and did so on the ground of the imprecatory Psalms. The replies of the usual kind were made; and it was presumed that David expressed the Divine purpose in praying that his enemies might be destroyed, and that he gave utterance only to the natural righteous indignation of conscience against unspeakable iniquity. But the doubter would not be satisfied. The two came at last to a newspaper bulletin, on which the words were written,—"Baltimore to be shelled at twelve o'clock." "I am glad of it", said the radical preacher; "I am glad of it." "And so am I", said his companion, "but I hardly dare say so, for fear you should say that I am uttering an imprecatory Psalm."—*Joseph Cook, in Boston Monday Lectures. "Transcendentalism."*

Verse 5. *And turned back;* from pursuing their designs and accomplishing them; as the Assyrian monarch was, who had a hook put into his nose, and a bridle in his lips, and was turned back by the way he came: Isa 37:29.—*John Gill.*

Verse 5. *All those who hate Zion.* Note that he does not say, *All who hate me;* but "*all who hate Zion.*" Thus the saints are not led to this from the desire of revenge, but from zeal for the people of God, so that they pray for the confusion and repression of the ungodly.—*Wolfgang Musculus.*

Verse 6. *Let them be as the grass upon the housetops.* They are rightly compared to *grass on the housetops;* for more contemptuously the Holy Ghost could not speak of them. For this grass is such, that it soon withereth away before the sickle be put into it. Yea, no man thinketh it worthy to be cut down, no man regardeth it, every man suffereth it to brag for a while, and to show itself unto men from the housetops as though it were something when it is nothing. So the wicked persecutors in the world, which are taken to be mighty and terrible according to the outward show, are of all men most contemptible. For Christians do not once think of plucking them up or cutting them down; they persecute them not, they revenge not their own injuries, but suffer them to increase, to brag and glory as much as they list. For they know that they cannot abide the violence of a vehement wind. Yea, though all things be in quietness, yet as grass upon the housetops, by little and little, withereth away through the heat of the sun, so tyrannies upon small occasions do perish and soon vanish away. The faithful, therefore, in suffering do prevail, and overcome; but the wicked in doing are overthrown, and miserably perish, as all the histories of all times and ages do plainly witness.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 6. *Like grass upon the housetops.* The flat roofs of the Eastern houses "are plastered with a composition of mortar, tar, ashes, and sand", in the crevices of which grass often springs. The houses of the poor in the country were formed of a plaster of mud and straw, where the grass would grow still more freely: as all the images are taken from country life, it is doubtless to country dwellings that the poet refers.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 6. *Like grass upon the housetops.* The enemies of Zion may have an elevated position in the nation, they may seem to promise growth, but having no root in themselves, like the hearers on the

stony ground, give no promise of fruit. Their profession dies away and leaves no benefit to the church, as it claims no blessing from others.—*William Wilson (1783-1873), in "The Book of Psalms, with an Exposition."*

Verse 6. *Grass upon the housetops.* In the morning the master of the house laid in a stock of earth, which was carried up, and spread evenly on the top of the house, which is flat. The whole roof is thus formed of mere earth, laid on and rolled hard and flat. On the top of every house is a large stone roller, for the purpose of hardening and flattening this layer of rude soil, so that the rain may not penetrate; but upon this surface, as may be supposed, grass and weeds grow freely, but never come to maturity. It is to such grass the Psalmist alludes as useless and bad.—*William Jowett, in "Christian Researches in Syria and the Holy Land", 1825.*

Verse 7. *The mower filleth not his hand,* etc. The grain was rather pulled than cut, and as each handful was taken the reaper gave it a flourishing swing up into his bosom.—*Mrs. Finn, in "Home in the Holy Land", 1866.*

Verse 7. *He that bindeth sheaves his bosom.* A practice prevails in hot climates of sending out persons into the woods and other wild places to collect the grass, which would otherwise be wasted; and it is no uncommon thing in the evening to see groups of grass cutters in the market, waiting to dispose of their bundles or sheaves, which are often so large that one is disposed to wonder how they could have been conveyed from the woods upon one man's shoulders.—*Maria Calcott, in "A Scripture Herbal," 1842.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. Affliction as it comes to saints from men of the world.

1. Reason for it—enmity of the serpent's seed.
2. Modes of its display—persecution, ridicule, slander, disdain, etc.
3. Comfort under it. So persecuted they the prophets: so the Master. It is their nature. They cannot kill the soul. It is but for a time, etc.

Verses 1-2.

1. How far persecution for righteousness' sake may go.
 - a) It may be great: "afflicted", "afflicted."
 - b) It may be frequent: "Many a time."
 - c) It may be early: "From my youth."
2. How far it cannot go.
 - a) It may seem to prevail.
 - b) It may prevail in some degree.
 - c) It cannot ultimately prevail.

d) It shall cause that to which it is opposed increasingly to prevail.—*G. R.*

Verses 1-4. Israel persecuted but not forsaken. Persecution.

1. Whence it came: "they."
2. How it came: "Many a time", "from my youth", severely: "afflicted", "ploughed."
3. Why it came. Human and Satanic hatred, and Divine permission.
4. What came of it: "not prevailed"—to destroy, to drive to despair, to lead to sin. God's righteousness manifested in upholding his people, baffling their foes, etc.

Verses 1-4. The enemies of God's church.

1. Their violence: "The plowers plowed", etc.
2. Their persistency: "Many a time...from my youth."
3. Their failure: "Yet they have not prevailed."
4. Their great opponent: "The Lord...hath cut asunder."

—*J. F.*

Verse 3.

1. Literally fulfilled.
 - a) In Christ. Mt 27:26 20:19 Mr 15:15 Lu 18:33 Joh 19:1.
 - b) In his followers. Mt 10:17 Ac 16:23 2Co 6:5 2Co 11:23-24 Heb 11:36. And frequently in subsequent persecutions.
2. Figuratively. In secret calumnies both in Christ and his followers.—*G. R.*

Verse 4. Israel's song of triumph.

1. The Lord is righteous in permitting these afflictions to come upon his people.
2. He is righteous in keeping his promise of deliverance to his people.
3. He is righteous in visiting the enemies of his people with judgment.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 5.

1. An inexcusable hatred described: "hate Zion", God's church and cause. For,
 - a) Her people are righteous.
 - b) Her faith is a gospel.
 - c) Her mission is peace.
 - d) Her very existence is the world's preservation.
2. An inveterate sinfulness indicated: "Them that hate Zion." For, whatever moral virtues they may boast of, they must be,
 - a) Enemies to the human race.
 - b) In defiant opposition to God.
 - c) Perversely blind, as Saul, or radically vile.
 - d) Devil like.

3. An instinctive feeling of a good man expressed: "Let them all be", etc. Prompted by,
- a) His love to God.
 - b) Love to man.
 - c) Love to righteousness. Hence, its existence is in itself a pledge that the righteous God will respect and comply with it.—*J. F.*

Verses 5-8.

1. The characters described.
 - a) They do not love Zion. They say not, "Lord, I have loved the habitation of thine house", etc.
 - b) They hate Zion—both its King and its subjects.
2. Their prosperity: "As the grass", etc.
3. Their end.
 - a) Shame: "Let them be confounded."
 - b) Loss: "Turned back."
 - c) Disappointment. No mowing; no reaping.
 - d) Dishonour. Unblessed by others as well as in themselves.—*G. R.*

Verses 6-9. The wicked flourishing and perishing.

1. Eminent in position.
2. Envied in prosperity.
3. Evanescent in duration.
4. Empty as to solidity.
5. Excepted from blessing.

Psalm 130

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. *A Song of Degrees.* It would be hard to see any upward step from the preceding to the present Psalm, and therefore it is possible that the steps or ascents are in the song itself: certainly it does rise rapidly out of the depths of anguish to the heights of assurance. It follows well upon 129: when we have overcome the trials which arise from man we are the better prepared to meet those sharper sorrows which arise out of our matters towards God. He who has borne the scourges of the wicked is trained in all patience to wait the dealings of the Holy Lord. We name this the DE PROFUNDIS PSALM: "Out of the depths" is the leading word of it: out of those depths we cry, wait,

watch, and hope. In this Psalm we hear of the pearl of redemption, Ps 130:7-8: perhaps the sweet singer would never have found that precious thing had he not been cast into the depths. "Pearls lie deep."

DIVISION. The first two verses (Ps 130:1-2) reveal an intense desire; and the next two are a humble confession of repentance and faith, Ps 130:3-4. In Ps 130:5-6 waiting watchfulness is declared and resolved upon; and in Ps 130:7-8 joyful expectation, both for himself and all Israel, finds expression.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O LORD.* This is the Psalmist's statement and plea: he had never ceased to pray even when brought into the lowest state. The depths usually silence all they engulf, but they could not close the mouth of this servant of the Lord; on the contrary, it was in the abyss itself that he cried unto Jehovah. Beneath the floods prayer lived and struggled; yea, above the roar of the billows rose the cry of faith. It little matters where we are if we can pray; but prayer is never more real and acceptable than when it rises out of the worst places. Deep places beget deep devotion. Depths of earnestness are stirred by depths of tribulation. Diamonds sparkle most amid the darkness. Prayer *de profundis* gives to God *gloria in excelsis*. The more distressed we are, the more excellent is the faith which trusts bravely in the Lord, and therefore appeals to him, and to him alone. Good men may be in the depths of temporal and spiritual trouble; but good men in such cases look only to their God, and they stir themselves up to be more instant and earnest in prayer than at other times. The depth of their distress moves the depths of their being; and from the bottom of their hearts an exceeding great and bitter cry rises unto the one living and true God. David had often been in the deep, and as often had he pleaded with Jehovah, his God, in whose hand are all deep places. He prayed, and remembered that he had prayed, and pleaded that he had prayed; hoping ere long to receive an answer. It would be dreadful to look back on trouble and feel forced to own that we did not cry unto the Lord in it; but it is most comforting to know that whatever we did not do, or could not do, yet we did pray, even in our worst times. He that prays in the depth will not sink out of his depth. He that cries out of the depths shall soon sing in the heights.

Verse 2. *Lord, hear my voice.* It is all we ask; but nothing less will content us. If the Lord will but hear us we will leave it to his superior wisdom to decide whether he will answer us or no. It is better for our prayer to be heard than answered. If the Lord were to make an absolute promise to answer all our requests it might be rather a curse than a blessing, for it would be casting the responsibility of our lives upon ourselves, and we should be placed in a very anxious position: but now the Lord hears our desires, and that is enough; we only wish him to grant them if his infinite wisdom sees that it would be for our good and for his glory. Note that the Psalmist spoke audibly in prayer: this is not at all needful, but it is exceedingly helpful; for the use of the voice assists the thoughts. Still, there is a voice in silent

supplication, a voice in our weeping, a voice in that sorrow which cannot find a tongue: that voice the Lord will hear if its cry is meant for his ear. *Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication.* The Psalmist's cry is a beggar's petition; he begs the great King and Lord to lend an ear to it. He has supplicated many times, but always with one voice, or for one purpose; and he begs to be noticed in the one matter which he has pressed with so much importunity. He would have the King hearken, consider, remember, and weigh his request. He is confused, and his prayer may therefore be broken, and difficult to understand; he begs therefore that his Lord will give the more earnest and compassionate heed to the voice of his many and painful pleadings. When we have already prayed over our troubles it is well to pray over our prayers. If we can find no more words, let us entreat the Lord to hear those petitions which we have already presented. If we have faithfully obeyed the precept by praying without ceasing, we may be confident that the Lord will faithfully fulfil the promise by helping us without fail. Though the Psalmist was under a painful sense of sin, and so was in the depth, his faith pleaded in the teeth of conscious unworthiness; for well he knew that the Lord's keeping his promise depends upon his own character and not upon that of his erring creatures.

Verse 3. *If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand.* If JAH, the all seeing, should in strict justice call every man to account for every want of conformity to righteousness, where would any one of us be? Truly, he does record all our transgressions; but as yet he does not act upon the record, but lays it aside till another day. If men were to be judged upon no system but that of works, who among us could answer for himself at the Lord's bar, and hope to stand clear and accepted? This verse shows that the Psalmist was Under a sense of sin, and felt it imperative upon him not only to cry as a suppliant but to confess as a sinner. Here he owns that he cannot stand before the great King in his own righteousness, and he is so struck with a sense of the holiness of God, and the rectitude of the law that he is convinced that no man of mortal race can answer for himself before a Judge so perfect, concerning a law so divine. Well does he cry, "O Lord, who shall stand?" None can do so: there is none that doeth good; no, not one. Iniquities are matters which are not according to equity: what a multitude we have of these! Jehovah, who sees all, and is also our *Adonai*, or Lord, will assuredly bring us into judgment concerning those thoughts, and words, and works which are not in exact conformity to his law. Were it not for the Lord Jesus, could we hope to stand? Dare we meet him in the dread day of account on the footing of law and equity? What a mercy it is that we need not do so, for the next verse sets forth another way of acceptance to which we flee.

Verse 4. *But there is forgiveness with thee.* Blessed but. Free, full, sovereign pardon is in the hand of the great King: it is his prerogative to forgive, and he delights to exercise it. Because his nature is mercy, and because he has provided a sacrifice for sin, therefore forgiveness is with him for all that come to him confessing their sins. The power of pardon is permanently resident with God: he has forgiveness ready to his hand at this instant. "That thou mayest be feared." This is the fruitful root of

piety. None fear the Lord like those who have experienced his forgiving love. Gratitude for pardon produces far more fear and reverence of God than all the dread which is inspired by punishment. If the Lord were to execute justice upon all, there would be none left to fear him; if all were under apprehension of his deserved wrath, despair would harden them against fearing him: it is grace which leads the way to a holy regard of God, and a fear of grieving him.

Verse 5. *I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait.* Expecting him to come to me in love, I quietly wait for his appearing; I wait *upon* him in service, and *for* him in faith. For God I wait and for him only: if he will manifest himself I shall have nothing more to wait for; but until he shall appear for my help I must wait on, hoping even in the depths. This waiting of mine is no mere formal act, my very soul is in it,—“my soul doth wait.” I wait and I wait—mark the repetition! “My soul waits”, and then again, “My soul waits”; to make sure work of the waiting. It is well to deal with the Lord intensely. Such repetitions are the reverse of vain repetitions. If the Lord Jehovah makes us wait, let us do so with our whole hearts; for blessed are all they that wait for him. He is worth waiting for. The waiting itself is beneficial to us: it tries faith, exercises patience, trains submission, and endears the blessing when it comes. The Lord's people have always been a waiting people: they waited for the First Advent, and now they wait for the Second. They waited for a sense of pardon, and now they wait for perfect sanctification. They waited in the depths, and they are not now wearied with waiting in a happier condition. They have cried and they do wait; probably their past prayer sustains their present patience. And in his word do I hope. This is the source, strength, and sweetness of waiting. Those who do not hope cannot wait; but if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. God's word is a true word, but at times it tarries; if ours is true faith it will wait the Lord's time. A word from the Lord is as bread to the soul of the believer; and, refreshed thereby, it holds out through the night of sorrow expecting the dawn of deliverance and delight. Waiting, we study the word, believe the word, hope in the word, and live on the word; and all because it is “*his* word, ”—the word of him who never speaks in vain. Jehovah's word is a firm ground for a waiting soul to rest upon.

Verse 6. *My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.* Men who guard a city, and women who wait by the sick, long for daylight. Worshippers tarrying for the morning sacrifice, the kindling of the incense and the lighting of the lamps, mingle fervent prayers with their holy vigils, and pine for the hour when the lamb shall smoke upon the altar. David, however, waited more than these, waited longer, waited more longingly, waited more expectantly. He was not afraid of the great Adonai before whom none can stand in their own righteousness, for he had put on the righteousness of faith, and therefore longed for gracious audience with the Holy One. God was no more dreaded by him than light is dreaded by those engaged in a lawful calling. He pined and yearned after his God. *I say, more than they that watch for the morning.* The figure was not strong enough, though one can hardly think of anything more vigorous: he felt that his own eagerness was

unique and unrivalled. Oh to be thus hungry and thirsty after God! Our version spoils the abruptness of the language; the original runs thus—"My soul for the Lord more than those watching for the morning—watching for the morning." This is a fine poetical repeat. We long for the favour of the Lord more than weary sentinels long for the morning light which will release them from their tedious watch. Indeed this is true. He that has once rejoiced in communion with God is sore tried by the hidings of his face, and grows faint with strong desire for the Lord's appearing,

"When wilt thou come unto me, Lord?

Until thou dost appear,

I count each moment for a day,

Each minute for a year."

Verse 7. *Let Israel hope in the LORD.* Or, "Hope thou, Israel, in Jehovah." Jehovah is Israel's God; therefore, let Israel hope in him. What one Israelite does he wishes all Israel to do. That man has a just right to exhort others who is himself setting the example. Israel of old waited upon Jehovah and wrestled all the night long, and at last he went his way succoured by the Hope of Israel: the like shall happen to all his seed. God has great things in store for his people, they ought to have large expectations. *For with the LORD there is mercy.* This is in his very nature, and by the light of nature it may be seen. But we have also the light of grace, and therefore we see still more of his mercy. With us there is sin; but hope is ours, because "with the Lord there is mercy." Our comfort lies not in that which is with us, but in that which is with our God. Let us look out of self and its poverty to Jehovah and his riches of mercy. *And with him is plenteous redemption.* He can and will redeem all his people out of their many and great troubles; nay, their redemption is already wrought out and laid up with him, so that he can at any time give his waiting ones the full benefit thereof. The attribute of mercy, and the fact of redemption, are two most sufficient reasons for hoping in Jehovah; and the fact that there is no mercy or deliverance elsewhere should effectually wean the soul from all idolatry. Are not these deep things of God a grand comfort for those who are crying out of the depths? Is it not better to be in the deeps with David, hoping in God's mercy, than up on the mountain tops, boasting in our own fancied righteousness?

Verse 8. *And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.* Our iniquities are our worst dangers: if saved from these, we are saved altogether; but there is no salvation from them except by redemption. What a blessing that this is here promised in terms which remove it out of the region of question: the Lord shall certainly redeem his believing people from all their sins. Well may the redemption be plenteous since it concerns all Israel and all iniquities! Truly, our Psalm has ascended to a great height in this verse: this is no cry out of the depths, but a chorale in the heights. Redemption is the top of covenant blessings. When it shall be experienced by all Israel, the latter day glory shall have come, and the Lord's people shall say, "Now, Lord, what wait we for?" Is not this a

clear prophecy of the coming of our Lord Jesus the first time? and may we not now regard it as the promise of his second and more glorious coming for the redemption of the body? For this our soul doth wait: yea, our heart and our flesh cry out for it with joyful expectation.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. The Psalm is the eleventh in the order of the gradual Psalms, and treats of the eleventh step in the spiritual ascent, viz., penitential prayer.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Whole Psalm. Of the Psalms which are called Penitential this is the chiefest. But, as it is the most excellent, so it has been perverted to the most disgraceful abuse in the Popedom: e.g., that it should be mumbled in the lowest voice by slow bellies, in the sepulchral vigils for their liberation of souls from purgatory: as if David were here treating of the dead, when he has not even spoken a word about them; but says that he himself, a living man, was calling upon God; and exhorts the Israelites, living men also, to do the same. But leaving the buffooneries of the Papists we will rather consider the true meaning and use of the Psalm. It contains the most ardent prayer of a man grievously distressed by a sense of the Divine anger against sin: by earnest turning to God and penitence, he is seeking the forgiveness of his iniquities.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Whole Psalm. The Holy Ghost layeth out here two opposite passions most plainly—*fear*, in respect of evil deserving sins, and *hope*, in regard of undeserved mercies.—*Alexander Roberts.* 1610.

Whole Psalm. The passionate earnestness of the Psalm is enhanced by the repetition eight times in it of the Divine Name.—*The Speaker's Commentary,* 1873.

Whole Psalm. This Psalm, perhaps more than any other, is marked by its mountains: depth; prayer; conviction; light; hope; waiting; watching; longing; confidence; assurance; universal happiness and joy...Just as the barometer marks the rising of the weather, so does this Psalm, sentence by sentence, record the progress of the soul. And you may test yourself by it, as by a rule or measure, and ask yourself at each line, "Have I reached to this? Have I reached to this?" and so take your spiritual gauge.—*James Vaughan, in "Steps to Heaven,"* 1878.

Whole Psalm. Whosoever he was that wrote this Psalm, he maketh mention and rehearsal of that prayer that he made to his God in the time of his great danger, and this he doth to the fifth verse; then finding in experience a comfortable answer, and how good a thing it was to pray to God, and to wait on him, he professes, that, as before, he had awaited on him, so still in time coming he would await on him, and this he doeth to the seventh verse. In the third and last part, he turneth him to Israel, to the church, and exhorteth them to await on God, as he had done, promising them mercy and redemption from all their iniquities if they would await on him.—*Robert Rollock,* 1555-1599.

Whole Psalm. Luther being once asked which were the best Psalms, replied, *Psalmi Paulini*; and when his companions at table pressed him to say which these were, he answered: Psalms 32, 51,

130, and 143.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Whole Psalm. Luther, when he was buffeted by the devil at Coburg, and in great affliction, said to those about him, *Venite, in contempnum Disboll, Psalmnum, De Profundis, quatuor vocibus cantemus;*"Come, let us sing that Psalm, 'Out of the depths, ' etc., in derision of the devil."—*John Trapp.*

Whole Psalm. The circumstances in which Dr. John Owen's Exposition of Psalm 130 originated are peculiarly interesting. Dr. Owen himself, in a statement made to Mr. Richard Davis, who ultimately became pastor of a church in Rowel, Northamptonshire, explains the occasion which led him to a very careful examination of the fourth verse in the Psalm. Mr. Davis, being under religious impressions, had sought a conference with Owen. In the course of the conversation, Dr. Owen put the question, "Young man, pray in what manner do you think to go to God?" "Through the Mediator, sir", answered Mr. Davis. "That is easily said", replied the doctor, "but I assure you it is another thing to go to God through the Mediator than many who make use of the expression are aware of. I myself preached Christ", he continued, "some years, when I had but very little, if any, experimental acquaintance with access to God through Christ; until the Lord was pleased to visit me with sore affliction, whereby I was brought to the mouth of the grave, and under which my soul was oppressed with horror and darkness; but God graciously relieved my spirit by a powerful application of Ps 130:4, *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared,* from whence I received special instruction, peace and comfort, in drawing near to God through the Mediator, and preached thereupon immediately after my recovery."—*William H. Goold, editor of Owen's Collected Works, 1851.*

Verse 1. *Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.* Is there not a depth of sin, and a depth of misery by reason Of sin, and a depth of sorrow by reason of misery? In all which, both David was, and I, God help me, am deeply plunged; and are not these depths enough out of which to cry? And yet, perhaps, none of these depths is that which David means; but there are depths of danger—a danger of body and a danger of soul, and out of these it seems that David cried; for the danger of his body was so deep that it had brought him to death's door, and the danger of his soul so deep that it had almost brought him to the gates of despair; and had he not just cause then to say, "*Out of the depths have cried to thee, O God*"? And yet there is a depth besides these that must help to lift us out of these—a depth of devotion, without which depth our crying out of other depths will never be heard. For devotion is a fire that puts a heat into out' crying, and carries it up into *coelum empyroeam*—the heaven of fire, where God himself is. And now join all these depths together—the depth of sin, of misery, of sorrow, the depth of danger, and the depth of devotion,—and then tell me if David had not, if I have not, as just cause as ever Jonah had to say, "Out of the depths have I cried to thee, O God." Indeed, to cry out of the depths hath many considerable circumstances to move God to hear: it

acknowledgeth his infinite power when no distance can hinder his assistance; it presents our own faith when no extremity can weaken our hope; it magnifies God's goodness when he, the Most High, regards the most low; it expresses our own earnestness, seeing crying out of depths must needs be a deep cry; and if each of these singly, and by itself, be motive sufficient to move God to hear, how strong must the motive needs be when they are all united? and united they are all in crying out of the depths; and therefore now that I cry to thee out of the depths, be moved, O God, in thy great mercy to "*hear my voice.*" It is cause enough for God not to hear some because they do not cry—cause enough not to hear some that cry because not out of the depths; but when crying and out of the depths are joined together, it was never known that God refused to hear; and therefore now that I cry to thee out of the depths, be pleased, O God, in thy great mercy to hear my voice.—*Sir Richard Baker, in "Meditations and Disquisitions upon the Three last Psalmes of David", 1639.*

Verse 1. *Out of the depths.* By the deep places (as all the ancients consent) is meant the deep places of afflictions, and the deep places of the heart troubled for sin. Afflictions are compared to deep waters. Ps 18:16: "He drew me out of many waters." "Save me, O God, for the waters are come in unto my soul." And surely God's children are often cast into very desperate cases, and plunged into deep miseries, to the end that they may send out of a contrite and feeling heart such prayers as may mount aloft and pierce the heavens. When we are in prosperity our prayers come from our lips; and therefore the Lord is forced to cast us down, that our prayers may come from our hearts, and that our senses may be wakened from the security in which they are lying. Albeit the throne of God be most high, yet he delighteth to hear the petition of hearts that are most low, that are most cast down by the sight of sin. There is no affliction, neither any place so low (yea, if as low as the belly of the whale wherein Jonah lay) which can separate us from the love of the Lord, or stay our prayers from coming before him. Those that are farthest cast down are not farthest from God, but are nearest unto him. God is near to a contrite heart, and it is the proper seat where his Spirit dwelleth: Isa 66:2. And thus God dealeth with us, as men do with such houses that they are minded to build sumptuously and on high; for then they dig deep grounds for the foundation. Thus God purposing to make a fair show of Daniel, and the three children in Babel; of Joseph in Egypt; of David in Israel; he first threw them into the deep waters of affliction. Daniel is cast into the den of lions; the three children are thrown into the fiery furnace; Joseph is imprisoned; David exiled. Yet all those he exalted and made glorious temples to himself. Mark hereby the dulness of our nature, that is such, that God is forced to use sharp remedies to awaken us. Jonah lay sleeping in the ship, when the tempest of God's wrath was pursuing him: God therefore threw him irate the belly of the whale, and the bottom of the deep, that from those deep places he might cry to him. When, therefore, we are troubled by heavy sickness, or poverty, or oppressed by the tyranny of men, let us make profit and use thereof, considering that God hath cast his best children into such dangers for their profit; and that it is better

to be in deep dangers praying, than on the high mountains of vanity playing.—*Archibald Symson, in "A Sacred Septenarie," 1638.*

Verse 1. Out of the depths. "Depths!" oh! into what "*depths*" men can sink! How far from happiness, glory, and goodness men can fall. There is the depth of *poverty*. A man can become utterly stripped of all earthly possessions and worldly friends! Sometimes we come upon a man, still living, but in such abject circumstances, that it strikes us as a marvel that a human being can sink lower than the beasts of the field. Then there is the depth of sorrow. Billow after billow breaks over the man, friend after friend departs, lover and friend are put into darkness. All the fountains of his nature are broken up. He is like a water logged ship, from the top waves plunging down as if into the bottom of the sea. So often in such depths, sometimes like Jonah in the whale's belly, the monster carrying him down, down, down, into darkness. There are depths after depths of mental darkness, when the soul becomes more and more sorrowful, down to that very depth which is just this side of despair. Earth hollow, heaven empty, the air heavy, every form a deformity, all sounds discord, the past a gloom, the present a puzzle, the future a horror. One more step down, and the man will stand in the chamber of despair, the floor of which is blistering hot, while the air is biting cold as the polar atmosphere. To what depths the spirit of a man may fall!

But the most horrible depth into which a man's soul can descend is *sin*. Sometimes we begin on gradual slopes, and slide so swiftly that we soon reach great depths; depths in which there are horrors that are neither in poverty, nor sorrow, nor mental depression. It is sin, it is an outrage against God and ourselves. We feel that there is no bottom. Each opening depth reveals a greater deep. This is really the bottomless pit, with everlasting accumulations of speed, and perpetual lacerations as we descend. Oh, depths below depths! Oh, falls from light to gloom, from gloom to darkness! Oh, the hell of sin! What can we do? We can simply *cry, CRY, CRY!* But, let us cry to God. Useless, injurious are other cries. They are mere expressions of impotency, or protests against imaginary fate. But the cry of the spirit to the Most High is a manful cry. Out of the depths of all poverty, all sorrow, all mental depression, all sin, *cry unto God!*—*From "The Study and the Pulpit", 1877.*

Verse 1. Out of the depths have I cried.

Up from the deeps, O God, I cry to thee!
Hear my soul's prayer, hear thou her litany,
O thou who sayest, "Come, wanderer, home to me."
Up from the deeps of sorrow, wherein lie
Dark secrets veil'd from earth's unpitying eye,
My prayers, like star crown'd angels, Godward fly.
From the calm bosom when in quiet hour
God's Holy Spirit reigns with largest power,

Then shall each thought in prayer's white blossom flower.

Not from life's shallows, where the waters sleep,

A dull, low marsh where stagnant vapours creep,

But ocean voiced, deep calling unto deep.

As he of old, King David, call'd to thee,

As cries the heart of poor humanity,

"Clamavi, Domine, exaudi me!"—*C. S. Fenner.*

Verse 1. But when he crieth from the deep, he riseth from the deep, and his very cry suffereth him not to be long at the bottom.—*Augustine.*

Verse 1. It has been well said that the verse puts before us six conditions of true prayer: it is lowly, "*out of the deep*"; fervent, "*have I called*"; direct to God himself, "*unto thee*"; reverent, "O LORD"; awed, "LORD", a solemn title, is again used; one's very own, "*hear my voice.*"—*Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 1. *Have I cried.* There are many kinds and degrees of prayer in the world; from the coldest form to the most intense agony. Every one prays; but very few "cry." But of those who do "cry to God", the majority would say,—"*I owe it to the depths.* I learnt it there. I often prayed before; but never—till I was carried down very deep—did I *cry.*" "Out of the depths have I *cried* unto thee, O Lord." It is well worth while to go down into any "depth" to be taught to "cry." It is not too much to say that we do not know what prayer may be till we have "*cried.*" And we seldom rise till we have gone very deep. "I die! I perish! I am lost! Help, Lord! Help me! Save me now! Do it now, Lord, or I am lost. O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, hearken and do; defer not, for thine own sake, O my God!" In mid day, if you are taken from the bright and sunny scenes of light, and go down into the bottom of a pit you may see the stars, which were invisible to you in the upper air. And how many could say that things they knew not in life's noon, they have found in life's midnight, and that they owe their glimpses of glory, and their best avenues of thought, and the importunacy of prayer, and the victories of faith, to seasons when they walked in very dark places. "*Out of the depths have I cried unto thee, O Lord.*"—*James Vaughan.*

Verse 1. *Have I cried unto thee, Jehovah.* God gave out that name Jehovah to his people to confirm their faith in the stability of his promises: Ex 3:1-22 He who is Being himself will assuredly give being and subsistence to his promises. Being to deal with God about the promises of grace, he makes his application to him under this name: "*I call upon thee, Jehovah.*"—*John Owen, in "A Practical Exposition upon Psalm 130."*

Verse 2. *Lord, hear my voice,* etc. Every prayer should have its reverent invocation, as every temple its porch. The two greatest prayers in the Old Testament—Solomon's prayer and Daniel's prayer—both have it very emphatically. And it is a very distinct part of our own perfect model: "Our Father, which art in heaven, hallowed be thy name." On our part it is deferential, and puts the mind

into its proper form; while it places the great God, whom it addresses, where he ought to be,—in the awe of his glory; in the magnitude of his power; in the infinitude of his wisdom and love. Never think little of that part of your prayer: never omit, never hurry over the opening address. Do not go into his presence without a pause, or some devout ascription. *Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications.* True, he is always listening and waiting for his children's "cry",—far more prepared to answer, than we are to ask. And the very fact that we are praying is a proof of his attention,—for who but he put it into our hearts to make that prayer? Nevertheless, it becomes us, and honours him, to establish, at the outset, the right relationship between a creature and his Creator; between a child and his Father: "Lord, hear my voice: let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication."—*James Vaughan.*

Verse 2. *Lord.* Hebrew, *Adonai.* As *Jehovah* marks his unchangeable faithfulness to his promises of delivering his people, so *Adonai* his *Lordship* over all hindrances in the way of his delivering them.—*Andrew Robert Fausset, in "A Commentary, Critical, Experimental and Practical", 1866.*

Verse 2. *Lord, hear my voice,* etc. The expressions are metaphorical, and borrowed from the carriage of a parent to a child, and upon the matter his suit is this,—Lord, notice me when I pray, as a parent will notice his distressed child's cry when he is like to ruin. *Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplications;* that goes a little further; that as a parent knowing a child to be in hazard, he will listen and hearken attentively if he can hear him cry, and notice and ponder that cry, and what he cries for; so he pleaded with God, that he would be waiting on and attentive, to see and hear if a cry should come from him, and that he would affectionately ponder and notice it when he hears it.—*George Hutcheson, 1678.*

Verse 3. *If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities,* etc. But doth not the Lord mark iniquity? Doth not he take notice of every sin acted by any of the children of men, especially by his own children? Why, then, doth the Psalmist put it upon an if? "If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquity." 'Tis true, the Lord marks all iniquity to know it, but he doth not mark any iniquity in his children to condemn them for it: so the meaning of the Psalm is, that if the Lord should mark sin with a strict and severe eye, as a judge, to charge it upon the person sinning, no man could bear it.

The word rendered *to mark* notes, first, to watch, or to observe with strictest diligence, and is therefore in the noun rendered a *watch tower*, upon which a man is placed to take observation of all things that are done, and of all persons that pass by, or approach and come near. A watchman placed upon a high tower is bound industriously and critically to observe all passengers and passages, all that his eye can reach. So saith the text,—If thou shouldest mark as a watchman, and eye with rigour everything that passeth from us, "*who shall stand?*" that is, make good his cause in the day of his judgment and trial before thee.

Secondly, the word signifieth to keep in mind, to lay up, to have, as it were, a store and stock, a

memorial or record, of such and such things by us. In that sense it is said (Ge 37:11), "Joseph's brethren envied him; but his father observed the saying": he marked what Joseph spake about his dreams, he laid it up, and did not let it pass away as a dream, or as a vision of the night. Thus, by "*If the Lord should mark iniquity*", we understand—if he should treasure up our sins in his memory, and keep them by him, "*who were able to stand when accounted with?*" The Lord, in a way of grace, seeth as if he saw, not, and winks at us oftentimes when we do amiss.—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verse 3. Let thine ears be attentive to the voice of my supplication, but let not thine eyes be intente to the stains of my sin; for *If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?* or who shall be able to abide it? Did not the angels fall when thou markest their follies? Can flesh, which is but dust, be clean before thee, when the stars, which are of a far purer substance, are not? Can anything be clean in thy sight which is not as clean as thy sight? and can any cleanness be equal to thine! Alas! O Lord, we are neither angels nor stars, and how then can we stand when those fell? how can we be clean when these be impure? If thou shouldest mark what is done amiss, there would be marking work enough for thee as long as the world lasts; for what action of man is free from stain of sin, or from defect of righteousness? Therefore, mark not anything in me, O God, that I have done, but mark that only in me which thou hast done thyself. Mark in me thine own image; and then thou mayest look upon me, and yet say still, as once thou saidst, *Et erant omnia valde bona "And all things were very good"*.—*Sir Richard Baker*.

Verse 3 (*whole verse*). We are introduced at once into all the solemnities of a criminal court. The judge is seated on the bench: the culprit is standing at the bar, charged with a capital offence, the witnesses are giving their evidence against him. The judge is listening attentively to everything which is said; and in order to assist his memory, he takes notes of the more important parts. If the Lord were to try us after this fashion, what would be the result? Suppose him seated on his throne of inflexible righteousness, taking notes, with a pen in his hand, of the transgressions which are proven against us. Nothing is omitted. Every sin is marked down with its peculiar aggravations. There is no possibility of escape from the deserved condemnation. The evidence against us is clear, and copious, and overwhelming. A thousandth part of it is sufficient to determine our doom. The Judge has no alternative but to pronounce the awful sentence. We must die a felon's death. *If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?*—*M. M'Michael*.

Verse 3. *If thou, LORD, shouldest mark.* If thou shouldest inquire and scrutinize, and then shouldest retain and impute: (for the Hebrew word imports both:) if thou shouldest inquire, thou wouldst find something of iniquity in the most righteous of mankind; and when thou hast found it, if thou shouldest retain it, and call him to an account for it, he could by no means free himself of the charge, or expiate the crime. Inquiring, thou wouldst easily find iniquity; but the sinner by the most diligent inquiry will not be able to discover a ransom, and therefore will be unable to stand, will have no place on which to

rest his foot, but will fall by the irresistible judgments of thy law, and the sentence of thy justice.—*Robert Leighton*.

Verse 3. *If thou, LORD.* He here fixes on another name of God, which is Jah: a name, though from the same root as the former, yet seldom used but to intimate and express the terrible majesty of God. "He rideth on the heavens, and is extolled by his name Jail": Ps 68:4. He is to deal now with God about the guilt of sin: and God is represented to the soul as great and terrible, that he may know what to expect and look for, if the matter must be tried out according to the demerit of sin.—*John Owen*.

Verse 3. *If thou, LORD...O Lord.* Mark here that in this third verse he two times nameth God by *the Lord* (as he doth also in the ninth verse), showing to us hereby his earnest desire to take hold of God with both his hands. He nameth him not only *Adonai*, but also *Jah* (which two signify his nature and power); all the qualities of God must be conjoined and concur together for us: although he be *Adonai*, yet if he be not also *Jah* we are undone.—*Archibald Symson*.

Verse 3. *LORD...Lord.* If God should show himself as JAH, no creature would be able to stand before him, who is *Adonai*, and can therefore carry out his judicial will or purpose.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

Verse 3. *Iniquities.* The literal meaning of the word "*iniquity*" is "a thing which is not equal", or "not fair." Whatever breaks a command of God is "not equal." It does not match with what man is, nor with what God is. It does not keep the high level of the law. It is altogether out of proportion to all that God has done. It destroys the harmony of creation. It does not rise even to the height of conscience. Still more, it mars and makes a flaw in the divine government. Therefore sin is an unequal thing, fitting nothing, disarranging everything. And it is *not fair*. It is not fair to that God upon whose empire it is a trespass. It is not fair to your fellow creatures, to whom it may be a very great injury. It is not fair to yourself, for your happiness lies in obedience. Therefore we call sin "*iniquity*." Or, as the Prayer Book Version expresses the same idea, "a thing amiss", missing its proper mark. "If thou shouldest be extreme to mark what is *done amiss*."—*James Vaughan*.

Verse 3. *O Lord, who shall stand?* As soon as God manifests signs of anger, even those who appear to be the most holy adopt this language. If God should determine to deal with them according to justice, and call them to his tribunal, not one would be able to stand; but would be compelled to fly for refuge to the mercy of God. See the confessions of Moses, Job, David, Nehemiah, Isaiah, Daniel, Paul, and others of the apostles. Hear Christ teaching his disciples to cry to the Father who is in heaven, "*Forgive us our trespasses!*" If before God the Patriarchs, Prophets, and Apostles, although possessing unusual holiness, nevertheless fell down, and as suppliants prayed for forgiveness, what shall be done with those who add sin to sin?—*D. H. Mollerus*.

Verses 3-4. These two verses contain the sum of all the Scriptures. In the third is the form of repentance, and in the fourth the mercies of the Lord. These are the two mountains, Gerizim and Ebal, mentioned in De 27:12-13. These are the pillars in Solomon's temple (1Ki 7:21), called Jachin

and Boaz. We must, with Paul, persuade ourselves that we are come from Mount Sinai to Mount Zion, where mercy is, although some sour grapes must be eaten by the way. Jeremy tasted in his vision first a bitter fig out of one basket, then a sweet fig out of the other. In the days of Moses the waters were first bitter, then sweetened by the sweet wood. And Elisha cast in salt into the pottage of the sons of the prophets, then it became wholesome.—*Archibald Symson.*

Verses 3-4. As I was thus in musing and in my studies, considering how to love the LORD, and to express my love to him, that saying came in upon me: *If thou, LORD, shouldest mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand? But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* These were good words to me, especially the latter part thereof; to wit, that there is forgiveness with thee that thou mayest be feared; that is, as then I understood it, that he might be loved and had in reverence; for it was thus made out to me, that the great God did set so high an esteem upon the love of his poor creatures, that rather than he would go without their love he would pardon their transgressions.—*John Bunyan.*

Verse 4. *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* One would think that punishment should procure fear, and forgiveness love; but *nemo majus diligit, quam qui maxime veretur offendere*—no man more truly loves God than he that is most fearful to offend him. "Thy mercy reacheth to the heavens, and thy faithfulness to the clouds"—that is, above all sublimities. God is glorious in all his works, but most glorious in his works of mercy; and this may be one reason why St. Paul calls the gospel of Christ a "glorious gospel": 1Ti 1:11. Solomon tells us, "It is the glory of a man to pass by an offence." Herein is God most glorious, in that he passeth by all the offences of his children. Lord, who can know thee and not love thee, know thee and not fear thee? We fear thee for thy justice, and love thee for thy mercy; yea, fear thee for thy mercy, and love thee for thy justice; for thou art infinitely good in both.—*Thomas Adams.*

Verse 4. *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* But is this not a mistaking in David to say, There is mercy with God, that he may be feared; all as one to say, There is severity with him, that he may be loved for if we cannot love one for being severe, how should we fear him for being merciful? I should it not, therefore, have been rather said, There is justice with thee, that thou mayest be feared? seeing it is justice that strikes a terror and keeps in awe; mercy breeds a boldness, and boldness cannot stand with fear, and therefore not fear with mercy. But is there not, I may say, an active fear, not to offend God, as well as a passive fear for having offended him? and with God's mercy may well stand the active fear, though not so well, perhaps, the passive fear which is incident properly to his justice. There is a common error in the world, to think we may be the bolder to sin because God is merciful; but, O my soul, take heed of this error, for God's mercy is to no such purpose; it is not to make us bold, but to make us fear: the greater his mercy is, the greater ought our fear to be, for there is mercy with him that he may be feared. Unless we fear, he may choose whether

he will be merciful or no; or rather, we maybe sure he will not be merciful, seeing he hath mercy for none but for them that fear him; and there is great reason for this, for to whom should mercy show itself but to them that need it? and if we think we need it we will certainly fear. Oh, therefore, most gracious God, make me to fear thee; for as thou wilt not be merciful to me unless I fear thee, so I cannot fear thee unless thou first be merciful unto me.—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 4. *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* Even Saul himself will lift up his voice and weep when he seeth a clear testimony of the love and undeserved kindness of David. Hast thou never beheld a condemned prisoner dissolved in tears upon the unexpected and unmerited receipt of a pardon, who all the time before was as hard as a flint? The hammer of the law may break the icy heart of man with terrors and horrors, and yet it may remain ice still, unchanged; but when the fire of love kindly thaws its ice, it is changed and dissolved into water—it is no longer ice, but of another nature.—*George Swinnock.*

Verse 4. *But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.* The Evangelical doctrine of the gratuitous forgiveness of sins does not of itself beget carelessness, as the Papists falsely allege; but rather a true and genuine fear of God; like as the Psalmist here shows that this is the final cause and effect of the doctrine.—*Solomon Gesner.*

Verse 4. *But there is forgiveness with thee, etc.* His judgments and his wrath may make us astonished and stupefied; but, if there be no more they will never make us to come to God. Then if this be not sufficient, what more is requisite? Even a sight of the Lord's mercy, for that is most forcible to allure, as the prophet saith here, and as the church of God says (So 1:3), "Because of the savour of thy good ointments, therefore the virgins love thee." This only is forcible to allure the sinner: for all the judgments of God, and curses of the law, will never allure him. What was the chief thing that moved the prodigal son to return home to his father? Was it chiefly the distress, the disgrace and poverty where with he was burdened, or the famine that almost caused him to starve? No, but the chief thing was this, he remembered that he had a loving father. That maketh him to resolve with an humble confession to go home Lu 15:1-32 Even so is it with the sinner; it is not terrors and threatenings that chiefly will move him to come to God, but the consideration of his manifold and great mercies.—*Robert Rollock.*

Verse 4. *But.* How significant is that word "*but*" As if you heard justice clamouring, "Let the sinner die", and the fiends in hell howling, "Cast him down into the fires", and conscience shrieking, : "Let him perish", and nature itself groaning beneath his weight, the earth weary with carrying him, and the sun tired with shining upon the traitor, the very air sick with finding breath for one who only spends it in disobedience to God. The man is about to be destroyed, to be swallowed up quick, when suddenly there comes this thrice blessed "*but*", which stops the reckless course of ruin, puts forth its strong arm bearing a golden shield between the sinner and destruction, and pronounces these words, "*But*

there is forgiveness with God, that he may be feared."—C. H. S.

Verse 4. *There is a propitiation with thee*, so some read it: Jesus Christ is the great propitiation, the ransom which God has found; he is ever with him, as advocate for us, and through him we hope to obtain forgiveness.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 4. *Forgiveness.* Hebrew, *selichah*, a word used only here and by Daniel once (Da 9:9), and by Nehemiah (Ne 9:17).—*Christopher Wordsworth*.

Verse 4. *That thou mayest be feared.* This forgiveness, this smile of God, binds the soul to God with a beautiful fear. Fear to lose one glance of love. Fear to lose one work of kindness. Fear to be carried away from the heaven of his presence by an insidious current of worldliness. Fear of slumber. Fear of error. Fear of not enough pleasing him. Our duty, then, is to drink deep of God's forgiving love. To be filled with it is to be filled with purity, fervency, and faith. Our sins have to hide their diminished heads, and slink away through crevices, when forgiveness—when Christ—enters the soul.—*George Bowen*, in *"Daily Meditations,"* 1873.

Verses 4-5, 7-8. David puts his soul out of all fear of God's taking this course *reckoning strictly* with poor penitent souls, by laying down this comfortable conclusion, as an indubitable truth: "*But there is forgiveness with thee, that thou mayest be feared.*" That is, there is forgiveness in thy nature, thou carriest a pardoning heart in thy bosom; yea, there is forgiveness in thy promise; thy merciful heart doth not only incline thee to thoughts of forgiving; but thy faithful promise binds thee to draw forth the same unto all that humbly and seasonably lay claim thereunto. Now, this foundation laid, see what superstructure this holy man raiseth (Ps 130:5): "*I wait for the LORD, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope.*" As if he had said, Lord, I take thee at thy word, and am resolved by thy grace to wait at the door of thy promise, never to stir thence till I have my promised dole (forgiveness of my sins) sent out unto me. And this is so sweet a morsel, that he is loath to eat it alone, and therefore he sends down the dish, even to the lower end of the table, that every godly person may taste with him of it (Ps 130:7-8): "*Let Israel hope in the LORD: for with the LORD there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*" As if he had said, That which is a ground of hope to me, notwithstanding the clamour of my sins, affords as solid and firm a bottom to any true Israelite or sincere soul in the world, did he but rightly understand himself, and the mind of God in his promise. Yea, I have as strong a faith for such as *for my own soul*, and I durst pawn the eternity of my happiness upon this principle,—that God should redeem every sincere Israelite from all his iniquities.—*William Gurnall*.

Verse 5. *I wait for the LORD*, etc. We pronounce this a most blessed posture of the believer. It runs counter to everything that is natural, and, therefore, it is all the more a supernatural grace of the gracious soul. In the first place it is *the posture of faith*. Here is the gracious soul hanging in faith upon God in Christ Jesus; upon the veracity of God to fulfil his promise, upon the power of God to

help him in difficulty, upon the wisdom of God to counsel him in perplexity, upon the love of God to shield him in danger, upon the omniscience of God to guide him with his eye, and upon the omnipresence of God to cheer him with his presence, at all times and in all places, his sun and shield. Oh, have faith in God.

It is also a *prayerful posture*. The soul waiting *for* God, is the soul waiting upon God. The Lord often shuts us up to this waiting for his interposition on our behalf, that he may keep us waiting and watching at the foot of his cross, in earnest, believing, importunate prayer. Oh, it is the waiting *for* the Lord that keeps the soul waiting upon the Lord!

It is also *the posture of a patient waiting* for the Lord. There is not a more God honouring grace of the Christian character than *patience*—a patient waiting on and for the Lord. It is that Christian grace, the fruit of the Spirit, which will enable you to bear with dignity, calmness, and submission the afflictive dealings of your Heavenly Father, the rebuke of the world, and the wounding of the saints.

It is the *posture of rest*. A soul waiting for the Lord is a soul resting in the Lord. Waiting and resting! Wearied with traversing in vain the wide circle of human expedients; coming to the end of all your own wisdom, strength, and resources; your uneasy, jaded spirit is brought into this resting posture of waiting on, and waiting for, the Lord; and thus folds its drooping wings upon the very bosom of God. Oh, how real and instant is the rest found in Jesus! Reposing in him, however profound the depth of the soul, however dark the clouds that drape it, or surging the waters that overwhelm it, all is sunshine and serenity within.—*Condensed from "Soul Depths and Soul Heights", by Octavius Winslow, 1874.*

Verse 5. *I wait for the LORD.* *Waiting* is a great part of life's discipline, and therefore God often exercises the grace of waiting. *Waiting* has four purposes. It practises the patience of faith. It gives time for preparation for the coming gift. It makes the blessing the sweeter when it arrives. And it shows the sovereignty of God,—to give just when and just as he pleases. It may be difficult to define exactly what the Psalmist had in his mind when he said, "I wait *for the Lord*, my soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope. My soul waiteth *for the Lord* more than they that watch for the morning." It may have been the Messiah, whose coming was a thing close at hand to the mind of the ancient Jews, just as the Second Advent is to us. It may have been some special interposition of Divine Providence. But more probably, looking at the place which it occupies, and at the whole tenor of the Psalm, and its line of thought, "The Lord" he waited for so intently was that full sense of safety, peace, and love which God's felt presence gives, and which is, indeed, nothing else but the coming of the Lord most sensibly and palpably into an anxious and longing heart. The picture of the waiting man is a striking one. It is as of one on the ridge of a journey, looking onward on his way, standing on tiptoe, and therefore needing something to lean on, and to support him. "*I wait for the Lord*",—spiritually, with my deepest thoughts—in the very centre of my being—"*I wait for the Lord, my soul doth wait.*" And I rest,

I stay myself on what thou, O Lord, hast said. "My soul doth wait, and in his word do I hope." In all your *waitings* remember two things: Let it not be so much the event which you wait for, as the Lord of the event; the Lord in the event. And take care that you have a promise underneath you,—*"In his word do I hope"*,—else "waiting" will be too much for you, and after all it may be in vain.—*James Vaughan*.

Verse 5. *I wait...I hope.* Waiting and hoping ever attend the same thing. No man will wait at all for that which he hath no hope of, and he who hath hope will wait always. He gives not over waiting, till he gives over hoping. The object of hope is some future good, but the act of hoping is at present good, and that is present pay to bear our charges in waiting. The word implies both a patient waiting and a hopeful trusting. So Christ expounds it (Mt 12:21), rendering that of the prophet (Isa 42:1-4), "The isles shall wait for his law", thus, "In his name shall the Gentiles trust."—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verses 5-6. In these two verses he doth four times make mention of his hope, and attendance upon God and his word, to let us see how sure a hold we should take on God, and with how many temptations our faith is assaulted, when we can see no reason thereof. Nothing will bear us up but hope. *Spero meliora.* What encourages husbandmen and mariners against the surges and waves of the sea, and evil weather, but hope of better times? What comforteth a sick man in time of sickness, but hope of health? or a poor man in his distress, but hope of riches? or a prisoner, but hope of liberty? or a banished man, but hope to come home? All these hopes may fail, as oftentimes wanting a warrant. Albeit a physician may encourage a sick man by his fair words, yet he cannot give him an assurance of his recovery, for his health depends on God: friends and courtiers may promise poor men relief, but all men are liars; only God is faithful who hath promised. Therefore let us fix our faith on God, and our hope in God; for he will stand by his promise. No man hath hoped in him in vain, neither was ever any disappointed of his hope.—*Archibald Symson*.

Verses 5, 7. Faith doth ultimately centre in the Deity. God himself in his glorious nature, is the ultimate object where unto our faith is resolved. The promise, simply considered, is not the object of trust, but God in the promise; and from the consideration of that we ascend to the Deity, and cast our anchor there. "Hope in the word" is the first act, but succeeded by hoping in the Lord: "*In his word do I hope*": that is not all; but, "*Let Israel hope in the Lord.*" That is the ultimate object of faith, wherein the essence of our happiness consists, and that is God. God himself is the true and full portion of the soul.—*Stephen Charnock*, 1628-1680.

Verse 6. *My soul waiteth for the LORD.* And now, my soul, what do I live for but only to wait upon God, and to wait for God? To wait upon him, to do him service, to wait for him, to be enabled to do him better service; to wait upon him, as being Lord of all; and to wait for him, as being the rewarder of all; to wait upon him whose service is better than any other command, and to wait for him whose expectation is better than any other possession. Let others, therefore, wait upon the world, wait for

the world; I, O God, will wait upon thee, for thee, seeing I find more true contentment in this waiting than all the world can give me in enjoying; for how can I doubt of receiving reward by my waiting for thee when my waiting for thee is itself the reward of my waiting upon thee? And therefore my soul waiteth; for if my soul did not wait, what were my waiting worth no more than I were worth myself, if I had not a soul; but my soul puts a life into my waiting, and makes it become a living sacrifice. Alas, my frail body is very unfit to make a waiter: it rather needs to be waited upon itself: it must have so much resting, so often leave to be excused from waiting, that if God should have no other waiters than bodies, he would be left oftentimes to wait upon himself; but my soul is *Divinoe particula auroe a portion of the Divine breath*, endued with all qualities fit for a waiter; and hath it not received its abilities, O God, from thee?] And therefore my soul waiteth, and is so intent in the service that it waits "*more than they that watch for the morning.*"—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 6. *Hammond* thus renders the verse:—"My soul hasteneth to the Lord from the guards in the morning, the guards in the morning."

Verse 6. *More than they that watch for the morning.* Look, as the weary sentinel that is wet and stiff with cold and the dews of the night, or as the porters that watched in the Temple, the Levites, were waiting for the daylight, so "more than they that watch for the morning" was he waiting for some glimpse of God's favour. Though he do not presently ease us of our smart or gratify our desires, yet we are to wait upon God. In time we shall have a good answer. God's delays are not denials. Day will come at length, though the weary sentinel or watchman counts it long first; so God will come at length; he will not be at our beck. We have deserved nothing, but must wait for him in the diligent use of means; as Benhadad's servants watched for the word "brother", or anything of kindness to drop from the king of Israel.—*Thomas Manton.*

Verse 6. *More than they that watch for the morning.* How many in the hallowed precincts of the Temple turned with anxious eye to the east, for the first red streak over Moab's mountains that gave intimation of approaching day; yet it was not for deliverance they waited, but for the accustomed hour when the morning sacrifice could be offered, and the soul be relieved of its gratitude in the hymn of thanksgiving, and of the burden of its sorrows and sins by prayer, and could draw that strength from renewed intercourse with heaven, that would enable it in this world to breathe the spirit and engage in the beneficent and holy deeds of a better.—*Robert Nisbet.*

Verse 6. *I say, more than they that watch for the morning,* for must there not be a proportion between the cause and effect? If my cause of watching be more than theirs, should not my watching be more than theirs? They that watch for the morning have good cause, no doubt, to watch for it, that it may bring them the light of day; but have not I more cause to watch, who wait for the light that lighteth every one that comes into the world? They that watch for the morning wait but for the rising of the sun to free them from darkness, that hinders their sight; but I wait for the rising of the Sun of

righteousness to dispel the horrors of darkness that affright my soul. They watch for the morning that they may have light to walk by; but I wait for the Dayspring from on High to give light to them that sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, and to guide our feet into the way of peace. But though there may be question made of the intentness of our watching, yet of the extensiveness there can be none, for they that watch for the morning watch at most but a piece of the night; but I have watched whole days and whole nights, and may I not then justly say, I wait *more* than they that watch for the morning?—*Sir Richard Baker.*

Verse 6. Holy men like Simeon, and devout priests like Zacharias, there were, amidst this seething people, who, brooding, longing, waiting, chanted to themselves day by day the words of the Psalmist, "*My soul waiteth for the Lord more than they that watch for the morning.*" As lovers that watch for the appointed coming, and start at the quivering of a leaf, the flight of a bird, or the humming of a bee, and grow weary of the tense strain, so did the Jews watch for their Deliverer. It is one of the most piteous sights of history, especially when we reflect that he came,—and they knew him not.—*Henry Ward Beecher, in his "Life of Jesus the Christ."*

Verse 6. *Watch.* We do injustice to that good and happy word, "*watch*", when we take it as watching against; against a danger; against a coming evil. It will bear that interpretation; but it is a far higher, and better, and more filial thing to watch for a coming good than to watch against an approaching evil. So, "*watching for*", we send up our arrows of prayer, and then look trustingly to see where they are coming down again. So, "*watching for*", we listen, in silence, for the familiar voice we love. So, "*watching for*", we expect the Bridegroom! Take care, that as one always standing on the eve,—not of danger, but of happiness,—your "*watch*" be the "*watch*" of love, and confidence, and cheerful hope.—*James Vaughan.*

Verse 6. In the year 1830, on the night preceding the first of August, the day the slaves in our West Indian Colonies were to come into possession of the freedom promised them, many of them, we are told, never went to bed at all. Thousands, and tens of thousands of them, assembled in their places of worship, engaging in devotional duties, and singing praises to God, waiting for the first streak of the light of the morning of that day on which they were to be made free. Some of their number were sent to the hills, from which they might obtain the first view of the coming day, and, by a signal, intimate to their brethren down in the valley the dawn of the day that was to make them men, and no longer, as they had hitherto been, mere goods and chattels,—men with souls that God had created to live forever. How eagerly must these men have watched for the morning!—*T. W. Aveling, in "The Biblical Museum," 1872.*

Verse 7. *Let Israel hope in the LORD.* This title is applied to all the Lord's people; it sets forth *their dignity*—they are PRINCES; it refers to *their experience*—they wrestle with God in prayer, and they prevail. Despondency does not become a prince, much less a Christian. Our God is "THE GOD OF

HOPE"; and we should hope in him. Israel should hope in his mercy, in his patience, in his provision, in his plenteous redemption. They should hope for light in darkness; for strength in weakness; for direction in perplexity; for deliverance in danger; for victory in conflict; and for triumph in death. They should hope in God confidently, because he hath promised; prayerfully, for he loves to hear from us; obediently, for his precepts are to be observed by us; and constantly, for he is always the same.—*James Smith (1802-1862), in "The Believer's Daily Remembrancer."*

Verse 7. *Let Israel hope in the LORD.* Whereas, in all preceding verses of the Psalm, the thoughts, the sorrows, the prayer, the penitence, the awe, the waiting, the watching, were all personal and confined to himself; here a great change has taken place, and it is no longer "I", but "Israel"; all Israel. "Let *Israel* hope in the Lord: for with the Lord there is mercy, and with him is plenteous redemption. And he shall redeem *Israel* from all his iniquities." This is as it always ought to be...It is the genius of our religion to go forth to multitudes.—*James Vaughan.*

Verse 7. *For with the LORD there is mercy.* Mercy has been shown to us, but it dwells in God. It is one of his perfections. The exercise of it is his delight. There is mercy with the Lord in all its *fulness*; he never was more merciful than now, neither will he ever be. There is mercy with the Lord in all its *tenderness*, he is full of compassion, his bowels are troubled for us, his tender mercies are over us. There is mercy with him in all its *variety*, it suits every case. Here is mercy that receives sinners, mercy that restores backsliders, mercy that keeps believers. Here is the mercy that pardons sin, that introduces to the enjoyment of all gospel privileges, and that blesses the praying soul far beyond its expectations. With the Lord there is mercy, and he loves to display it, he is ready to impart it, he has determined to exalt and glorify it. There is mercy with the Lord; this should encourage the miserable to approach him; this informs the fearful that they need bring nothing to induce him to bless them; this calls upon backsliders to return to him; and this is calculated to cheer the tried Christian, under all his troubles and distresses. Remember, mercy is like God, it is infinite and eternal. Mercy is always on the throne. Mercy may be obtained by any sinner.—*James Smith.*

Verse 7. *With him is plenteous redemption.* This plenteous redemption leaves behind it no more relics of sin than Moses left hoofs of beasts behind him in Egypt. It redeems not only from the fault, but from the punishment; not only *a tanto*, but *a toto not only from such, but also from all sin and penalty*; not only from the sense but from the fear of pain; and in the fault, not only from the guilt, but from the stain; not only from being censured, but from being questioned. Or is it meant by a plenteous redemption that not only he leads captivity captive, but gives gifts unto men? For what good is it to a prisoner to have his pardon, if he be kept in prison still for not paying his fees? but if the prince, together with the pardon, sends also a largess that may maintain him when he is set at liberty, this, indeed, is a plenteous redemption; and such is the redemption that God's mercy procures unto us. It not only delivers us from a dungeon, but puts us in possession of a palace; it not only frees us

from eating bread in the sweat of our brows, but it restores us to Paradise, where all fruits are growing of their own accord; it not only clears us from being captives, but endears us to be children; and not only children, but heirs; and not only heirs, but co-heirs with Christ; and who can deny this to be a plenteous redemption Or is it said a plenteous redemption in regard of the price that was paid to redeem us? for we are redeemed with a price, not of gold or precious stones, but with the precious blood of the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world. For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son to be a ransom for us, and this I am sure is a plenteous redemption.—Sir Richard Baker.

Verse 7. *Plenteous redemption*, or more literally, "redemption plenteously." He calls it plenteous, as Luther says, because such is the straitness of our heart, the slenderness of our hopes, the weakness of our faith, that it far exceeds all our capacity, all our petitions and all our desires.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verses 7-8. This Psalm containeth an evident prophecy of the Messiah; in setting forth his plentiful redemption, and that he should redeem Israel, that is, the Church, from all their sins. Which words in their full sense were used by an angel to Joseph, in telling him that the child's name should be JESUS, "because he should save his people from their sins": Mt 1:21.—*Sir John Hayward* (1560-1627), in "*David's Tears*," 1623.

Verse 8. *He will redeem.* "HE" emphatic, He alone, for none other can.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verse 8. *From his iniquities.* Not only from the punishment (as Ewald and Hupfeld). The redemption includes the forgiveness of sins, the breaking of the power and dominion of sin, and the setting free from all the consequences of sin.—*J. J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verse 8. *Iniquities.* Iniquities of *eye*—has conscience no voice there? Is no iniquity ever practised by your eye? Let conscience speak. Iniquity of *ear*—is there no iniquity that enters into your heart through the ear? You cannot listen to a conversation in the street without iniquity entering into your heart through what Bunyan calls "Ear gate." Iniquity of *lip*—do you always keep your tongue as with a bridle? Do your lips never drop anything unbecoming the gospel? Is there no carnal conversation, no angry word at home, no expression that you would not like the saints of God to hear? What! your lips always kept so strictly that there is never a single expression dropped from them which you would be ashamed to utter before an assembly of God's people? Iniquity of *thought*—if your eyes, ears, and lips are clean, is there no iniquity of thought? What! in that workshop within, no iniquitous suggestions, no evil workings? Oh, how ignorant must we be of ourselves, if we feel that we have no iniquity of thought! Iniquity of *imagination*—does not fancy sometimes bring before you scenes of sensuality in which your carnal nature is vile enough to revel? Iniquity of *memory*—does not memory sometimes bring back sins you formerly committed, and your evil nature is perhaps base enough to desire they had been greater Iniquity of *feeling*—no enmity against God's people ever working? no pride of heart? no covetousness? no hypocrisy? no self righteousness? no sensuality? no base

thought that you cannot disclose even to your bosom friend? But here is the blessed promise—a promise only suited to Israel: for all but Israel lose sight of their iniquities, and justify themselves in self righteousness. None but Israel feel and confess their iniquities, and therefore to Israel is the promise of redemption limited: "He shall redeem *Israel* from all his iniquities." What! *all*? Yes, Not *one* left? No, not a trace, not a shade, not the shadow of a shade; all buried, all gone, all swallowed up, all blotted out, all freely pardoned, all cast behind God's back.—*Joseph C. Philpot*, 1802-1869.

Verse 8. What a graceful and appropriate conclusion of this comprehensive and instructive Psalm! Like the sun, it dawns veiled in cloud, it sets bathed in splendour; it opens with soul depth, it closes with soul height. Redemption from all iniquity! It baffles the most descriptive language, and distances the highest measurement. The most vivid imagination faints in conceiving it, the most glowing image fails in portraying it, and faith droops her wing in the bold attempt to scale its summit. "*He shall redeem Israel from all his iniquities.*" The verse is a word painting of man restored, and of Paradise regained.—*Octavius Winslow*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. The assertion of an experienced believer.

1. I have cried—that is, I have earnestly, constantly, truthfully prayed.
2. I have cried only unto thee. Nothing could draw me to other confidences, or make me despair of thee.
3. I have cried in distress. At my worst, temporally or spiritually, I have cried out of the depths.
4. I therefore infer—that I am thy child, no hypocrite, no apostate; and that thou hast heard and wilt hear me evermore.

Verse 1.

1. What we are to understand by "the depths." Great misery and distress.
2. How men get into "the depths." By sin and unbelief.
3. What gracious souls do when in "the depths." Cry unto the Lord.
4. How the Lord lifts praying souls out of "the depths"; "He shall redeem," etc., Ps 130:8.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 1.

1. In the pit.
2. The morning star seen: "Thee, O Lord."
3. Prayer flutters up "out of the depths."—*W. B. H.*

Verses 1-2.

1. The depths from which prayer may rise.
 - a) Of affliction.
 - b) Of conviction.

- c) Of desertion.
- 2. The height to which it may ascend.
 - a) To the hearing of God.
 - b) To a patient hearing. "Hear my voice."
 - c) To an attentive hearing.

Or,

- 1. We should pray at all times.
- 2. We should pray that our prayers may be heard.
- 3. We should pray until we know we are heard.
- 4. We should pray in faith that when heard we have the thing we have asked. "That which thou hast prayed to me against the King of Assyria I have heard." God had heard. That was enough. It was the death of Sennacherib and the overthrow of his host.—*G. R.*

Verses 1-2. Consider,

- 1. The Psalmist's condition in the light of a warning. Evidently, through sin, he came into the depths; see Ps 130:3-4. Learn,
 - a) The need of watchfulness on the part of all.
 - b) That backsliding will, sooner or later, bring great trouble of soul.
- 2. His sometime continuance in that condition, in the light of a Divine judgment: "I have cried." Certainly his first cry had not brought deliverance.
 - a) The realization of pardon is a Divine work, dependent upon God's pleasure. Ps 85:8.
 - b) But he will not always nor often speak pardon at the first asking; for He will make His people reverence his holiness, feel the bitterness of sinning, learn caution, etc.
- 3. His conduct while in that condition in the light of a direction. He,
 - a) Seeks deliverance only of God.
 - b) Is intensely earnest in his application: "I cried."
 - c) Is inopportune in his pleading: "Hear my voice, "etc.—*J. F.*

Verse 2. Attention from God to us—how to gain it.

- 1. Let us plead the name which commands attention.
- 2. Let us ourselves pay attention to God's word.
- 3. Let us give earnest attention to what we ask, and how we ask.
- 4. Let us attentively watch for a reply.

Verse 2. *Lord, hear my voice.*

- 1. Though it be faint by reason of distance—hear it.
- 2. Though it be broken because of my distress—hear it.
- 3. Though it be unworthy on account of my iniquities—hear it.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 3.

1. The supposition: "If thou, Lord, shouldest mark iniquities"

a) It is scriptural.

b) It is reasonable. If God is not indifferent towards men, he must observe their sins. If he is holy, he must manifest indignation against sin. If he is the Creator of conscience, he must certainly uphold its verdict against sin. If he is not wholly on the side of sin, how can he fail to avenge the mischiefs and miseries sin has caused?

2. The question it suggests: "Who shall stand?" A question,

a) Not difficult to answer.

b) Of solemn import to all.

c) Which ought to be seriously pondered without delay.

3. The possibility it hints at. "If thou, Lord." The "if" hints at the possibility that God may not mark sin. The possibility,

a) Is reasonable, providing it can be without damage to God's righteousness; for the Creator and Preserver of men cannot delight in condemning and punishing.

b) Is a God honouring reality, through the blood of Christ, Ro 3:21-26.

c) Becomes a glorious certainty in the experience of penitent and believing souls.—*J. F.*

Verses 3-4.

1. The Confession. He could not stand.

2. The Confidence. "There is forgiveness."

3. The Consequence. "That thou mayest be feared."

Verses 3-4.

1. The fearful supposition.

2. The solemn interrogation.

3. The Divine consolation.—*W. J.*

Verse 4. Forgiveness with God.

1. The proofs of it.

a) Divine declarations.

b) Invitations and promises, Isa 1:18.

c) The bestowment of pardon so effectually as to give assurance and joy. 2Sa 12:13 Ps 32:5 Lu 7:47-8. 1Jo 2:12.

2. The reason of it.

a) In God's nature there is the desire to forgive; the gift of Christ is sufficient evidence for it.

b) But, the text speaks not so much of a desire as it asserts the existence of a forgiveness being "with" God, therefore ready to be dispensed. The blood of Christ is the reason (Col 1:14); by it the

disposition to forgive righteously manifests itself in the forgiving act: Ro 3:25-26.

c) Hence, forgiveness for all who believe is sure: Ro 3:25 1Jo 2:1-2.

3. The result of its realization: "That thou mayest be feared": with a reverential fear, and spiritual worship.

a) The possibility of forgiveness begets in an anxious soul true penitence, as opposed to terror and despair.

b) The hope of receiving it begets earnest seeking and prayerfulness.

c) A believing reception of it gives peace and rest, and, exciting grateful love, leads to spiritual worship and filial service.—*J. F.*

Verse 4. *There is forgiveness.*

1. It is needed.

2. God alone can give it.

3. It may be had.

4. We may know that we have it.

Verse 4.

1. A most cheering announcement: "There is forgiveness with thee."

a) A fact certain.

b) A fact in the present tense.

c) A fact which arises out of God himself.

d) A fact stated in general terms.

e) A fact to be meditated upon with delight.

2. A most admirable design: "That thou mayest be feared."

a) Very contrary to the abuse made of it by rebels, triflers, and procrastinators.

b) Very different from the pretended fears of legalists.

c) No pardon, no fear of God—devils, reprobates.

d) No pardon, none survive to fear him.

e) But the means of pardon encourage faith, repentance, prayer; and the receipt of pardon creates love, suggests obedience, inflames zeal.

Verse 4. See "Spurgeon's Sermons", No. 351: "Plenteous Redemption."

Verse 4. Tender Light.

1. The Angel by the Throne: "Forgiveness with Thee."

2. The shadow that enhances his sweet majesty: "If", "But."

3. The homage resultant from his ministry; universal from highest to least.—*W.B. H.*

Verses 5-6. Three postures: Waiting, Hoping, Watching.

Verses 5-6.

1. The seeking sinner.
2. The Christian mourner.
3. The loving intercessor.
4. The spiritual labourer.
5. The dying believer.—*W. J.*

Verses 5-6.

1. We are to wait on God.
 - a) By faith: "In his word do I hope."
 - b) By prayer. Prayer can wait when it has a promise to rest upon.
2. We are to wait for God: "I wait for the Lord." "My soul waiteth for the Lord more", etc.
 - a) Because he has his own time for giving.
 - b) Because what he gives is worth waiting for.—*G. R.*

Verse 6. More than they.

1. For the darker sorrow his absence causes.
2. For the richer splendour his coming must bring.
3. For the greater might of our indwelling love.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 6.

1. A long, dark night: The Lord absent.
2. An eager, hopeful watcher: Waiting the Lord's return.
3. A bright, blessed morning: The time of the Lord's appearing.—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 7. Redeeming grace the sole hope of the holiest.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 7.

1. A divine exhortation: "Let Israel hope in the LORD."
2. A spiritual reason: "For with the LORD there is mercy", etc.
3. A gracious promise: "He shall redeem Israel from, all his iniquities."—*J. C. Philpot.*

Verses 7-8. It is our wisdom to have personal dealings with God.

1. The first exercise of faith must be upon the Lord himself. This is the natural order, the necessary order, easiest, wisest, and most profitable order. Begin where all begins.
2. Exercises of faith about other things must still be in connection with the Lord. Mercy—"with the Lord." Plenteous redemption "with him."
3. Exercises of faith, whatever their object, must all settle on him. "He shall redeem", etc.

Verse 8.

1. The Redemption: "From all iniquities."
2. The Redeemer: "The Lord." See Tit 2:14.
3. The Redeemed: "Israel."—*W. H. J. P.*

WORKS UPON THE HUNDRED AND THIRTIETH PSALM

A Treatise concerning the fruitful Sayings of David, The King and Prophet, in The *Seven Penitential Psalms*. . . . By the Right Reverend Father in God Ions Fisher, DD. and Bp. of *Rochester*. Printed in the Year 1714. This is a reprint in 12mo. of the Black Letter 4to. described on page 114 of Vol. 2. of "The Treasury of David." The work is more curious than useful.

"*An Exposition upon some select Psalms of David.*" . . . Written by that faithful servant of God M. Robert Rollok. . . . And translated out of Latine into English by Charles Lumisden . . . Edinborgh . . . 1600, 8vo. contains a short exposition on Psalm 130.

In "Select Works of Robert Rollock," edited for the Wodrow Society by William M. Gunn, Esq., Vol. 1 pp. 451-481, there are two expository Sermons on Psalm 130.

A Exposition On The Hundred And Thirtieth Psalm. Gathered out of some of the Ancient Fathers and later writers by Alexander Roberts. Bachelor of Divinity and Preacher of the Word of God at Kings Lind in Norfolk. London...1610. 4to.

David's Tears. By Sir John Hayward, Knight, Doctor of Lawe. London. Printed by John Bell, 1623. 4to. On Psalms 6, 32, and 130.

The Saints' Comforts. Being the substance of diverse Sermons. Preached on Psalm 130, the beginning *Ps 130:1-5* ...By a Reverend Divine now with God. *Richard Sibbes*. London...1638. 18mo. Reprinted in Vol. 6 of Sibbes' Works, Nichol's edition, 1863.

A Godly and Fruitful Exposition on the 130 Psalme, the sixth of the Penitentials, in A Sacred Septenarie or, A Godly And Fruitful Exposition On The Seven Psalms Of Repentance...By Mr. Archibald Symson, late Pastor of the church at *Dalkeeth* in *Scotland*. London... 1638. 4to.

In "Meditations And Disquisitions upon The Three last Psalmes of David. *By Sir Richard Baker, Knight*" 4to. 1639, there is an Exposition of Psalm 130. It will be found in Higham's reprint 1882 of Sir R. Baker's Expositions of the Psalms, pp. 257-271.

A Practical Exposition upon Psalm 130; wherein the Nature of the Forgiveness of Sin is declared; the Truth and Reality of it asserted; and the case of a Soul Distressed with the Guilt of Sin, and Relieved by a Discovery of Forgiveness with God, is at large Discoursed By John Owen, D.D., 4to.], 1668, 1669, 1680. There are modern reprints of this Exposition; and it is in Vol. 6 of Owen's Works, edited by W. H. Goold, 1881.

In "*The Whole Works of Robert Leighton*, D.D., Archbishop of Glasgow, 4 vols., 8yD., 1725", there are "Meditations on Psalm 130." Vol. 2. pp. 510-540.

Forty Five Sermons upon The 130 Psalme. Preached at IRWIN. By that Eminent Servant of Jesus Christ, Mr. George Hutcheson—1678, Minister of the Gospel. Edinburgh, 1691. 8vo.

In "Sermons preached in Christ Church," Brighton, from October, 1877, to July, 1878, by the Rev.

James Vaughan, M.A. London, 1878, there is a Course of Lenten Sermons on the 130th Psalm, entitled "Steps to Heaven."

Psalm 131

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. *A Song of Degrees of David.* It is both by David and of David: he is the author and the subject of it, and many incidents of his life may be employed to illustrate it. Comparing all the Psalms to gems, we should liken this to a pearl: how beautifully it will adorn the neck of patience. It is one of the shortest Psalms to read, but one of the longest to learn. It speaks of a young child, but it contains the experience of a man in Christ. Lowliness and humility are here seen in connection with a sanctified heart, a will subdued to the mind of God, and a hope looking to the Lord alone happy is the man who can without falsehood use these words as his own; for he wears about him the likeness of his Lord, who said, "I am meek and lowly in heart." The Psalm is in advance of all the Songs of Degrees which have preceded it; for loveliness is one of the highest attainments in the divine life. There are also steps in this Song of Degrees: it is a short ladder, if we count the words; but yet it rises to a great height, reaching from deep humility to fixed confidence. Le Blanc thinks that this is a song of the Israelites who returned from Babylon with, humble hearts, weaned from their idols. At any rate, after any spiritual captivity let it be the expression of our hearts.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *LORD, my heart is not haughty.* The Psalm deals with the Lord, and is a solitary colloquy with him, not a discourse before men. We have a sufficient audience when we speak with the Lord, and we may say to him many things which were not proper for the ears of men. The holy man makes his appeal to Jehovah, who alone knows the heart: a man should be slow to do this upon any matter, for the Lord is not to be trifled with; and when anyone ventures on such an appeal he should be sure of his case. He begins with his heart, for that is the centre of our nature, and if pride be there it defiles everything; just as mire in the spring causes mud in all the streams. It is a grand thing for a man to know his own heart so as to be able to speak before the Lord about it. It is beyond all things deceitful and desperately wicked, who can know it? Who can know it unless taught by the Spirit of God? It is a still greater thing if, upon searching himself thoroughly, a man can solemnly protest unto the Omniscient One that his heart is not haughty: that is to say, neither proud in his opinion of himself,

contemptuous to others, nor self righteous before the Lord; neither boastful of the past, proud of the present, nor ambitious for the future. *Nor mine eyes lofty.* What the heart desires the eyes look for. Where the desires run the glances usually follow. This holy man felt that he did not seek after elevated places where he might gratify his self esteem, neither did he look down upon others as being his inferiors. A proud look the Lord hates; and in this all men are agreed with him; yea, even the proud themselves hate haughtiness in the gestures of others. Lofty eyes are so generally hateful that haughty men have been known to avoid the manners natural to the proud in order to escape the ill will of their fellows. The pride which apes humility always takes care to cast its eyes downward, since every man's consciousness tells him that contemptuous glances are the sure ensigns of a boastful spirit. In Psalm 121 David lifted up his eyes to the hills; but here he declares that they were not lifted up in any other sense. When the heart is right, and the eyes are right, the whole man is on the road to a healthy and happy condition. Let us take care that we do not use the language of this Psalm unless, indeed, it be true as to ourselves; for there is no worse pride than that which claims humility when it does not possess it.

Neither do I exercise myself in great matters. As a private man he did not usurp the power of the king or devise plots against him: he minded his own business, and left others to mind theirs. As a thoughtful man he did not pry into things unrevealed; he was not speculative, self conceited or opinionated. As a secular person he did not thrust himself into the priesthood as Saul had done before him, and as Uzziah did after him. It is well so to exercise ourselves unto godliness that we know our true sphere, and diligently keep to it. Many through wishing to be great have failed to be good: they were not content to adorn the lowly stations which the Lord appointed them, and so they have rushed at grandeur and power, and found destruction where they looked for honour. *Or in things too high for me.* High things may suit others who are of greater stature, and yet they may be quite unfit for us. A man does well to know his own size. Ascertaining his own capacity, he will be foolish if he aims at that which is beyond his reach, straining himself, and thus injuring himself. Such is the vanity of many men that if a work be within their range they despise it, and think it beneath them: the only service which they are willing to undertake is that to which they have never been called, and for which they are by no means qualified. What a haughty heart must he have who will not serve God at all unless he may be trusted with five talents at the least! His looks are indeed lofty who disdains to be a light among his poor friends and neighbours here below, but demands to be created a star of the first magnitude to shine among the upper ranks, and to be admired by gazing crowds. It is just on God's part that those who wish to be everything should end in being nothing. It is a righteous retribution from God when every matter turns out to be too great for the man who would only handle great matters, and everything proves to be too high for the man who exercised himself in things too high for him. Lord, make us lowly, keep us lowly, fix us for ever in lowliness. Help us to be

in such a case that the confession of this verse may come from our lips as a truthful utterance which we dare make before the Judge of all the earth.

Verse 3. *Let Israel hope in the LORD from henceforth and for ever.* See how lovingly a man who is weaned from self thinks of others! David thinks of his people, and loses himself in his care for Israel. How he prizes the grace of hope! He has given up the things which are seen, and therefore he values the treasures which are not seen except by the eyes of hope. There is room for the largest hope when self is gone, ground for eternal hope when transient things no longer hold the mastery of our spirits. This verse is the lesson of experience: a man of God who had been taught to renounce the world and live upon the Lord alone, here exhorts all his friends and companions to do the same. He found it a blessed thing to live by hope, and therefore he would have all his kinsmen do the same. Let all the nation hope, let all their hope be in Jehovah, let them at once begin hoping "from henceforth", and let them continue hoping "for ever." Weaning takes the child out of a temporary condition into a state in which he will continue for the rest of his life: to rise above the world is to enter upon a heavenly existence which can never end. When we cease to hanker for the world we begin hoping in the Lord. O Lord, as a parent weans a child, so do thou wean me, and then shall I fix all my hope on thee alone.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. This little song is inscribed *dwdl* because it is like an echo of the answer (2Sa 6:21 sq.) with which David repelled the mocking observation of Michal when he danced before the Ark in a linen ephod, and therefore not in kingly attire, but in the common raiment of the priests: *I esteem myself still less than I now show it, and I appear base in mine own eyes.* In general David is the model of the state of mind which the poet expresses here. He did not push himself forward, but suffered himself to be drawn forth out of seclusion. He did not take possession of the throne violently; but after Samuel has anointed him, he willingly and patiently traverses the long, thorny, circuitous way of deep abasement, until he receives from God's hand that which God's promise had assured to him. The persecution by Saul lasted about ten years, and his kingship in Hebron, at first only incipient, seven years and a half. He left it entirely to God to remove Saul and Ishbosheth. He let Shimei curse. He left Jerusalem before Absalom. Submission to God's guidance, resignation to his dispensations, contentment with that which was allotted to him, are the distinguishing traits of his noble character.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

Whole Psalm. Psalm 130 is a Song of Forgiveness; Psalm 131 is a Song of Humility: the former celebrates the blessedness of the man whose transgressions are pardoned, the latter celebrates the blessedness of the man who is of a meek and lowly spirit. Forgiveness *should* humble us. Forgiveness implies sin; and should not the sinner clothe himself with humility? and when not for any

desert of his, but simply by the free grace of Heaven, his sins have been pardoned, should he not bind the garments of humility still more closely about him? The man who is of a nature at once sincere and sweet, will be even more humbled by the sense of an undeserved forgiveness than by the memory of the sins from which it has cleansed him. Very fitly, therefore, does the Psalm of humility follow the Psalm which sings of the Divine loving kindness and tender mercy.—*Samuel Cox.*

Whole Psalm. This Psalm, which records the meek and humble spirit of those who are the true worshippers of the Temple, doubtless belongs, as its title announces, to the time of David. It is exactly in the spirit of that humble thanksgiving made by him, after the divine revelation by Nathan of the future blessings of his posterity (1Ch 22:9-11); and forms a most appropriate introduction to the following Psalm, the theme of which is evidently the dedication of the Temple.—*John Jebb.*

Verse 1. *LORD, my heart is not haughty.* For the truth of his plea he appeals to God; and from all those who are affected like David, God will accept of the appeal.

Firstly. He could in truth of heart appeal to God: "*LORD, my heart is not haughty.*" He appeals to him who knoweth all things. "Lord, from whom nothing is hid, thou knowest that this is the very disposition of my soul. If I have anything, it is from thee; it is thy providence which brought me from following the ewes great with young to feed and govern thy people." Such a holy man would not rashly invoke God, and take his holy name in vain; but knowing his integrity, durst call God to witness. The saints are wont to do so upon like occasions; as Peter (Joh 21:17); "Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee." They know they have a God that will not be deceived with any shows, and that he knoweth and approveth them for such as he findeth them to be.

Secondly. From those that are affected like David, God will accept the appeal; for in the account of God we are that which we sincerely desire and endeavour to be, and that which is the general course and tenor of our lives, though there be some intermixture of failing. David saith, "*LORD, my heart is not haughty*"; and yet he was not altogether free from pride. His profession respecteth his sincere purpose and constant endeavour, and the predominant disposition of his soul. God himself confirmeth such appeals by his own testimony: 1Ki 15:5, "My servant David did that which was right in the eyes of the Lord, neither departed from all that which he had commanded him, save only in the matter of Uriah." ...By all this it is shown that the plea of sincerity is allowed by God, though there be some mixture of failings and weaknesses.

Thirdly. Is not this boasting like the Pharisee? Lu 18:9, "God, I thank thee, I am not like other men." If David were thus humble, why doth he speak of it? Is he not guilty of pride while he seemeth to speak against pride?

This is spoken either as,

1. A necessary vindication; or
2. A necessary instruction.

(a) As a necessary vindication against the censures and calumnies of his adversaries. Saul's courtiers accused him as aspiring after the kingdom; yea, his own brother taxed him with pride when he came first abroad: 1Sa 17:28, "I know thy pride, and the naughtiness of thine heart; for thou art come down that thou mightest see the battle." If his brother would calumniate his actions, much more might others. Now it is for the honour of God that his children, as they would not commit a fault, so they should not be under the suspicion of it; therefore he appeals to God.

(b) A necessary instruction; for whatsoever David said or wrote here, he said or wrote by the inspiration of the Holy Ghost, that Israel may learn how to hope in God. Herein David is a notable pattern of duty both to superiors and inferiors.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 1. *My heart is not haughty.* Albeit pride is a common vice, which attends vain man in every degree of excellency and supposed worth in him, yet the grace of God is able to keep humble a wise, rich, and potent man, yea, to keep humble a king and conqueror; for it is no less a person than David who saith here, "*Lord, my heart is not haughty.*"—*David Dickson*.

Verse 1. Nor mine eyes lofty. Pride has its seat in the heart; but its principal expression is in the eye. The eye is the mirror of the soul; and from it mental and moral characteristics may be ascertained, with no small degree of precision. What a world of meaning is sometimes concentrated in a single glance! But of all the passions, pride is most clearly revealed in the eyes. There can scarcely be a mistake here. We are all familiar with a class of phrases, which run in pairs. We speak of sin and misery; holiness and happiness; peace and prosperity, war and desolation. Among these may be numbered, the proud heart and the haughty look. "There is a generation, Oh, how lofty are their eyes! and their eyelids are lifted up." "Him that hath an high look and a proud heart I will not suffer." ...A proud look is one of the seven things which are an abomination unto the Lord. It is said of him, "Thou wilt save the afflicted people; but wilt bring down high looks." And hence David makes the acknowledgment: Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that pride has no existence in my heart. Thou knowest that no pride flashes forth from mine eyes.—*N. M'Michael*.

Verse 1. *Nor mine eyes lofty.* He had neither a scornful nor an aspiring look. "*My eyes are not lofty*", either to look with envy upon those that are above me, or to look with disdain upon those that are below me. Where there is a proud heart, there is commonly a proud look (Pr 6:17); but the humble publican will not so much as lift up his eyes.—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 1. *Neither have I occupied myself,* etc. One cannot admire enough the prayer of Anselm, a profound divine of our own country, in the eleventh century. "I do not seek, O Lord, to penetrate thy depths. I by no means think my intellect equal to them: but I long to understand in some degree thy truth, which my heart believes and loves. For I do not seek to understand that I may believe; but I believe, that I may understand."—*N. M'Michael*.

Verse 1. *Great matters...things too high for me.* The great and wonderful things meant are God's

secret purposes, and sovereign means for their accomplishment, in which man is not called to cooperate, but to acquiesce. As David practised this forbearance by the patient expectation of the kingdom, both before and after the death of Saul, so he here describes it as a characteristic of the chosen people.—*Joseph Addison Alexander*.

Verses 1-2. Our Father is our superior; it is fit therefore that we be resigned to his will. "Honour thy father and thy mother" (Ex 20:12); how much more our heavenly Father! (Heb 12:9). See David's spirit in the case: "*LORD, my heart is not haughty*", etc.: Ps 131:1-2. As if he had said, "I will keep within my own sphere; I will not stretch beyond my line, in prescribing to God; but submit to his will, 'as a weaned child', taken from its dear breasts": intimating that he would wean himself from whatever God removed from him. How patiently did Isaac permit himself to be bound and sacrificed by Abraham! Ge 22:9. And yet he was of age and strength sufficient to have struggled for his life, being twenty-five years old; but that holy young man abhorred the thought of striving with his father. And shall not we resign ourselves to our God and Father in Christ Jesus?—*John Singleton* (—1706), in "*The Morning Exercises*."

Verses 1-2. It has always been my aim, and it is my prayer, to have no plan as regards myself; well assured as I am that the place where the Saviour sees meet to place me must ever be the best place for me.—*Robert Murray M'Cheyne*, 1813-1843.

Verse 2. *Surely I have behaved and quieted myself*, etc. Oh, how sapless and insipid doth the world grow to the soul that is making meet for heaven! "I am crucified to the world, and this world to me." Ga 6:14. In valet doth this harlot think to allure me by her attractions of profit and pleasure. "Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother: my soul is even as a weaned child." There is no more relish in these gaudy things to my palate, than in the white of an egg; everything grows a burden to me, were it not my duty to follow my calling, and be thankful for my enjoyments. I think I have my wife, husband, and dearest relations, as if I had none; I weep for outward losses, as if I wept not; rejoice in comforts below as if I rejoiced not (1Co 7:29-30); my thoughts are taken up with other objects. The men of the world slight me, many seem to be weary of me, and I am as weary of them. It is none of these earthly things that my heart is set upon; my soul is set on things above, my treasure is in heaven, and I would have my heart there also: I have sent before me all my goods into another country, and am shortly for removing; and when I look about me, I see a bare, empty house, and am ready to say with Monica, What do I here? my father, husband, mother (Jerusalem above), my brethren, sisters, best friends are above. I think, I grudge the world any portion of my heart, and think not these temporal visible things worth a cast of my eye compared with things invisible and eternal: 2Co 4:18.—*Oliver Heywood*, 1629-1702.

Verse 2. (*first clause*). *If I have not restrained*, or quieted, and compelled to silence, *my soul*. It is a Hebrew phrase of asseveration and of swearing: as if he would say, I have thoroughly imposed

silence on my soul, that it should be tranquil, and should bear patiently the divinely imposed cross. Just as in the following Psalm we hear a like form of asseveration: "If I will come into the tabernacle of my house", meaning "I will not come", etc.—*Solomon Gesner*.

Verse 2. *I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned.* Weaned from what? Self sufficiency, self will, self seeking. From creatures and the things of the world—not; indeed, as to their use, but as to any dependence upon them for his happiness and portion...Yet this experience is no easy attainment. The very form of expression—"I have behaved and *quieted* myself", reminds us of some risings which were with difficulty subdued. There is a difference here between Christ and Christians. In him the exercise of grace encountered no adverse principles; but in them it meets with constant opposition. The flesh lusteth against the spirit, and when we would do good evil is present with us; hence the warfare within. So it is with "the child that is weaned." The task to the mother is trying and troublesome. The infant cries, and seems to sob out his heart. He thinks it very hard in her, and knows not what she means by her seeming cruelty, and the mother's fondness renders all her firmness necessary to keep her at the process; and sometimes she also weeps at the importunity of his dear looks, and big tears, and stretched out hands. But it must be done, and therefore, though she pities, she perseveres; and after a while he is soothed and satisfied, forgets the breast, and no longer feels even a hankering after his former pleasure. But how is the weaning of the child accomplished? By embittering the member to his lips; by the removal of the object in the absence and concealment of the mother; by the substitution of other food; by the influence of time. So it is with us. We love the world, and it deceives us. We depend on creatures, and they fail us, and pierce us through with many sorrows. We enter forbidden paths, and follow after our lovers; and our way is hedged up with thorns; and we then say, "Return unto thy rest, O my soul; and now, Lord, what wait I for? My hope is in thee." The enjoyment of a greater good subdues the relish of a less. What are the indulgences of sin, or the dissipations of the world to one who is abundantly satisfied with the goodness of God's house, and is made to drink of the river of his pleasures?—*William Jay* (1769-1853), in "*Evening Exercises for the Closet*."

Verse 2. *As a child that is weaned of his mother.* Though the weaned child has not what it would have, or what it naturally most desireth, the milk of the breast—yet it is contented with what the mother giveth—it rests upon her love and provision. So are we to be content with what providence alloweth us: Heb 13:5, "Let your conversation be without covetousness, and be content with such things as ye have"; and Php 4:11, "I have learned, in whatsoever state I am, therewith to be content." Whatever pleaseth our heavenly Father should please us. The child that is put from the breast to a harder diet is yet contented at last. The child doth not prescribe what it will eat, drink, or put on. Children are in no care for enlarging possessions, heaping up riches, aspiring after dignities and honours; but meekly take what is provided for them. The child, when it has lost the food which nature

provideth for it, is not solicitous, but wholly refers itself to the mother, hangeth upon the mother. So for everything whatsoever should we depend upon God, refer ourselves to God, and expect all things from him: Ps 62:5, "My soul, wait thou only upon God; for my expectation is from him." With such a simplicity of submission should we rest and depend upon God. Let us take heed of being over wise and provident for ourselves, but let us trust our Father which is in heaven, and refer ourselves to his wise and holy government.—*Thomas Manton*.

Verse 2. *As a child that is weaned of his mother.* Weaned from the world, the riches, honours, pleasures, and profits of it; as well as from nature, from self, from his own righteousness, and all dependence upon it; and as a child that is weaned from the breast wholly depends on its nurse for sustenance, so did he wholly depend upon God, his providence, grace, and strength; and as to the kingdom, he had no more covetous desires after it than a weaned child has to the breast, and was very willing to wait the due time for the enjoyment of it. The Targum has it, "as one weaned on the breasts of its mother, I am strengthened in the law." This is to be understood not of a child whilst weaning, when it is usually peevish, fretful, and froward, but when it is weaned, and is quiet and easy in its mother's arms without the breast.—*John Gill*.

Verse 2. *My soul is even as a weaned child.* In its *nature*, weanedness of soul differs essentially from that disgust with the world, to which its ill usage and meanness sometimes give rise. It is one thing to be angry with the world, or ashamed of it, and another to be weaned from it. Alter the world, ennoble it, and many a proud mind that now despises, would court it. It is different also from that weariness of spirit which generally follows a free indulgence in earthly enjoyments. There is such a thing as wearing out the affections. Solomon appears to have done this at one period of his life. "I have not a wish left", said a well known sensualist of our own country, who had drunk as deeply as he could drink of the world's cup. "Were all the earth contains spread out before me, I do not know a thing I would take the trouble of putting out my hand to reach." This weanedness of soul presupposes a power left in the soul of loving and desiring. It is not the destruction of its appetite, but the controlling and changing of it. A weaned child still hungers, but it hungers no more after the food that once delighted it; it is quiet without it; it can feed on other things: so a soul weaned from the world, still pants as much as ever for food and happiness, but it no longer seeks them in worldly things, or desires to do so. There is nothing in the world that it feels necessary for its happiness. This thing in it it loves, and that thing it values; but it knows that it can do without them, and it is ready to do without them whenever God pleases. Let us inquire now into the sources of this frame of mind—how we get it. One thing is certain—it is not our work. We do not bring ourselves to it. No infant weans itself. The truth is, it is God that must wean us from the world. We shall never leave it of our own accord. It is God's own right hand that must draw us from it. And how? The figure in the text will partly tell us. 1. *By embittering the world to us.* 2. *At other times the Lord removes from us the thing we love.* 3. *But*

he weans us most from the earth *by giving us better food.*—*Condensed from a Sermon by Charles Bradley, entitled "Weanedness of Soul," 1836.*

Verse 2. *As a weaned child.* That is, meek, modest, humble, submissive, simple, etc. See Mt 18:1-4.—*Henry Ainsworth.*—1622.

Verse 2. Here is David's picture of himself...Observe, the "*child*"—which is drawn for us to copy—is "*weaned*": the process is complete; it has been truly disciplined; the lesson is learned; and now it rests in its "weaning." The whole image expresses a repose which follows a struggle. *Surely I have behaved and quieted myself, as a child that is weaned of his mother;* or, more literally, "*on his mother*"; now content to lie still on the very place of its privation, "*—as a child that is weaned on his mother.*" That obedience would be a tame and valueless thing, which was not the consequence of quiet control. A mere apathetic state is the very opposite of obedience that may be truly so called. But this is the point of the similitude,—there has been a distress, and a battle, and a self victory; and now the stilled will is hushed into submission and contentment; ready to forego what is most liked, and to take just whatever is given it—"*a weaned child.*"

I do not believe that it was ever the intention of God that any man should so merge and lose his will in the Divine, that he should have no distinct will of his own. There have been many who have tried to attain this annihilation of will; and they have made it the great aim and end of life. But the character of the dispensation does not allow it. I do not believe it to be a possible thing; and if it were possible, I do not believe that it would be after the mind of God. It is not man's present relation to his Maker. None of the saints in the Bible did more than submit a strong existing will. The Lord Jesus Christ himself did no more. "What shall I say? Father, save me from this hour; but for this cause came I unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name. Not my will, but thine be done." Evidently two things—"My will", "Thy will." It was an instantly and perfectly subjugated will,—nevertheless, a will. And this is what is required of us; and what the nature of our manhood, and the provisions of our religion have to assume. A will, decidedly a will: the more decided the will, the stronger the character, and the greater the man. But a will that is always being given up, separated, conformed, constantly, increasingly conformed. The unity of the two wills is heaven.—*Condensed from a Sermon by James Vaughan.*

Verse 3. *Let Israel hope in the LORD.* After the example, therefore, of the King of Israel, who thus demeaned himself in his afflictions, lowly, contented, and resigned, casting all his care upon the Father who cared for him, and patiently waiting his time for deliverance and salvation; after this their example and pattern, let his faithful people hope and trust, not in themselves, their wisdom, or their power, but in Jehovah alone, who will not fail to exalt them, as he hath already exalted their Redeemer, if they do but follow his steps.—*George Horne.*

Verse 3. *Let Israel hope in the LORD.* Though David could himself wait patiently and quietly for the crown designed him, yet perhaps Israel, the people whose darling he was, would be ready to attempt

something in favour of him before the time; he therefore endeavours to quiet them too, and bids them, "*hope in the LORD*" that *they* should see a happy change of the face of affairs in due time. Thus "it is good to hope, and quietly to wait for the salvation of the Lord."—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 3. *Let Israel hope in the LORD.* etc. Remember that he is Jehovah.

1. Wise to plan.
2. Good to purpose.
3. Strong to execute, and that he will withhold no good thing from them that walk uprightly.
4. Trust "*from henceforth.*" If you have not begun before, begin now.
5. And do not be weary; trust "*for ever.*" Your case can never be out of the reach of God's power and mercy.—*Adam Clarke*.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. *Humility.*

1. A profession which ought to befit every child of God.
2. A profession which nevertheless many children of God cannot truthfully make. Point out the prevalence of pride and ambition even in the church.
3. A profession which can only be justified through the possession of the spirit of Christ (Mt 11:29-30 Mt 18:1-5).—*C.A. D.*

Verse 2. *Surely I have behaved and quieted myself.* The original bears somewhat of the form of an oath, and therefore our translators exhibited great judgment in introducing the word "surely"; it is not a literal version, but it correctly gives the meaning. The Psalmist had been upon his best behaviour, and had smoothed down the roughnesses of his self will; by holy effort he had mastered his own spirit, so that towards God he was not rebellious, even as towards man he was not haughty. It is no easy thing to quiet yourself: sooner may a man calm the sea, or rule the wind, or tame a tiger, than quiet himself. We are clamorous, uneasy, petulant; and nothing but grace can make us quiet under afflictions, irritations, and disappointments. *As a child that is weaned of afflictions mother.* He had become as subdued and content as a child whose weaning is fully accomplished. The Easterners put off the time of weaning far later than we do, and we may conclude that the process grows none the easier by being postponed. At last there must be an end to the suckling period, and then a battle begins: the child is denied his comfort, and therefore frets and worries, flies into pets, or sinks into sulks. It is facing its first great sorrow and it is in sore distress. Yet time brings not only alleviations, but the ending of the conflict; the boy ere long is quite content to find his nourishment at the table with his brothers, and he feels no lingering wish to return to those dear fountains from which he once sustained his life. He is no longer angry with his mother, but buries his head in that very bosom after which he pined so grievously: he is weaned *on* his mother rather than *from* her.

"My soul doth like a weanling rest,
I cease to weep;
So mother's lap, though dried her breast,
Can lull to sleep."

To the weaned child his mother is his comfort though she has denied him comfort. It is a blessed mark of growth out of spiritual infancy when we can forego the joys which once appeared to be essential, and can find our solace in him who denies them to us: then we behave manfully, and every childish complaint is hushed. If the Lord removes our dearest delight we bow to his will without a murmuring thought; in fact, we find a delight in giving up our delight. This is no spontaneous fruit of nature, but a well tended product of divine grace: it grows out of humility and lowliness, and it is the stem upon which peace blooms as a fair flower. *My soul is even as a weaned child*; or it may be read, "as a weaned child on me my soul", as if his soul leaned upon him in mute submission, neither boasting nor complaining. It is not every child of God who arrives at this weanedness speedily. Some are sucklings when they ought to be fathers; others are hard to wean, and cry, and fight, and rage against their heavenly parent's discipline. When we think ourselves safely through the weaning, we sadly discover that the old appetites are rather wounded than slain, and we begin crying again for the breasts which we had given up. It is easy to begin shouting before we are out of the wood, and no doubt hundreds have sung this Psalm long before they have understood it. Blessed are those afflictions which subdue our affections, which wean us from self sufficiency, which educate us into Christian manliness, which teach us to love God not merely when he comforts us, but even when he tries us. Well might the sacred poet repeat his figure of the weaned child; it is worthy of admiration and imitation; it is doubly desirable and difficult of attainment. Such weanedness from self springs from the gentle humility declared in the former verse, and partly accounts for its existence. If pride is gone, submission will be sure to follow; and, on the other hand, if pride is to be driven out, self must also be vanquished.

Verse 2. The soul is as a weaned child:

1. In conversion.
2. In sanctification, which is a continual weaning from the world and sin.
3. In bereavement.
4. In affliction of every kind.
5. In death.—*G. R.*

Verse 2.

1. The soul has to be weaned as well as the body.
 - a) It is first nourished by others.
 - b) It is afterward thrown upon its own resources.

2. The soul is weaned from one thing by giving its attention to another.

- a) From worldly things by heavenly.
- b) From self righteousness by the righteousness of another.
- c) From sin to holiness.
- d) From the world to Christ.
- e) From self to God.—*G.R.*

Verse 2.

- 1. A desirable condition: "As a weaned child."
- 2. A difficult task—to subdue and quiet self.
- 3. A delightful result: "Surely... my soul is as a weaned child."—*W. H. J. P.*

Verse 2.

- 1. Soul fretfulness: weak, dishonourable, rebellious.
- 2. Soul government; throne often abdicated; God gives each the sceptre of self rule; necessary to successful life.
- 3. Soul quiet: its sweetness; its power. Come, Holy Spirit, breathe it upon us!—*W. B. H.*

Verse 2. See "Spurgeon's Sermons", No. 1210: "The Weaned Child."

Verses 2-3. The weaned child hoping in the Lord:

- 1. The first weaning of the soul, the grand event of a man's history.
- 2. The joy in the Lord that springs up in every weaned soul: "My soul is even as a weaned child; let Israel hope in the Lord from henceforth and for ever."
- 3. The daily weaning of the soul through life.
- 4. The earnest desires and the fruitful work of every weaned soul.—*A. Moody Stuart.*

Verse 3.

- 1. The encouragement to hope in God.
 - a) As a covenant God, "the God of Israel."
 - b) As a covenant keeping God: "From henceforth", etc.
- 2. The effect of this hope.
 - a) The humility and dependence in the first verse.
 - b) The contentment and weaning in the second verse. Would Israel be thus humble and obedient as a little child? "Let Israel hope," etc.—*G. R.*

Verse 3. *The Voice of Hope heard in the Calm.*

- 1. Calmed souls appreciate God. Quiet favours contemplation. God's majesty, perfection, and praise so discovered.
- 2. Calmed souls confide in God; seen to be so worthy of trust.
- 3. Calmed souls look fearlessly into eternity; "from henceforth and for ever."—*W. B. H.*

Verse 3. *Hope on, hope ever.*

1. For the past warrants such confidence.
2. For the present demands such confidence.
3. For the future will justify confidence.—*W. H. J. P.*

WORK UPON THE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-FIRST PSALM

"Several *five* Sermons Upon Psalm 131," in the Works of Manton, D.D. Vol. 5., folio, pp. 961-1007; they may also be found in 21. pp. 406-462 of the new edition of Manton's Works, published by Nisbet and Co., 1874.

Psalm 132

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

Other Works

TITLE. *A Song of Degrees.* A joyful song indeed: let all pilgrims to the New Jerusalem sing it often. The degrees or ascents are very visible; the theme ascends step by step from, "afflictions" to a "crown", from "remember David", to, "I will make the horn of David to bud." The latter half is like the over arching sky bending above "the fields of the wood" which are found in the resolves and prayers of the former portion.

DIVISION. Our translators have rightly divided this Psalm. It contains a statement of David's anxious care to build a house for the Lord (Ps 132:1-7); a prayer at the removal of the Ark (Ps 132:8-10); and a pleading of the divine covenant and its promises (Ps 132:11-18).

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *LORD, remember David, and all his afflictions.* With David the covenant was made, and therefore his name is pleaded on behalf of his descendants, and the people who would be blessed by his dynasty. Jehovah, who changes not, will never forget one of his servants, or fail to keep his covenant; yet for this thing he is to be entreated. That which we are assured the Lord will do must, nevertheless, be made a matter of prayer. The request is that the Lord would *remember*, and this is a word full of meaning. We know that the Lord remembered Noah, and assuaged the flood; he remembered Abraham, and sent Lot out of Sodom; he remembered Rachel, and Hannah, and gave them children; he remembered his mercy to the house of Israel, and delivered his people. That is a choice song wherein we sing, "He *remembered us* in our low estate: for his mercy endureth for ever";

and this is a notable prayer, "Lord remember me." The plea is urged with God that he would bless the family of David for the sake of their progenitor; how much stronger is our master argument in prayer that God would deal well with us for Jesus' sake! David had no personal merit; the plea is based upon the covenant graciously made With him: but Jesus has deserts which are his own, and of boundless merits these we may urge without hesitation. When the Lord was angry with the reigning prince, the people cried, "Lord remember David"; and when they needed any special blessing, again they sang, "Lord, remember David." This was good pleading, but it was not so good as ours, which runs on this wise, "Lord, remember *Jesus*, and all his afflictions."

The *afflictions* of David here meant were those which came upon him as a godly man his endeavours to maintain the worship of Jehovah, and to provide for its decent and suitable celebration. There was always an ungodly party in the nation, and these persons were never slow to slander, hinder, and molest the servant of the Lord. Whatever were David's faults, he kept true to the one, only, living, and true God; and for this he was a speckled bird among monarchs. Since he zealously delighted in the worship of Jehovah, his God, he was despised and ridiculed by those who could not understand his enthusiasm. God will never forget what his people suffer for his sake. No doubt innumerable blessings descend upon families and nations through the godly lives and patient sufferings of the saints. We cannot be saved by the merits of others, but beyond all question we are benefited by their virtues. Paul saith, "God is not unrighteous to forget your work and labour of love, which ye have showed toward his name." Under the New Testament dispensation, as well as under the Old, there is a full reward for the righteous. That reward frequently comes upon their descendants rather than upon themselves: they sow, and their successors reap. We may at this day pray—Lord, remember the martyrs and confessors of our race, who suffered for thy name's sake, and bless our people and nation with gospel grace for our fathers' sakes.

Verse 2. *How he sware unto the Lord, and vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob.* Moved by intense devotion, David expressed his resolve in the form of a solemn vow, which was sealed with an oath. The fewer of such vows the better under a dispensation whose great Representative has said, "swear not at all." Perhaps even in this case it had been wiser to have left the pious resolve in the hands of God in the form of a prayer; for the vow was not actually fulfilled as intended, since the Lord forbade David to build him a temple. We had better not swear to do anything before we know the Lord's mind about it, and then we shall not need to swear. The instance of David's vows shows that vows are allowable, but it does not prove that they are desirable. Probably David went too far in his words, and it is well that the Lord did not hold him to the letter of his bond, but accepted the will for the deed, and the meaning of his promise instead of the literal sense of it. David imitated Jacob, that great maker of vows at Bethel, and upon him rested the blessing pronounced on Jacob by Isaac, "God Almighty bless thee" (Ge 28:3), which was remembered by the patriarch on his death bed,

when he spoke of "the mighty God of Jacob." God is mighty to hear us, and to help us in performing our vow. We should be full of awe at the idea of making any promise to the Mighty God: to dare to trifle with him would be grievous indeed. It is observable that affliction led both David and Jacob into covenant dealings with the Lord: many vows are made in anguish of soul. We may also remark that, if the votive obligations of David are to be remembered of the Lord, much more are the suretyship engagements of the Lord Jesus before the mind of the great Lord, to whom our soul turns in the hour of our distress. Note, upon this verse, that Jehovah was the God of Jacob, the same God evermore; that he had this for his attribute, that he is mighty—mighty to succour his Jacobs who put their trust in him, though their afflictions be many. He is, moreover, specially *the Mighty One* of his people; he is the God of Jacob in a sense in which he is not the God of unbelievers. So here we have three points concerning our God:—*name*, Jehovah; *attribute*, mighty; *special relationship*, "mighty God of Jacob." He it is who is asked to remember David and his trials, and there is a plea for that blessing in each one of the three points.

Verse 3. *Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house, nor go up into my bed.* Our translators give the meaning, though not the literal form, of David's vow, which ran thus, "If I go"—"If I go up", etc. This was an elliptical form of imprecation, implying more than it expressed, and having therefore about it a mystery which made it all the more solemn. David would not take his ease in his house, nor his rest in his bed, till he had determined upon a place for the worship of Jehovah. The ark had been neglected, the Tabernacle had fallen into disrespect; he would find the ark, and build for it a suitable house; he felt that he could not take pleasure in his own palace till this was done. David meant well, but he spake more than he could carry out. His language was hyperbolic, and the Lord knew what he meant: zeal does not always measure its terms, for it is not thoughtful of the criticisms of men, but is carried away with love to the Lord, who reads the hearts of his people. David would not think himself housed till he had built a house for the Lord, nor would he reckon himself rested till he had said, "Arise, O Lord, into thy rest." Alas, we have many around us who will never carry their care for the Lord's worship too far! No fear of their being indiscreet? They are housed and bedded, and as for the Lord, his people may meet in a barn, or never meet at all, it will be all the same to them. Observe that Jacob in his vow spoke of the stone being God's house, and David's vow also deals with a house for God.

Verse 4. *I will not give sleep to mine eyes, or slumber to mine eyelids.* He could not enjoy sleep till he had done his best to provide a place for the ark. It is a strong expression, and it is not to be coolly discussed by us. Remember that the man was all on fire, and he was writing poetry also, and therefore his language is not that which we should employ in cold blood. Everybody can see what he means, and how intensely he means it. Oh, that many more were seized with sleeplessness because the house of the Lord lies waste? They can slumber fast enough, and not even disturb themselves

with a dream, though the cause of God should be brought to the lowest ebb by their covetousness. What is to become of those who have no care about divine things, and never give a thought to the claims of their God?

Verse 5. *Until I find out a place for the Lord, an habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.* He resolved to find a place where Jehovah would allow his worship to be celebrated, a house where God would fix the symbol of his presence, and commune with his people. At that time, in all David's land, there was no proper place for that ark whereon the Lord had placed the mercy seat, where prayer could be offered, and where the manifested glory shone forth. All things had fallen into decay, and the outward forms of public worship were too much disregarded; hence the King resolves to be first and foremost in establishing a better order of things. Yet one cannot help remembering that the holy resolve of David gave to a place and a house much more importance than the Lord himself ever attached to such matters. This is indicated in Nathan's message from the Lord to the king—"Go and tell my servant David, Thus saith the Lord, Shalt thou build me an house for me to dwell in? Whereas I have not dwelt in any house since the time that I brought up the children of Israel out of Egypt, even to this day, but have walked in a tent and in a tabernacle. In all the places wherein I have walked with all the children of Israel spake I a word with any of the tribes of Israel, whom I commanded to feed my people Israel, saying, Why build ye not me an house of cedar?" Stephen in his inspired speech puts the matter plainly: "Solomon built him an house. Howbeit the Most High dwelleth not in temples made with hands." It is a striking fact that true religion never flourished more in Israel than before the temple was built, and that from the day of the erection of that magnificent house the spirit of godliness declined. Good men may have on their hearts matters which seem to them of chief importance, and it may be acceptable with God that they should seek to carry them out; and yet in his infinite wisdom he may judge it best to prevent their executing their designs. God does not measure his people's actions by their wisdom, or want of wisdom, but by the sincere desire for his glory which has led up to them. David's resolution, though he was not allowed to fulfil it, brought a blessing upon him: the Lord promised to build the house of David, because he had desired to build the house of the Lord. Moreover, the King was allowed to prepare the treasure for the erection of the glorious edifice which was built by his son and successor. The Lord shows the acceptance of what we desire to do by permitting us to do something else which his infinite mind judges to be fitter for us, and more honourable to himself.

Verse 6. Meanwhile, where was the habitation of God among men? He was wont to shine forth from between the cherubim, but where was the ark? It was like a hidden thing, a stranger in its own land. Lo, we heard of it at Ephratah. Rumours came that it was somewhere in the land of Ephraim, in a temporary lodging; rather an object of dread than of delight. Is it not wonderful that so renowned a symbol of the presence of the Lord should be lingering in neglect—a neglect so great that it was

remarkable that we should have heard of its whereabouts at all? When a man begins to think upon God and his service it is comforting that the gospel is heard of. Considering the opposition which it has encountered it is marvellous that it should be heard of, and heard of in a place remote from the central city; but yet we are sorrowful that it is only in connection with some poor despised place that we do hear of it. What is Ephratah Who at this time knows where it was? How could the ark have remained there so long?

David instituted a search for the ark. It had to be hunted for high and low; and at last at Kirjathjearim, the forest city, he came upon it. How often do souls find Christ and his salvation in out of the way places! What matters where we meet with him so long as we do behold him, and find life in him? That is a blessed Eureka which is embedded in our text—*"we found it."* The matter began with hearing, led on to a search, and concluded in a joyful find. *"We found it in the fields of the wood."* Alas that there should be no room for the Lord in the palaces of kings, so that he must needs take to the woods. If Christ be in a wood he will yet be found of those who seek for him. He is as near in the rustic home, embowered among the trees, as in the open streets of the city; yea, he will answer prayer offered from the heart of the black forest where the lone traveller seems out of all hope of hearing. The text presents us with an instance of one whose heart was set upon finding the place where God would meet with him; this made him quick of hearing, and so the cheering news soon reached him. The tidings renewed his ardour, and led him to stick at no difficulties in his search; and so it came to pass that, where he could hardly have expected it, he lighted upon the treasure which he so much prized.

Verse 7. *We will go into his tabernacles.* Having found the place where he dwells we will hasten thereto. He has many dwellings in one in the various courts of his house, and each of these shall receive the reverence due: in each the priest shall offer for us the appointed service; and our hearts shall go where our bodies may not enter. David is not alone, he is represented as having sought for the ark with others, for so the word *"we"* implies; and now they are glad to attend him in his pilgrimage to the chosen shrine, saying, *"We found it, we will go."* Because these are the Lord's courts we will resort to them. *We will worship at his footstool.* The best ordered earthly house can be no more than the footstool of so great a King. His ark can only reveal the glories of his feet, according to his promise that he will make the place of his feet glorious: yet thither will we hasten with joy, in glad companionship, and there will we adorn him. Where Jehovah is, there shall he be worshipped. It is well not only to go to the Lord's house, but to *worship* there: we do but profane his tabernacles if we enter them for any other purpose. Before leaving this verse let us note the ascent of this Psalm of degrees—*"We heard...we found...we will go...we will worship."*

Verse 11. Here we come to a grand covenant pleading of the kind which is always prevalent with the Lord. *The LORD hath sworn in truth unto, David.* We cannot urge anything with God which is equal to

his own word and oath. Jehovah swears that our faith may have strong confidence in it: he cannot forswear himself. He swears in truth, for he means every word that he utters; men may be perjured, but none will be so profane as to imagine this of the God of truth. By Nathan this covenant of Jehovah was conveyed to David, and there was no delusion in it. *He will not turn from it.* Jehovah is not a changeable being. He never turns from his purpose, much less from his promise solemnly ratified by oath. He turneth never. He is not a man that he should lie, nor the son of man that he should repent. What a rock they stand upon who have an immutable oath of God for their foundation! We know that this covenant was really made with Christ, the spiritual seed of David, for Peter quotes it at Pentecost, saying, "Men and brethren, let me freely speak unto you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his sepulchre is with us unto this day. Therefore being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him, that of the fruit of his loins, according to the flesh, he would raise up Christ to sit on his throne; he seeing this before spake of the resurrection of Christ." Christ therefore sits on a sure throne for ever and ever, seeing that he has kept the covenant, and through him the blessing comes upon Zion, whose poor are blessed in him. *Of the fruit of thy body will I set upon thy throne.* Jesus sprang from the race of David, as the evangelists are careful to record; he was "of the house and lineage of David": at this day he is the King of the Jews, and the Lord has also given him the heathen for his inheritance. He must reign, and of his kingdom there shall be no end. God himself has set him on the throne, and no rebellion of men or devils can shake his dominion. The honour of Jehovah is concerned in his reign, and therefore it is never in danger; for the Lord will not suffer his oath to be dishonoured.

Verse 12. *If thy children will keep my covenant and my testimony that I shall teach them.* There is a condition to the covenant so far as it concerned kings of David's line before the coming of the true Seed; but *he* has fulfilled that condition, and made the covenant indefeasible henceforth and for ever as to himself and the spiritual seed in him. Considered as it related to temporal things it was no small blessing for David's dynasty to be secured the throne upon good behaviour. These monarchs held their crowns from God upon the terms of loyalty to their superior Sovereign, the Lord who had elevated them to their high position. They were to be faithful to the covenant by obedience to the divine law, and by belief of divine truth, they were to accept Jehovah as their Lord and their Teacher, regarding him in both relations as in covenant with them. What a condescension on God's part to be their teacher! How gladly ought they to render intelligent obedience! What a proper, righteous, and needful stipulation for God to make that they should be true to him when the reward was the promise, *Their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore.* If they will sit at his feet God will make them sit on a throne; if they will keep the covenant they shall keep the crown from generation to generation.

The kingdom of Judah might have stood to this day had its kings been faithful to the Lord. No internal

revolt or external attack could have overthrown the royal house of David: it fell by its own sin, and by nothing else. The Lord was continually provoked, but he was amazingly long suffering, for long after seceding Israel had gone into captivity, Judah still remained. Miracles of mercy were shown to her. Divine patience exceeded all limits, for the Lord's regard for David was exceeding great. The princes of David's house seemed set on ruining themselves, and nothing could save them; justice waited long, but it was bound at last to unsheathe the sword and strike. Still, if in the letter man's breach of promise caused the covenant to fail, yet in spirit and essence the Lord has been true to it, for Jesus reigns, and holds the throne for ever. David's seed is still royal, for he was the progenitor according to the flesh of him who is King of kings and Lord of lords. This verse shows us the need of family piety. Parents must see to it that their children know the fear of the Lord, and they must beg the Lord himself to teach them his truth. We have no hereditary right to the divine favour: the Lord keeps up his friendship to families from generation to generation, for he is loath to leave the descendants of his servants, and never does so except under grievous and long continued provocation. As believers, we are all in a measure under some such covenant as that of David: certain of us can look backward for four generations of saintly ancestors, and we are now glad to look forward and to see our children, and our children's children, walking in the truth. Yet we know that grace does not run in the blood, and we are filled with holy fear lest in any of our seed there should be an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.

Verse 13. *For the LORD hath chosen Zion.* It was no more than any other Canaanite town till God chose it, David captured it, Solomon built it, and the Lord dwelt in it. So was the church a mere Jebusite stronghold till grace chose it, conquered it, rebuilt it, and dwelt in it. Jehovah has chosen his people, and hence they are his people. He has chosen the church, and hence it is what it is. Thus in the covenant David and Zion, Christ and his people, go together. David is for Zion, and Zion for David: the interests of Christ and his people are mutual. *He hath desired it for his habitation.* David's question is answered. The Lord has spoken: the site of the temple is fixed: the place of the divine manifestation is determined. Indwelling follows upon election, and arises out of it: Zion is chosen, chosen for a habitation of God. The desire of God to dwell among the people whom he has chosen for himself is very gracious and yet very natural: his love will not rest apart from those upon whom he has placed it. God desires to abide with those whom he has loved with an everlasting love; and we do not wonder that it should be so, for we also desire the company of our beloved ones. It is a double marvel, that the Lord should choose and desire such poor creatures as we are: the indwelling of the Holy Ghost in believers is a wonder of grace parallel to the incarnation of the Son of God. God in the church is the wonder of heaven, the miracle of eternity, the glory of infinite love.

Verse 14. *This is my rest for ever.* Oh, glorious words! It is God himself who here speaks. Think of rest for God! A Sabbath for the Eternal and a place of abiding for the Infinite. He calls Zion *my rest.*

Here his love remains and displays itself with delight. "He shall rest in his love." And this *forever*. He will not seek another place of repose, nor grow weary of his saints. In Christ the heart of Deity is filled with content, and for his sake he is satisfied with his people, and will be so world without end. These august words declare a distinctive choice—*this* and no other; a certain choice—*this* which is well known to me; a present choice—*this* which is here at this moment. God has made his election of old, he has not changed it, and he never will repent of it: his church was his rest and *is* his rest still. As he will not turn from his oath, so he will never turn from his choice. Oh, that we may enter into his rest, may be part and parcel of his church, and yield by our loving faith a delight to the mind of him who taketh pleasure in them that fear him, in them that hope in his mercy. *Here will I dwell; for I have desired it.* Again are we filled with wonder that he who fills all things should dwell in Zion—should dwell in his church. God does not unwillingly visit his chosen; he desires to dwell with them; he desires them. He is already in Zion, for he says *here*, as one upon the spot. Not only will he occasionally come to his church, but he will dwell in it, as his fixed abode. He cared not for the magnificence of Solomon's temple, but he determined that at the mercy seat he would be found by suppliants, and that thence he would shine forth in brightness of grace among the favoured nation. All this, however, was but a type of the spiritual house, of which Jesus is foundation and cornerstone, upon which all the living stones are builded together for an habitation of God through the Spirit. Oh, the sweetness of the thought that God desires to dwell in his people and rest among them! Surely if it be his desire he will cause it to be so. If the desire of the righteous shall be granted much more shall the desire of the righteous God be accomplished. This is the joy of our souls, for surely we shall rest in God, and certainly our desire is to dwell in him. This also is the end of our fears for the church of God; for if the Lord dwell in her, she shall not be moved; if the Lord desire her, the devil cannot destroy her.

Verse 15. *I will abundantly bless her provision.* It must be so. How can we be without a blessing when the Lord is among us? We live upon his word, we are clothed by his charity, we are armed by his power: all sorts of provision are in him, and how can they be otherwise than blessed? The provision is to be *abundantly blessed*; then it will be abundant and blessed. Daily provision, royal provision, satisfying provision, overflowing joyful provision the church shall receive; and the divine benediction shall cause us to receive it with faith, to feed upon it by experience, to grow upon it by sanctification, to be strengthened by it to labour, cheered by it to patience, and built up by it to perfection. *I will satisfy her poor with bread.* The citizens of Zion are poor in themselves, poor in spirit, and often poor in pocket, but their hearts and souls shall dwell in such abundance that they shall neither need more nor desire more. Satisfaction is the crown of experience. Where God rests his people shall be satisfied. They are to be satisfied with what the Lord himself calls "*bread*", and we may be sure that he knows what is really bread for souls. He will not give us a stone. The Lord's poor

shall "have food convenient for them": that which will suit their palate, remove their hunger, fill their desire, build up their frame, and perfect their growth. The bread of earth is "the bread that perisheth", but the bread of God endureth to life eternal. In the church where God rests his people shall not starve; the Lord would never rest if they did. He did not take rest for six days till he had prepared the world for the first man to live in; he would not stay his hand till all things were ready; therefore, we may be sure if the Lord rests it is because "it is finished", and the Lord hath prepared of his goodness for the poor. Where God finds his desire his people shall find theirs; if he is satisfied, they shall be. Taking the two clauses together, we see that nothing but an abundant blessing in the church will satisfy the Lord's poor people: they are naked and miserable till that comes. All the provision that Solomon himself could make would not have satisfied the saints of his day: they looked higher, and longed for the Lord's own boundless blessing, and hungered for the bread which came down from heaven. Blessed be the Lord, they had in this verse two of the "I wills" of God to rest upon, and nothing could be a better support to their faith.

Verse 16. More is promised than was prayed for. See how the ninth verse asks for the priests to be clad in righteousness, and the answer is, *I will also clothe her priests with salvation*. God is wont to do exceeding abundantly, above all that we ask or even think. Righteousness is but one feature of blessing, salvation is the whole of it. What cloth of gold is this! What more than regal array! Garments of salvation! we know who has woven them, who has dyed them, and who has given them to his people. These are the best robes for priests and preachers, for princes and people; there is none like them; give them me. Not every priest shall be thus clothed, but only *her* priests, those who truly belong to Zion by faith which is in Christ Jesus who hath made them priests unto God. These, are clothed by the Lord himself, and none can clothe as he does. It even the grass of the field is so clothed by the Creator as to out do Solomon in all his glory, how must his own children be clad? Truly he shall be admired in his saints; the liveries of his servants shall be the wonder of heaven. *And her saints shall shout aloud for joy*. Again we have a golden answer to a silver prayer. The Psalmist would have the "saints shout for joy." "That they shall do", saith the Lord, "and *aloud* too"; they shall be exceedingly full of delight; their songs and shouts shall be so hearty that they shall sound as the noise of many waters, and as great thunders. These joyful ones are not, however, the mimic saints of superstition, but *her* saints, saints of the Most High, "sanctified in Christ Jesus." These shall be so abundantly blessed and so satisfied, and so apparelled that they can do no otherwise than shout to show their astonishment, their triumph, their gratitude, their exultation, their enthusiasm, their joy in the Lord. Zion has no dumb saints. The sight of God at rest among his chosen is enough to make the most silent shout. If the morning stars sang together when the earth and heavens were made, much more will all the sons of God shout for joy when the new heavens and the new earth are finished, and the New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride for her husband.

Meanwhile, even now the dwelling of the Lord among us is a perennial fountain of sparkling delight to all holy minds. This shouting for joy is guaranteed to Zion's holy ones: God says they *shall* shout aloud, and depend upon it they will: who shall stop them of this glorying? The Lord hath said by his Spirit, "let them shout aloud": who is he that shall make them hold their peace? The Bridegroom is with them, and shall the children of the bride chamber fast?: Nay, verily, we rejoice, yea and will rejoice.

Verse 17. *There will I make the horn of David to bud.* In Zion David's dynasty shall develop power and glory. In our notes from other authors we have included a description of the growth of the horns of stags, which is the natural fact from which we conceive the expression in the text to be borrowed. As the stag is made noble and strong by the development of his horns, so the house of David shall advance from strength to strength. This was to be by the work of the Lord—"there will I make", and therefore it would be sure and solid growth. When God makes us to bud none can cause us to fade. When David's descendants left the Lord and the worship of his house, they declined in all respects, for it was only through the Lord, and in connection with his worship that their horn would bud. I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed. David's name was to be illustrious, and brilliant as a lamp; it was to continue shining like a lamp in the sanctuary; it was thus to be a comfort to the people, and an enlightenment to the nations. God would not suffer the light of David to go out by the extinction of his race: his holy ordinances had decreed that the house of his servant should remain in the midst of Israel. What a lamp is our Lord Jesus! A light to lighten the Gentiles, and the glory of his people Israel. As the anointed—the true Christ, he shall be the light of heaven itself. Oh for grace to receive our illumination and our consolation from Jesus Christ alone.

Verse 18. *His enemies will I clothe with shame.* They shall be utterly defeated, they shall loathe their evil design, they shall be despised for having hated the Ever Blessed One. Their shame they will be unable to hide, it shall cover them: God will array them in it for ever, and it shall be their convict dress to all eternity. *But upon himself shall his crown flourish.* Green shall be his laurels of victory. He shall win and wear the crown of honour, and his inherited diadem shall increase in splendour. Is it not so to this hour with Jesus? His kingdom cannot fail, his imperial glories cannot fade. It is himself that we delight to honour; it is to himself that the honour comes, and upon himself that it flourishes. If others snatch at his crown their traitorous aims are defeated; but he in his own person reigns with ever growing splendour.

"Crown him, crown him,
Crowns become the victor's brow."

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. Lightfoot ascribes this Psalm to David, and supposes it to have been composed on

the second removal of the ark from the house of Obededom: 1Ch 15:4, etc. But the mention of David's name in the tenth verse in the third person, and the terms there employed, militate against his being the author. Others ascribe it to Solomon, who, they think, wrote it about the time of the removing of the ark into the Temple which he had built for it: 2Ch 5:2, etc. Others are of opinion, that it was composed by Solomon for the solemn services that were celebrated at the dedication of the Temple.—*James Anderson's note to Calvin in loc.*

Whole Psalm. The Psalm is divided into four stanzas of ten lines, each of which contains the name of David. The first part begins with speaking of David's vow to the Lord, the third with the Lord's promise to David.—*William Kay.*

Whole Psalm. The parallelisms need to be traced with some care. Ps 132:1-6 are answered by Ps 132:12, Ps 132:7 by Ps 132:13; Ps 132:8 by Ps 132:14; Ps 132:9 by Ps 132:15-16; Ps 132:10 by Ps 132:17-18. An attention to these parallelisms is often necessary to bring out the meaning of Scripture.—*Joseph Angus, in "The Bible Handbook", 1862.*

Verse 1. *LORD, remember.* It is a gracious privilege to be permitted to be God's reminders. Faith is encouraged to remind him of his covenant, and of his precious promises. There is, indeed, no forgetfulness with him. The past, as also the future, is a present page before his eye. But by this exercise we impress on our own minds invaluable lessons.—*Henry Law.*

Verse 1. *Remember David, and all his afflictions.* Solomon was a wise man, yet pleads not any merit of his own;—I am not worthy, for whom thou shouldest do this, but, "Lord, *remember David*", with whom thou madest the covenant; as Moses prayed (Ex 32:13), "*Remember Abraham*", the first trustee of the covenant; remember "*all his afflictions*"; all the troubles of his life, which his being anointed was the occasion of; or his care and concern about the ark, and what an uneasiness it was to him that the ark was in curtains (2Sa 7:2). *Remember all his humility and weakness*, so some read it; all that pious and devout affection with which he had made the following vow.—*Matthew Henry.*

Verse 1. *Remember...all his afflictions.* The sufferings of believers for the cause of truth are not meritorious, but neither are they in vain; they are not forgotten by God. Mt 5:11-12.—*Christopher Starke, 1740.*

Verse 1. *Afflictions.* The Hebrew word for "*afflictions*" is akin to the word for "trouble" in 1Ch 12:14: "Now, behold, in my *trouble* I have prepared for the house of the Lord an hundred thousand talents of gold."—*H. T. Armfeld.*

Verses 1-2. If the Jew could rightly appeal to God to show mercy to his church and nation for the sake of that shepherd youth whom he had advanced to the kingdom, much more shall we justly plead our cause in the name of David's son (called David four times in the prophets), and of *all his trouble*, all the sorrows of his birth and infancy, his ministry and passion and death, which he bore as a consequence of his self dedication to his father's will, when his priesthood, foreordained from all

eternity, was confirmed with an oath, "for these *Levitical* priests were made without *swearing* an oath; but this with an oath by him that said unto him, The Lord sware and will not repent, Thou art a priest for ever after the order of Melchizedek": Heb 7:21 Ps 100:4.—*Theodoret and C'assiodorus, in Neale and Littledale.*

Verse 2. And vowed. The history does not record the time nor the occasion of this vow; but history does record how it was ever in David's thoughts and on David's heart. David, indeed, in the first verse, asks of God to remember his afflictions, and then records his vow; and you may, perhaps, think that the vow was the consequence of his afflictions, and that he made it contingent on his deliverance ...It is far more consistent with the character of David to look upon the affliction to which he alludes as resulting from the Lord's not permitting him to carry out his purpose of erecting an earthly habitation for the God of heaven, inasmuch as he had shed blood abundantly. And if, as is more than probable, amid that blood which he had shed, David's conscience recalled the blood of Uriah as swelling the measure, he could not but be deeply afflicted, even while he acknowledged the righteousness of the sentence. But though not permitted of God to execute his purpose, we cannot but feel and own that it was a noble resolution which David here makes; and though recorded in all the amplification of Oriental imagery, it expresses the holy determination of the Psalmist to forego every occupation and pursuit, and not to allow a single day to elapse till he had at least fixed on the site of the future temple.—*Barton Bouchier.*

Verse 2. He vowed. He who is ready to vow on every occasion will break his vow on every occasion. It is a necessary rule, that "we be as sparing in making our vows as may be"; there being many great inconveniences attending frequent and multiplied vows. It is very observable, that the Scripture mentions very few examples of vows, compared with the many instances of very great and wonderful providences; as if it would give us some instances, that we might know what we have to do, and yet would give us but few, that we might know we are not to do it often. You read Jacob lived seven score and seven years (Ge 47:28); but you read, I think, but of one vow that he made. Our extraordinary exigencies are not many; and, I say, our vows should not be more. Let this, then, be the first necessary ingredient of a well ordered vow. Let it be no oftener made than the pressing greatness of an evil to be removed, or the alluring excellency of a blessing extraordinary to be obtained, will well warrant. Jephthah's vow was so far right; he had just occasion; there was a great and pressing danger to be removed; there was an excellent blessing to be obtained: the danger was, lest Israel should be enslaved; the blessing was victory over their enemies. This warranted his vow, though his rashness marred it. It was in David's troubles that David sware, and vowed a vow to the Most High; and Jacob forbare to vow until his more than ordinary case bade his vow, and warranted him in so doing: Ge 28:20. Let us do as he did,—spare to vow, until such case puts us on it.—*Henry Hurst (1629?—1690), in "The Morning Exercises."*

Verse 2. *Vowed unto the mighty God of Jacob.* The first holy votary that ever we read of was Jacob here mentioned in this text, who is therefore called the father of vows: and upon this account some think David mentions God here under the title of "*the mighty God of Jacob*", rather than any other, because of his vow.—*Abraham Wright.*

Verse 2. *The mighty God of Jacob.* The title *strong one of Jacob*, by which God is here designated, first used by Jacob himself, Ge 49:24, and thence more generally used as is clear from Isa 1:24 49:26, and other places, here sets forth God both as the most mighty who is able most severely to punish perjury, and with whom no one may dare to contend, and also as the defender and most mighty vindicator of Israel, such as Jacob had proved him, and all his descendants, in particular David, who frequently rejoiced and gloried in this mighty one and defender. Such a mighty one of Jacob was worthy to have a temple built for him, and was so great that he would not suffer perjury.—*Hermann Venema.*

Verse 2. Where the interpreters have translated, "*the God of Jacob*", it is in the Hebrew, "*the mighty in Jacob.*" Which name is sometimes attributed unto the angels, and sometimes it is also applied to other things wherein are great strength and fortitude; as to a lion, an ox, and such like. But here it is a singular word of faith, signifying that God is the power and strength of his people; for only faith ascribes this unto God. Reason and the flesh do attribute more to riches, and such other worldly helps as man seeth and knoweth. All such carnal helps are very idols, which deceive men, and draw them to perdition; but this is the strength and fortitude of the people, to have God present with them...So the Scripture saith in another place: "Some trust in chariots, and some in horses, but we will remember the name of the Lord." Likewise Paul saith: "Be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might." For this power is eternal, and deceives not. All other powers are not only deceitful, but they are transitory, and continue but for a moment.—*Martin Luther.*

Verse 3. *Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house,* etc. To avoid the absurdity of thinking that David should make such a rash and unwarrantable vow as this might seem to be, that till he had his desire satisfied in that which is afterwards expressed he would abide in the open air, and never go within his doors, nor ever take any rest, either by day or by night, some say that David spake this with reference to his purpose of taking the fort of Zion from the Jebusites (2Sa 5:6), where by revelation he knew that God meant to have the ark settled, and which he might probably think would be accomplished within some short time. And then others again say, that he meant it only of that stately cedar house, which he had lately built for himself at Jerusalem (2Sa 7:1-2), to wit, that he would not go into that house; and so also that he would not go up unto his bed, nor (Ps 132:4) give any sleep to his eyes, nor slumber to his eyelids, to wit, in that house. But neither of these expositions gives me any satisfaction. I rather take these to be hyperbolical expressions of the continual, exceeding great care wherewith he was perplexed about providing a settled place for the ark to rest

in, like that in Pr 6:4-5: "Give not sleep to thine eyes, nor slumber to thine eyelids; deliver thyself as a roe from the hand of the hunter", etc. Neither is it any more in effect than if he had said, I will never lay by this care to mind myself in anything whatsoever: I shall never with any content abide in mine own house, nor with any quiet rest in my bed, until, etc.—*Arthur Jackson*, 1593-1666.

Verse 3. *Surely I will not come into the tabernacle of my house*, etc. When he had built himself a palace (1Ch 15:1), it appears by the context, that he did not *bless* it (1Ch 16:43), nor consequently live in it (for that he might not do till it were blest) until he had first prepared a place, and brought up the ark to it.—*Henry Hammond*.

Verse 3. *Surely I will not come*, etc. Our translation of the verse is justified by Aben Ezra, who remarks that *oa* is here to be translated not in its usual sense of "if",—"if I shall come"—but as introducing a vow, "I will not come." This idiom, it may be observed, is more or less missed by our existing translation of Heb 4:5: "And in this place again, If they shall enter into my rest"—a translation which is the more curious from the fact that the idiom in the present Psalm is hit off exactly in the preceding chapter, Heb 3:11: "So I sware in my wrath, They shall not enter into my rest."—*H. T. Armfield*.

Verse 3. *I will not come into the tent which is my house*. What does this singular form of expression denote? Is it "an instance of the way in which the associations of the old patriarchal tent life fixed themselves in the language of the people", as Perowne suggests? or does David deliberately select it to imply that even his palace is but a tent as compared with the House that he will rear for God?—*Samuel Cox*.

Verse 3. *Nor go up into my bed*. From the expression of the Psalmist it would seem that a lofty bed was not only a necessary luxury, but a sign of superior rank. This idea was very prevalent in the period of the revival of the arts on the Continent, where the state bed, often six feet high, always stood on a dais in an alcove, richly curtained off from the saloon. In the East the same custom still continues, and a verse in the Koran declares it to be one of the delights of the faithful in paradise that "they shall repose themselves on lofty beds" (Cap. 56, "The Inevitable"). Frequently these state beds were composed of the most costly and magnificent materials. The prophet Amos speaks of ivory beds (Am 6:4); Nero had a golden one; that of the Mogul Aurungzeebe was jewelled; and, lastly, in the privy purse expenses of our own profligate Charles II., we read of a "silver bedstead for Mrs. Gwynn." And to this day the state bedsteads in the viceregal palace at Cairo are executed in the same metal, and are supposed to have cost upwards of 3,000 pounds sterling each.—*From "The Biblical Museum," 1879.*

Verses 3-5. *Surely I will not Come*, etc. These were all types and figures of Christ, the true David, who, in his desire of raising a living temple, and an everlasting tabernacle to God, spent whole nights in prayer, and truly, neither entered his house, nor went up into his bed, nor gave slumber to his

eyelids, nor rest to his temples, and presented to himself "a glorious church, not having spot, nor wrinkle, nor any such thing", nor built "with corruptible gold or silver", but with his own precious sweat and more precious blood; it was with them he built that city in heaven that was seen by St. John in the Apocalypse, and "was ornamented with all manner of precious stones." Hecen, we can all understand the amount of care, cost and labour we need to erect a becoming temple in our hearts to God.—*Robert Bellarmine (1542-1621), in "A Commentary on the Book of Psalms."*

Verses 3-5. This admirable zeal of this pious king condemns the indifference of those who leave the sacred places which are dependent upon their care in a condition of shameful, neglect, while they lavish all their care to make for themselves sumptuous houses.—*Pasquier Quesnel (1634-1719), dans "Les Pseaumes, avec des Reflexions, "1700.*

Verse 5. *An habitation for the mighty God of Jacob.* Jacob "vowed a vow", when he declared, "this...shall be God's house": Ge 28:20-22. David accordingly preserved a reminiscence of the fact, when he vowed a vow in connection with a similar object.—*H. T. Armfield.*

Verse 6. *We heard of it at Ephratah.* This is commonly understood of Bethlehem, as that place had this name. But the ark never was at Bethlehem, at least we read of no such thing. There was a district called by this name, or one closely resembling it, where Elkanah, Samuel's father, lived, and whence Jeroboam came, both of whom are called Ephrathites. 1Sa 1:1 1Ki 11:26. This was in the tribe of Ephraim, and is probably the place meant by the Psalmist. Now the ark had been for a long series of years at Shiloh, which is in Ephraim, when it was taken to be present at the battle with the Philistines, in which Hophni and Phinehas, the sons of Eli, were slain, and when thirty thousand of the Israelites lost their lives, together with the capture of the ark. The frightful report of this calamity was brought to Eli, and occasioned his instant death. This appears to be the event referred to in the words, "We heard of it at Ephratah"; and a grievous report it was, not likely to be soon forgotten. We found it in the fields of Jaar. After the ark had been for some time in the land of the Philistines, they sent it away, and it came to Bethshemesh, in the tribe of Judah. 1Sa 6:12. In the immediate vicinity of this place was also Kirjathjearim, i.e. the city of Jaar, to which the ark was removed; for the Bethshemites were afraid to retain it, as many thousands of them had lost their lives, for the violation of the sanctity of the ark, by looking into it. As this slaughter took place close by, if not in the fields of Jaar, the Psalmist, with reference to it, says, "*We found it in the fields of Jaar.*" Having glanced at these two afflictive and memorable events, he goes on with his direct design, of encouraging the people to perform due honour to the ark, and to the temple, by contrasting with the sad occurrences to which he had adverted their present joy and prosperity.—*William Walford, in "The Book of Psalms. A New Translation, with Notes."* 1837.

Verse 6. *We heard of it at Ephratah,* etc. Either of the ark which David and others had heard of, that it formerly was at Shiloh (Jos 18:1), here called Ephratah, as some think; so the Ephraimites are called

Ephrathites (Jud 12:5); and Elkanah of Ramathaimzophim, of Mount Ephraim, is said to be an Ephrathite (1Sa 1:1); but this tribe the Lord chose not, but the tribe of Judah, for his habitation; and rejected the tabernacle of Shiloh, and removed it from thence (Ps 78:60,67-68). "*We found it in the fields of the wood;*" at Kirjathjearim, which signifies *the city of woods*; being built among woods, and surrounded with them: here the ark was twenty years, and here David found it; and from hence he brought it to the house of Obededom, and from thence to Zion. Christ has been *found in the fields of the wood*; in a low, mean, abject state, as this phrase signifies: Eze 16:5. The shepherds found him rejected from being in the inn, there being no room for him, and lying in a manger (Lu 2:7,16); the angels found him in the wilderness, among the wild beasts of the field (Mk 1:13); nor had he the convenience even of foxes and birds of the air; he had no habitation or place where to lay his head: Mt 8:20. And he is to be found in the field of the Scriptures, where tiffs rich treasure and pearl of great price lies hid: Mt 8:44.—*John Gill.*

Verse 6. *We heard of it at Ephratah.* The only explanation, equally agreeable to usage and the context, is that which makes Ephratah the ancient name of Bethlehem (Ge 48:7), here mentioned as the place where David spent his youth, and where he used to hear of the ark, although he never saw it till long afterwards, when he found it in the fields of the wood, in the neighbourhood of Kirjathjearim, which name means Forest town, or City of the Woods. Compare 1Sa 7:1 with 2Sa 6:3-4.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 6. *We heard of it at Ephratah,* etc. Having prepared a sumptuous tabernacle, or tent, for the ark on Mount Zion, in the "City of David", a great national assembly was summoned, at which all the tribes were invited to attend its removal to this new sanctuary. The excitement spread over all Israel. "We heard men say at Ephratah *Bethlehem*, in the south of the land, and we found them repeat it in the woody Lebanon", sings the writer of the 132nd Psalm, according to Ewald's rendering. "Let us go into his tabernacle; let us worship at his footstool." The very words of the summons were fitted to rouse the deepest feelings of the nation, for they were to gather at Baalah, of Judah, another name for Kirjathjearim, to "bring up thence" to the mountain capital "the Ark of God, called by the name, the name of Jehovah of Hosts that dwelleth between the cherubim": 2Sa 6:2. It "had not been enquired at in the days of Saul": but, when restored, the nation would have their great palladium once more in their midst, and could "appear before God in Zion." and be instructed and taught in the way they should go.—*Cunningham Geikie, in "Hours with the Bible."* 1881.

Verse 6. *Ephratah.* The Psalmist says, that David himself, even when a youth in Bethlehem Ephratah, heard of the sojourn of the ark in Kirjathjearim, and that it was a fond dream of David's boyhood to be permitted to bring up the ark to some settled habitation, which he desired *to find* (Ps 132:5).—*Christopher Wordsworth.*

Verse 6. *We found it.* The Church can never long be hid. The sun reappears after a short

eclipse.—*Henry Law.*

Verse 6. It is not always where we first seek God that he is to be found. "We *heard* of it at Ephratah: we *found* it in the fields of the wood." We must not be governed by hearsay in seeking for God in Christ; but seek for ourselves until we find. It is not in every house of prayer that God in Christ can be found: after seeking him in gorgeous temples we may find him "in the fields of the wood." "If any man shall say unto you, Lo, here is Christ, or lo, there; believe it not" upon his own testimony, but seek him for yourselves.—*George Rogers, 1883.*

Verse 7. *We will go...we will worship.* Note their agreement and joint consent, which is visible in the pronoun "we": "*We will go.*" "*We*" taketh in a whole nation, a whole people, the whole world, and maketh them one. "*We*" maketh a commonwealth; and "*we*" maketh a church. We go up to the house of the Lord together, and we hope to go to heaven together. Note their alacrity and cheerfulness in going. Their long absence rendered the object more glorious. For, what we love and want, we love the more and desire the more earnestly. When Hezekiah, having been "sick unto death", had a longer lease of life granted him, he asketh the question, "What is the sign" (*not, that I shall live, but*) "that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?" Isa 38:1-22. Love is on the wing, cheerful to meet its object; yea, it reacheth it at a distance, and is united to it while it is afar off... "*We will go.*" We long to be there. We will hasten our pace. We will break through all difficulties in the way.—*Condensed from Anthony Farinlen.*

Verse 7. (*first clause.*) *Tabernacles* are spoken of in the plural number, and this it may be (though we may doubt whether the Psalmist had such minute distinctions in his eye) because there was in the Temple an inner sanctuary, a middle apartment, and then the court. It is of more importance to attend to the epithet which follows, where the Psalmist calls the Ark of the Covenant *God's footstool*, to intimate that the sanctuary could never contain the immensity of God's essence, as men were apt absurdly to imagine. The mere outward Temple with all its majesty being no more than his footstool, his people were called upon to look upwards to the heavens, and fix their contemplations with due reverence upon God himself.—*John Calvin.*

Verse 7. The Lord's "*footstool*" here mentioned was either *the Ark of the Testimony* itself, or the place at least where it stood, called *Debir*, or the *Holy of Holies*, towards which the Jews in their temple used to worship. The very next words argue so much: "*Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength*"; and it is plain out of 1Ch 28:2, where David saith concerning his purpose to have built God an house, "I had in mine heart to build an house of rest for the ark of the covenant of the Lord, and for the *footstool* of our God", where the conjunction *and* is exegetical, and the same with *that is*. According to this expression the prophet Jeremy also, in the beginning of the second of his Lamentations, bewaileth that "the Lord had cast down the beauty of Israel" (that is, his glorious Temple), "and remembered not his *footstool*" (that is, the Ark of the Covenant), "in the day of his

wrath"; as Isa 60:7 64:11 Ps 96:6.

That this is the true and genuine meaning of this phrase of *worshipping the Lord towards his footstool*, besides the confessed custom of the time, is evidently confirmed by a parallel expression of this worshipping posture (Ps 28:2): "Hear the voice of my supplications when I cry unto thee, when I lift up mine hands Kvdq rybd-la towards thy *holy oracle*": that is, towards the Most Holy place where the ark stood, and from whence God gave his answers. For that rybd Debir, which is here translated "*oracle*" was the *Sanctum Sanctorum* or Most Holy place, is clear out of the sixth and eighth chapters of the First Book of Kings; where in the former we read (Ps 132:19) that "Solomon prepared the *oracle* or *Debir*, to set the ark of the covenant of the Lord there": in the latter (Ps 132:6), that "the priests brought in the ark of the covenant of the Lord unto his place, into the oracle of the house, to the most holy place, even under the wings of the cherubims." Wherefore the authors of the translation used in our Liturgy rendered this passage of the Psalm, "When I hold up my hands toward the mercy seat of thy holy temple"; namely, having respect to the meaning thereof. Thus you see that one of the two must needs be this *scabellum pedum*, or "*footstool*" of God, either *the ark* or *mercy seat* itself, or the *adytum Templi*, the Most Holy place, where it stood. For that it is not the whole Temple at large (though it might be so called), but some thing or part of those that are within it the first Words of my text ("*We will go into his tabernacles*") do argue. If, then, it be the ark (whose cover was that which we call the *mercy seat*), it seems to have been so called in respect of God's sitting upon the cherubims, under which the ark lay, as it were his footstool: whence sometimes it is described, "The ark of the covenant of the Lord of Hosts, which sitteth upon the cherubims": 1Sa 4:4. If the *ark*, with the *cover* thereof (*the mercy seat*), be considered as God's *throne*, then the place thereof, the *Debir*, may not unfitly be termed his "*footstool*." Or, lastly, if we consider heaven to be the throne of God, as indeed it is, then whatsoever place or monument of presence he hath here on earth is in true esteem no more than his "*footstool*."—*Joseph Mede*, 1586-1638.

Verse 8. In these three verses we see the finders of the ark removing it to its appointed place, using a formula somewhat like to that used by Moses when he said, "Rise up, Lord", and again, "Return, O Lord, unto the many thousands of Israel." The ark had been long upon the move, and no fit place had been found for it in Canaan, but now devout men have prepared a temple, and they sing, *Arise, O Lord, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength*. They hoped that now the covenant symbol had found a permanent abode—a rest, and they trusted that Jehovah would now abide with it for ever. Vain would it be for the ark to be settled if the Lord did not continue with it, and perpetually shine forth from between the cherubim. Unless the Lord shall rest with us there is no rest for us; unless the ark of his strength abide with us we are ourselves without strength. The ark of the covenant is here mentioned by a name which it well deserved; for in its captivity it smote its captors, and broke their gods, and when it was brought back it guarded its own honour by the death of those who dared to

treat it with disrespect. The power of God was thus connected with the sacred chest. Reverently, therefore, did Solomon pray concerning it as he besought the living God to consecrate the temple by his presence. It is the Lord and the covenant, or rather say the covenant Jehovah whose presence we desire in our assemblies, and this presence is the strength of his people. Oh that the Lord would indeed abide in all the churches, and cause his power to be revealed in Zion.

Verse 8. *Arise, O LORD, into thy rest; thou, and the ark of thy strength.* Whenever the camp was about to move, Moses used the language found in the first part of this verse. "*Arise (or rise up), O Jehovah.*"—*William Swan Plumer.*

Verse 8. *Thou, and the ark of thy strength.* "Both he that sanctifieth and they who are sanctified are all of one" Heb 2:11. Now Christ, our Great High Priest, is gone up into the holy resting place. Of him it is said, "Arise": for he arose from the dead, and ascended into heaven. And to his "ark", the church, it is said, "Arise": because he lives, all in him shall live also.—*Edward Simms, in "A Spiritual Commentary on the Book of Psalms," 1882.*

Verse 8. *The ark of thy strength.* The historical records of the ark are numerous, and deeply interesting. Miracles were often wrought at its presence. At the passage of the Jordan, no sooner were the feet of the priests which bare this holy vessel dipped in the brim of the river, than the waters rose up upon an heap, and the people of God passed over on dry ground—"clean over Jordan": Jos 3:14-17. At the siege of Jericho, the ark occupied a most prominent position in the daily procession of the tribes around the doomed city...It was, however, captured by the Philistines, and Hophni and Phineas, Eli's wicked sons, in whose care it was placed, slain. Thus the Lord "delivered his strength into captivity and his glory into the enemy's hand": Ps 78:61.—*Frank H. White, in "Christ in the Tabernacle," 1877.*

Verse 9. *Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness.* No garment is so resplendent as that of a holy character. In this glorious robe our great High priest is evermore strayed, and he would have all his people adorned in the same manner. Then only are priests fit to appear before the Lord, and to minister for the profit of the people, when their lives are dignified with goodness. They must ever remember that they are God's priests, and should therefore wear the livery of their Lord, which is holiness: they are not only to have righteousness, but to be clothed with it, so that upon every part of them righteousness shall be conspicuous. Whoever looks upon God's servants should see holiness if they see nothing else. Now, this righteousness of the ministers of the temple is prayed for in connection with the presence of the Lord; and this instructs us that holiness is only to be found among those who commune with God, and only comes to them through his visitation of their spirits. God will dwell among a holy people; and on the other hand, where God is the people become holy. And let thy saints shout for joy. Holiness and happiness go together; where the one is found, the other ought never to be far away. Holy persons have a right to great and demonstrative joy: they may

shout because of it. Since they are saints, and thy saints, and thou hast come to dwell with them, O Lord, thou hast made it their duty to rejoice, and to let others know of their joy. The sentence, while it may read as a permit, is also a precept: saints are commanded to rejoice in the Lord. Happy religion which makes it a duty to be glad! Where righteousness is the clothing, joy may well be the occupation.

Verse 9. (*first clause*). The chief badge and cognizance of the Lord's minister is the true doctrine of justification and obedience of faith in a holy conversation: *Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness.*—David Dickson.

Verse 9. *Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness.*

Holiness on the head,
Light and perfections on the breast,
Harmonious bells below, raising the dead
To lead them unto life and rest.
Thus are true Aarons drear, etc.
—George Herbert, 1593-1633.

Verse 9. *Saints.* If the very names given by God's prophets to his people are such as *saints, gracious ones, merciful ones*, surely his professed people ought to see to it that they are not cruel, not tender, or unholy.—William Swan Plumer.

Verses 9, 16. Let us notice the prayer, Ps 132:9, with the answer, Ps 132:16. The prayer asks in behalf of the priests *righteousness*: the answer is, "I will clothe her priests with *salvation*", i.e., with what shows forth God's *gracious character*. Caring for the interest of God, the worshipper finds his own interest fully cared for. And now, after spreading the Lord's pledged word (Ps 132:11-12) before him, the worshipper hears the Lord himself utter the reply, *q.d.*, "I will do all that has been sought."—A. A. Bonar.

Verse 10. *For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed.* King Solomon was praying, and here the people pray for him that his face may not be turned away, or that he may not be refused an audience. It is a dreadful thing to have our face turned away from God, or to have his face turned away from us. If we are anointed of the Spirit the Lord will look upon us with favour. Specially is this true of Him who represents us, and is on our behalf the *Christ*—the truly anointed of the Lord. Jesus is both our David and God's anointed; in him is found in fulness that which David received in measure. For his sake all those who are anointed in him are accepted. God blessed Solomon and succeeding kings, for David's sake; and he will bless us for Jesus' sake. How condescending was the Son of the Highest to take upon himself the form of a *servant*, to be anointed for us, and to go in before the mercyseat to plead on our behalf! The Psalm sings of the ark, and it may well remind us of the going in of the anointed priest within the veil: all depended upon his acceptance, and therefore

well do the people pray, "Turn not away the face of thine anointed." Thus, in these three verses, we have a prayer for the temple, the ark, the priests, the Levites, the people, and the king: in each petition there is a fulness of meaning well worthy of careful thought. We cannot plead too much in detail; the fault of most prayers is their indefiniteness. In God's house and worship everything needs a blessing, and every person connected therewith needs it continually. As David vowed and prayed when he was minded to house the ark, so now the prayer is continued when the temple is consecrated, and the Lord deigns to fill it with his glory. We shall never have done praying till we have done needing.

Verse 10. *For thy servant David's sake.* Solomon's plea for the divine blessing to rest upon him as king, "*For thy servant David's sake*", was justified in its use by God: Isa 37:35. It gives no countenance to the idea of intercession on the part of deceased saints; for it is not a prayer to David, but a pleading with God for the sake of David. Nor does it support the idea of works of supererogation on the part of David; it only implies a special divine delight in David, on account of which God was pleased to honour David's name during succeeding generations; and if the delight itself is pure grace, the expression of it, in any way, must be grace. Nor does it even give countenance to the idea that God's converting and saving grace may be expected by any man because his parents or ancestors were delighted in by God; for a plea of this character is in Scripture strictly confined to two instances, Abraham and David, with both of whom a special covenant was made, including their descendants, and it was just this covenant that authorised the use of the plea by those who by promise were specially interested, and by none others, and for the ends contemplated by the covenant. But it did prefigure the great Christian plea, "For Christ Jesus' sake"; just as God's selection of individual men and making them centres of revelation and religion, in the old time; prefigured "The man Christ Jesus" as the centre and basis of religion for all time. Hence in the plea, "For Christ's sake", the old pleas referred to are abolished, as the Jewish ritual is abolished. Christ bids us use His name: Joh 16:13-14,20, etc. To believe the false notions mentioned above, or to trust in any other name for divine, gracious favour, is to dishonour the name of Christ. "For Christ's sake" is effective on account of the great covenant, the merits of Christ, and his session in heaven.—*John Field (of Sevenoaks)*, 1883.

Verse 10. *For thy servant David's sake.* The frequency with which God is urged to hear and answer prayer for *David's sake* (1Ki 11:12-13 15:4 2Ki 8:19, etc.), is not to be explained by making *David* mean the promise to David, nor from the personal favour of which he was the object, but for his historical position as the great theocratic model, in whom it pleased God that the old economy should reach its culminating point, and who is always held up as the type and representative of the Messiah, so that all the intervening kings are mere connecting links, and their reigns mere repetitions and continuations of the reign of David, with more or less resemblance as they happened to be good or

bad. Hence the frequency with which his name appears in the later Scriptures, compared with even the last of his successors, and the otherwise inexplicable transfer of that name to the Messiah himself.—*Joseph Addison Alexander*.

Verse 10. *For thy servant David's sake.* When Sennacherib's army lay around Jerusalem besieging it, God brought deliverance for Israel partly out of regard to the prayer of the devout Hezekiah, but partly also out of respect for the pious memory of David, the hero king, the man after God's own heart. The message sent through Isaiah to the king concluded thus: "Therefore thus saith the Lord concerning the king of Assyria, he shall not come into this city, nor shoot an arrow there, nor come before it with shield, nor cast a bank against it. By the way that he came, by the same shall he return, and shall not come into this city, saith the Lord. For I will defend this city, to save it, for mine own sake, and for my servant David's sake": 2Ki 19:32-34. What a respect is shown to David's name by its being thus put on a level with God! *Mine own sake, and David's sake.*—*Alexander Balmain Bruce, in "The Galilean Gospel," 1882.*

Verse 10. *Turn not away the face,* etc. As if in displeasure, or in forgetfulness.—*Albert Barnes.*

Verse 10. *Thine anointed.* What is meant by "*thine anointed*"? Is it David himself; or some definite king among his merely human descendants; or does it apply to each or any of them as they come into office to bear the responsibilities of this line of anointed kings? I incline to the latter construction, under which the petition is applicable to any one or to all the anointed successors of David. For David's sake let every one of them be admitted to free audience before thee, and his prayer be evermore availing. The context contemplates a long line of kings descended from David. It was pertinent to make them all the subjects of this prayer.—*Henry Cowles.*

Verse 11. *The LORD hath sworn.* The most potent weapon with God is his own word. They remind him, therefore, as did Ethan in Ps 89:20, etc., of the solemn words which he had spoken by Nathan, and which must at that time have been still fresh in the memory of all. Solomon, too, made mention of those glorious words of comfort in his prayer at the dedication of the temple.—*Augustus F. Theluck.*

Verses 11-12. This Psalm is one of those fifteen which are called Psalms of Degrees; of which title whatsoever reason can be given fitting the rest, surely if we consider the argument of this, it may well import the excellency thereof, and why? It is nothing else but a sacred emulation, wherein God and a king contend; the king in piety, God in bounty. The king declares himself to be a most eminent pattern of zeal, and God himself to be a most magnificent rewarder of his servants. The king debars himself of all worldly content, while he is busily providing to entertain God; and God, who fills heaven and earth, vouchsafes to lodge in that place which was provided by the king. The king presents his supplication not only for himself, but also for his charge, the priests, the people; and God restrains not his blessing to the king, but also at his suit enlargeth it to church and commonweal. Finally, the king bindeth himself to make good his duty with a votive oath, and God stipulates again with an oath

that which he promised both to king and kingdom: to the kingdom in the words that follow; but to the king in those that I have now read to you. This speech, then, is directed unto the king, unto David; but it containeth a blessing which redounds unto his issue, "*the fruit of his body*." This blessing is no less than a royal succession in the throne of David: David's sons shall inherit it, but it is God that states them in it. They shall sit, but *I will set them*, yea, so set them that they shall never fall; they shall sit for ever; the succession shall be perpetual. And hitherto the promise runs absolute: it is qualified in that which followeth. The king was busy to build God's house; and see how God answers him, promising the building of the king's house! God requites a building with a building. There is a very apt illusion in the word, upon which the son of Syrach also plays, when he saith, that children and the building of a city make a perpetual name; how much more if they be a royal offspring, that are destined to sit upon a throne? And God promises David sons for this honourable end—"*to sit upon his throne*."—Arthur Lake, —1626.

Verse 12. *If thy children will keep my covenant*, etc. Lest David's sons, if they be left without law, should live without care, they must know that the succession shall be perpetual; but the promise is conditional; if David's sons conform themselves to God, "*if they keep my covenant*", whereof they cannot pretend ignorance. And they have an authentic record: the record, "*my testimonies*"; authentic, "*I myself will teach them*." You see the king's blessing, it is rely great; but lest the promise thereof be thought too good to be true, God secures the king with a most unchangeable warrant. The warrant is his oath, "*The Lord sware*"; and this warrant is, 1. Unchangeable, because sincere; he swore in truth. 2. Stable, *he will not turn from it*. And what could king David desire more for his own house than a promise of such a blessing, and such a warrant of that promise? Yes he might, and no doubt he did desire *more*; and God also intended to him more than the letter of this promise doth express, even the accomplishment of the truth whereof this was but a type. And what is that? The establishment of the kingdom of Jesus Christ.—Arthur Lake.

Verse 12. *That I shall teach them*. Here is to be noted that he addeth, "*which I will teach them*"; for he will be the teacher and will be heard. He wills not that church councils should be heard, or such as teach that which he hath not taught...God giveth no authority unto man above the word. So should he set man, that is to say, dust and dung, above himself; for what is the word, but God himself? This word they that honour, obey, and keep, are the true church indeed, be they never so contemptible in the world; but they which do not, are the church of Satan, and accursed of God. And this is the cause why it is expressly set down in the text, "*The testimonies which I will teach them*." For so will God use the ministry of teachers and pastors in the church, that he notwithstanding will be their chief Pastor, and all other ministers and pastors whatsoever, yea, the church itself, shall be ruled and governed by the word.—Martin Luther.

Verse 12. *Their children shall also sit upon thy throne for evermore*. As if he had said, this promise as

touching Christ will I accomplish, and will undoubtedly establish the throne unto my servant David; but do not ye, which in the meantime sit on this throne, and govern this kingdom, presume upon the promise, and think that you cannot err, or that I will wink at your errors, and not rather condemn and severely punish them. Therefore either govern your kingdom according to my word, or else I will root you out and destroy you for ever. This promise he now amplifies, and setteth forth more at large.—*Martin Luther*.

Verse 13. *For the LORD hath chosen Zion*, etc. The Lord's pitching upon any place to dwell there cometh not of the worthiness of the place, or persons, but from God's good pleasure alone. The Lord having chosen his church, resteth in his love to her: he smelleth a sweet savour of Christ, and this maketh his seat among his people steadfast.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 13. *For the LORD hath chosen Zion*. Here, of a singular purpose, he useth the same word which Moses used (De 16:6): "As the place which the Lord thy God *shall choose* to place his name in." For at the beginning there was no certain place appointed wherein the tabernacle should remain; but it wandered, not only from place to place, but also from tribe to tribe, as Ephraim, Manasseh, Dan, etc. Moreover, by the word, "*hath chosen*", he overthroweth all kinds of worship and religion of men's own devising and choosing, whereof there was an infinite number among the Jews. Election or choice belongeth not unto us; but we must yield obedience to the voice of the Lord. Else shall that happen unto us which Jeremiah threatens: "That they have chosen will I reject." These things destroy and confound the inventions, the devices and devotions, the false and counterfeit religions, which we have seen in the papacy... God is not served but when that is done which he hath commanded. Wherefore election or choice pertaineth not to us, so that what God hath commanded, that we must do.—*Martin Luther*.

Verse 14. *This is my rest for ever*. Of the Christian church we may affirm with undoubted certainty, that it is *God's rest for ever*: after this dispensation of his will, there will never succeed another; Christianity closes and completes the Divine communication from God to man; nothing greater, nothing better can or will be imparted to him on this side eternity; and even in heaven itself we shall, through an everlasting duration, be employed in contemplating and adoring the riches of that grace, the brightest glories of which have been realized in the consummations of Calvary, the ascension of the Messiah, the breaking down of all national peculiarity, and the gift and mission of the Divine Spirit. Let the argument of the apostle to the Hebrews be fully weighed, and the conclusion of every mind must be, that God has "removed those things that are shaken, as of things that are made, that those things which cannot be shaken may remain:" Heb 12:27.—*John Morison, in "An Exposition of the Book of Psalms," 1829*.

Verse 14. *This is my rest for ever*. The heart of the saints is the dwelling place of God. He rests in those who rest in him. He rests when he causes us to rest.—*Pasquier Quesnel*.

Verse 14. *Dwell.* The word translated "*dwell*" means originally to *sit*, and especially to sit enthroned, so that this idea would be necessarily suggested with the other to a Hebrew reader.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verses 14-18. Now that he might apparently see how near the Lord is to all them that call upon him in faithfulness and truth, he waiteth not long for an answer, but carries it away with him before he departs. For to David's petition, "*Return, O LORD, unto thy resting place, thou, and the ark of thy strength*"; God's answer is this,—"*This shall be my resting place, here will I dwell, for I have a delight therein. I will bless her victuals with increase, and will satisfy her poor with bread.*" To David's petition, "*Let thy priests be clothed with righteousness, and let thy saints sing with joyfulness*", God's answer is this: "*I will clothe her priests with salvation: and her saints shall rejoice and sing.*" Lastly, to David's petition, "*For thy servant David's sake turn not away the face of thine anointed*", God's answer is this: "*There will I make the horn of David to flourish: I have ordained a light for mine anointed. As for his enemies, I will clothe them with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish.*" As if he should have said,—*Turn away the face of mine anointed Nay, that will I never do; I will indeed turn away the face of the enemies of mine anointed; their face shall be covered with confusion, and clothed with shame. But contrariwise, I have ordained a light for mine anointed. He shall even have a light in his face and a crown upon his head. "As for his enemies, I will clothe them with shame; but upon himself shall his crown flourish."*—*Thomas Playfere, 1633.*

Verse 15. *I will abundantly bless her provision,* etc. The provision of Zion, the church of God, the word and ordinances, of which Christ is the sum and substance; the gospel is milk for babes, and meat for strong men; the ordinances are a feast of fat things; Christ's flesh is meat indeed, and his blood drink indeed; the whole provision is spiritual, savoury, salutary, strengthening, satisfying, and nourishing, when the Lord blesses it; as he does to those who hunger and thirst after it, and feed upon it by faith; so that their souls grow thereby, and they become fat and flourishing; grace increases in them, and they are fruitful in every good work; and this the Lord promises to do *abundantly*, in a very large way and manner; or *certainly*, for it is, in the original text, "in blessing I will bless", that is, will surely bless, as this phrase is sometimes rendered. I will satisfy her poor with bread. Zion has her poor; persons may be poor and yet belong to Zion, belong to Zion and yet be poor; there are poor in all the churches of Christ: our Lord told his disciples that they had the poor, and might expect to have them, always with them; and particular directions are given to take care of Zion's poor under the gospel dispensation, that they may not want bread in a literal sense: though by the poor are chiefly designed the Lord's afflicted and distressed ones; or those who in a spiritual sense are poor, sensible of their spiritual poverty, and seeking after the true riches; or are poor in spirit, to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs; these the Lord promises to satisfy, to fill them to the full with the bread of the gospel, made of the finest of the wheat, of which there is enough and to

spare in his house; and with Christ the bread of life, of which those that eat shall never die, but live for ever.—*John Gill*.

Verse 15. *Her provision; I will bless, I will bless.* The repetition of the verb may express either certainty or fulness. *I will surely bless, or I will bless abundantly.*—*Joseph Addison Alexander*.

Verse 15. *I will abundantly bless her provision.* Believe it, a saint hath rare fare, gallant cheer, and rich diet, and all at free cost. He is feasted all the day long; he is brought oft into the banqueting house, and hath the rarest, the costliest, the most wholesome diet, that which is most hearty and strengthening, which is most dainty and pleasant, and the greatest variety, and nothing is wanting that may make his state happy, except a full enjoyment of glory itself. The Lord gives him all the experiences of his power and goodness to his Church in former ages to feed his hopes upon; nay, many choice providences, many of prayer, many foretastes of glory, many ordinances, especially that great one the Lord's Supper, at which Christ and all his benefits are served up in a royal dish to refresh and feast the faith, hope, and love of the saints. And that which sweetens all this—he knows that all this is but a little to what he shall shortly live upon when he comes to the marriage supper; then he shall always be feasted and never surfeited. And beside all this, he hath the sweet and refreshing incomes of the Spirit, filling him with such true pleasure, that he can easily spare the most sumptuous banquet, the noblest feast, and highest worldly delights, as infinitely short of one hour's treatment in his Friend's chamber. And, if this be his entertainment in the inn, what shall he have at the court? If this heavenly manna be his food in the wilderness, at what rate is he like to live when he comes into Canaan? If this be the provision of the way, what is that of the country?—*John Janeway*, about 1670.

Verse 15. *I will satisfy her poor with bread.* Christ is a satisfying good. A wooden loaf, a silver loaf, a golden loaf will not satisfy a hungry man; the man must have bread. The dainties and dignities of the world, the grandeur and glory of the world, the plenty and prosperity of the world, the puff and popularity of the world, will not satisfy a soul sailing by the gates of hell, and crying out of the depths; it must be a Christ. "Children, or I die", was the cry of the woman; a Christ, or I die—a Christ, or I am damned, is the doleful ditty and doleful dialect of a despairing or desponding soul. "He that loveth silver shall not be satisfied therewith; nor he that loveth abundance with increase:" Ec 5:10. It is a good observation, that the world is round, but the heart of man is triangular. Now, all the globe of the world will not fill the triangular heart of man. What of the world and in the world can give quietness, when Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, goes down upon the soul? The heart is a three square, and nothing but a trinity in unity and a unity in trinity will satisfy this. Not riches, nor relations, nor barns, nor bags, will satisfy a convinced and deserted soul. This person can say concerning his bags as a great person upon a sick, if not a dying, bed, did concerning his bags,—Away, and away for ever. Though there be bag upon bag, yet they are altogether insignificant in a dying hour; these bags, they

are but as so many ciphers before a figure. This is the cry of despairing and desponding souls: "O satisfy us early with thy mercy; that we may rejoice and be glad all our days:" Ps 90:14.—*Richard Mayhew, 1679.*

Verse 15. *I will satisfy her poor with bread.* Dainties I will not promise them; a *sufficiency*, but not, a *superfluity*: poor they may be, but not destitute; bread they shall have, and of that God's plenty, as they say; enough to bring them to their Father's house, "where there is bread enough." Let not, therefore, the poor Israelite fear to bring his offerings, or to disfurnish himself for God's worship, etc.—*John Trapp.*

Verse 16. *I will clothe her priests with salvation.* Their salvation shall be evident and conspicuous, just as a garment is.—*Aben Ezra.*

Verse 16. God's presence is an earnest of all good; for all this follows upon "here will I dwell." By it he giveth meat to the hungry, and comfort to the poor, even the Bread of Life to the believing and repenting soul; by it he himself is the sanctification of his priests, and his righteousness and salvation is their most glorious vesture; and by his presence he maketh his elect ever glad, filling their hearts with joy and their mouths with songs.—*J. W. Burgon.*

Verse 16. *Her saints shall shout aloud for joy.* It would astonish and amuse a European stranger to hear these natives sing. They have not the least idea either of harmony or melody; noise is what they best understand, and he that sings the loudest is considered to sing the best. I have occasionally remonstrated with them on the subject; but the reply I once received silenced me for ever after. "Sing softly, brother", I said to one of the principal members. "Sing softly!" he replied, "is it you, our father, who tells us to sing softly? Did you ever hear us sing the praises of our Hindu gods? how we threw our heads backward, and with all our might shouted out the praises of those who are no gods I and now do you tell us to *whisper* the praises of Jesus? No, sir, we cannot—we must express in loud tones our gratitude to him who loved us, and died for us!" And so they continued to sing with all their might, and without further remonstrance.—*G. Gogerly, in "The Pioneers: a Narrative of the Bengal Mission," 1870.*

Verse 17. *There will I make the horn of David to bud,* etc. A metaphor taken from those goodly creatures, as stags, and such like; whose chiefest beauty and strength consisteth in their horns, especially when they bud and branch abroad.—*Thomas Playfere.*

Verse 17. *The horn of David.* This image of a *horn* is frequent in the Old Testament...The explanation must be found neither in the horns of the altar on which criminals sought to lay hold, nor in the horns with which they ornamented their helmets; the figure is taken from the horns of the bull, in which the power of this animal resides. It is a natural image among an agricultural people...Just as the strength of the animal is concentrated in its horn, so all the delivering power granted to the family of David for the advantage of the people will be concentrated in the Messiah.—*F. Godet, in "A Commentary on*

the Gospel of St. Luke," 1875.

Verse 17. *Make the horn to bud.* In the beginning of the month of March the common stag, or red deer, is lurking in the sequestered spots of his forest home, harmless as his mate, and as timorous. Soon a pair of prominences make their appearance on his forehead, covered with a velvety skin. In a few days these little prominences have attained some length, and give the first indication of their true form. Grasp one of these in the hand and it will be found burning hot to the touch, for the blood runs fiercely through the velvety skin, depositing at every touch a minute portion of bony matter. More and more rapidly grow the horns, the carotid arteries enlarging in order to supply a sufficiency of nourishment, and in the short period of ten weeks the enormous mass of bony matter has been completed. Such a process is almost, if not entirely, without parallel in the history of the animal kingdom.—*J. G. Wood, in "The Illustrated Natural History," 1861.*

Verse 17. *The horn.* My friend, Mr. Graham, of Damascus, says, concerning the horns worn by eastern women, "This head dress is of dough, tin, silver, or gold, according to the wealth of the different classes. The rank is also indicated by the length of it. The nobler the lady, the longer the horn. Some of them are more than an English yard." I procured at Damascus an ancient gem, representing a man wearing the horn. In the present day, its use is confined to the women.—*John Wilson, in "The Lands of the Bible," 1847.*

Verse 17. *I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.* This clause contains an allusion to the law, which cannot be preserved in any version. The word translated "lamp" is used to designate the several burners of the golden candlestick (Ex 25:37 35:14 37:23 39:87), and the verb here joined with it is the one applied to the ordering or tending of the sacred lights by the priests (Ex 27:21 Le 27:3). The meaning of the whole verse is, that the promise of old made to David and to Zion should be yet fulfilled, however dark and inauspicious present appearances.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 17. *I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.* We remark,

1. The designation given unto Christ by God his Father; he is "*mine anointed.*" Though he be despised and rejected of men; though an unbelieving world see no form or comeliness in him, why he should be desired, yet I own him, and challenge him as mine Anointed, the Prophet, Priest, and King of my church. "I have found David my servant: with my holy oil have I anointed him: with whom my hand shall be established: mine arm also shall strengthen him": Ps 89:20-21.

2. The great means of God's appointment for manifesting the glory of Christ to a lost world; he has provided "*a lamp*" for his Anointed. The use of a lamp is to give light to people in the darkness of the night; so the word of God, particularly the gospel, is a light shining in a dark place, until the day of glory dawn, when the Lord God and the Lamb will be the light of the ransomed for endless evermore.

3. The authority by which this lamp is lighted and carried through this dark world; it is "*ordained*" of God; and by his commandment it is that we preach and spread the light of the gospel (Mr

16:15,20).—*Ebenezer Erskine*, 1680—.

Verse 17. *I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.* That is, I have ordained prosperity and blessings for him; blessings upon his person, and especially the blessing of posterity. Children are as a *lamp* or *candle* in their father's house, making the name of their ancestors conspicuous; hence in Scripture a Child given to succeed his father is called a *lamp*. When God by Ahijah the prophet told Jeroboam that God would take the kingdom out of the hand of Solomon's son, and give it unto him, even ten tribes; he yet adds (1Ki 11:86), "And unto his son will I give one tribe, that David my servant may have a light (*lamp* or *candle*) alway before me in Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen me to put my name there." And again (1Ki 15:4), when Abijam the son of Rehoboam proved wicked, the text saith, "Nevertheless for David's sake did the Lord his God give him a *lamp* (or *candle*) in Jerusalem, to set up his son after him."—*Joseph Caryl*.

Verses 17-18. God having chosen David's family, he here promises to bless that also with suitable blessings.

1. Growing power: "*There (in Zion) will I make the horn of David to bud.*" The royal dignity should increase more and more, and constant additions be made to the lustre of it. Christ is the "horn of salvation", noting a plentiful and powerful salvation, which God hath raised up and made to bud "in the house of his servant David." David had promised to use his power for God's glory, to cut off the horns of the wicked, and to exalt the horns of the righteous (Ps 75:10); and in recompense for it, God here promises to make his horn to bud; for to them that have power and use it well, more shall be given.

2. Lasting honour: "*I have ordained a lamp for mine anointed.*" Thou wilt "light my candle" (Ps 18:28): that lamp is likely to burn brightly which God ordains. A lamp is a successor; for when a lamp is almost out, another may be lighted by it: it is a succession; for by this means David shall not want a man to stand before God. Christ is the lamp and the light of the world.

3. Complete victory. "*His enemies*", that have formed designs against him, "*will I clothe with shame*", when they shall see their designs baffled. Let the enemies of all good governors expect to be clothed with shame, and especially the enemies of the Lord Jesus and his government, who shall rise in the last great day "to everlasting shame and contempt."

4. Universal prosperity: "*Upon himself shall his crown flourish*", i.e., his government shall be more and more his honour. This was to have its full accomplishment in Christ Jesus, whose crown of honour and power shall never fade, nor the flowers of it wither. The crowns of earthly princes "endure not to all generations" (Pr 27:24); but Christ's crown shall endure to all eternity, and the crowns reserved for his faithful subjects are such as "fade not away."—*Matthew Henry*.

Verse 18. *His enemies will I clothe with shame.* That is, shame shall so inseparably cover them, that as wheresoever a man goeth, he carrieth his clothes with him; so wheresoever they go they shall

carry their *shame* with them. And that which is strangest of all, they which are ashamed use to clothe or cover their shame, and then think themselves well enough; but David's enemies shall be so ashamed, that even the very covering of their shame shall be a discovering of it; and the clothing or cloaking of their ignominy shall be nothing else but a girding of it more closely and more inseparably unto them.—*Thomas Playfere*.

Verse 18. *Upon himself shall the crown flourish.* This idea seems to be taken from the nature of the ancient crowns bestowed upon conquerors. From the earliest periods of history, the laurel, olive, ivy, etc., furnished crowns to adorn the heads of heroes, who had conquered in the field of battle, gained the prize in the race, or performed some other important service to the public. These were the dear bought rewards of the most heroic exploits of antiquity. This sets the propriety of the phrase in full view. The idea of a crown of gold and jewels flourishing, is at least unnatural; whereas, flourishing is natural to laurels, oaks, etc. These were put upon the heads of the victors ill full verdure, and their merit seemed to make them flourish on their heads, in fresher green. The literal crown which Jesus wore was also of the vegetable kind, and the thorn of sorrow never flourished in such rigour as on his head. Now he has got the crown of life, which shall not fade away, like the perishing verdure of the crowns of other heroes. It shall flourish for ever, with all the rigour of immortality, and bring forth all the olive fruits of peace for his people. Its branches shall spread, and furnish crowns for all the victors in the spiritual warfare.—*Alexander Pirie*, —1804.

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1.

1. The Lord remembers Jesus, our David: he loves him, he delights in him, he is with him.
2. In that memory his griefs have a prominent place—"all his afflictions."
3. Yet the Lord would be put in remembrance by his people.

Verses 1-2. Concerning his people,

1. The Lord remembers,
 - a) Their persons.
 - b) Their afflictions.
 - c) Their vows.
2. The Lord remembers them,
 - a) To accept them.
 - b) To sympathize with them.
 - c) To assist them.

Verses 1-2.

1. God remembers his people, each one: "Remember David." The Spirit maketh intercession within

us according to the will of God.

2. He remembers their afflictions: "David and all his afflictions." "I know thy works and thy tribulation."

3. He remembers their vows, especially,

- a) Those which relate to his service.
- b) Those which are solemnly made.
- c) Those which are faithfully performed.—*G. R.*

Verses 1-5. Notice,

1. How painfully David felt what he conceived to be a dishonouring of God, which he thought he might be able to remedy. Consider "his afflictions",—because the ark dwelt within curtains, while he himself dwelt in a house of cedar: 2Sa 7:2.

2. Consider,

- a) Its singularity. Most find affliction in personal losses; very few suffer from a cause like this.
- b) The little sympathy such a feeling meets with from the most of men. "If God means to convert the heathen, he can do it without you, young man", was said to Dr., then Mr. Carey, when heathenism was an affliction to him.
- c) Its fittingness to a really God fearing man.
- d) Its pleasingness to God: 1Sa 2:30.

2. How earnestly he set himself to remedy the evil he deplored: "He sware", etc. There cannot be the least doubt that he would have foregone the enjoyment of temporal luxuries until he had accomplished the work dear to his heart, if he had been permitted of God. Remark,

- a) There is little zeal for God's honour when self denial is not exercised for the sake of his cause.
- b) Were a like zeal generally shown by God's people, there would be more givers and more liberal gifts; more workers, and the work more heartily and better done.
- c) It would be well to astonish the world, and deserve the commendations of the righteous by becoming enthusiasts for the honour of God.—*J. F.*

Verses 3-5.

1. We should desire a habitation for God more than for ourselves. God should have the best of everything. "See, now, I dwell in a house of cedar, but the ark of God dwelleth within curtains."

2. We should be guided by the house of God in seeking a house for ourselves: "Surely I will not come", etc.

3. We should labour for the prosperity of God's house even more than of our own. Nothing should make sleep more sweet to us than when the church of God prospers; nothing keep us more awake than when it declines: "I will not give sleep", etc. (Ps 132:4); "Is it time for you, O ye, to dwell in your ceiled houses, and this house lie waste?"—*G. R.*

Verse 5. Something to live for—to find fresh habitations for God.

1. The Condescension implied: God *with us*.

2. The Districts explored: hearts, homes, "dark places of the earth."

3. The Royalty of the Work. It makes King David busy, and is labour worthy of a king.—*W. B. H.*

Verse 5. "*A place for the LORD.*" In the heart, the home, the assembly, the life. Everywhere we must find or make a place for the Lord.

Verse 5. "*The mighty God of Jacob.*"

1. Mighty, and therefore he joined heaven and earth at Bethel.

2. Mighty, and therefore brought Jacob back from Mesopotamia.

3. Mighty, and yet wrestled with him at Jabbok.

4. Mighty, and yet allowed him to be afflicted.

5. Mighty, and therefore gave him full deliverance.

Verses 6-7. We shall use this for practical purposes. A soul longing to meet with God. God has appointed a meeting place.

1. *We know what it is.* A mercy seat, a throne of grace, a place of revealed glory. Within it the law preserved. Heavenly food—pot of manna. Holy rule—Aaron's rod.

2. *We desire to find it.* Intensely. Immediately. Reverently. Longing to receive it.

3. *We heard of it.* In our young days. We almost forget where. From ministers, from holy men, from those who loved us.

4. *We found it.* Where we least expected it. In a despised place. In a lonely place. Where we lost ourselves. Very near us—where we hid like Adam among the trees.

5. *We will go.* To God in Christ. For all he gives. To dwell with him. To learn of him.

6. *We will worship.* Humbly. Solemnly. Gratefully. Preparing for heaven.

Verse 7.

1. The Place: "His tabernacles."

a) Built for God.

b) Accepted by God: present everywhere, he is especially present here.

2. The Attendance: "We will go", etc. There God is present to meet us, and there we should be present to meet him.

3. The Design:

a) For adoration.

b) For self consecration: "We will worship at his footstool."—*G. R.*

Verses 8-9.

1. The Presence of God desired—

a) That it may be signally manifested: "Arise" and enter.

b) That it may be gracious: "Thou and the ark"—that he may be present on the mercyseat.

c) That it may be felt: accompanied with power: "The ark of thy strength."

d) That it may be abiding: "Arise into thy rest."

2. The reasons for this desire.

a) With respect to the priests or ministers: "Let thy priests", etc.: not their own righteousness, but as a clothing: let them speak of "garments of salvation" and "robes of righteousness."

b) With respect to the worshippers: "And let thy saints", etc. Let ministers preach the gift of righteousness; not that which grows out of man's nature, but that which is "unto all and upon all them that believe", and saints will shout for joy.—*G. R.*

Verse 9. Consider,

1. The importance of a righteous ministry in the church.

2. The connection between such a ministry and a joyous people.

3. The dependence of both on the gracious working of God.—*J. F.*

Verse 9. (*second clause*).

1. Saints.

2. Shouting.

3. Explaining—"for joy."

4. Encouraging—"Let thy saints shout."

Verse 9. (*second clause*).—The connection between holiness and joy.

Verses 9, 16. *The Spiritual Vestry.*

1. The Vestments:

a) Righteousness; for which the costliest stole is a poor substitute.

b) Salvation: learning, oratory, etc., of small account in comparison.

2. The Procuring of the vestments:

a) Must be from God.

b) Earnest prayer should constantly arise from all saints.

3. The Robing:

a) By God's own hand!

b) Their beauty and power who are so invested.

c) The persons are "thy priests."—*W. B. H.*

Verses 9, 16.

1. Priests and Saints.

2. Vestments.

3. "Hymns Ancient and Modern."

4. The Real Presence: God giving the garments and the joy.

Verse 10.

1. An evil to be deprecated: "Turn not away the face"—so that he cannot see thee, or be seen of thee, or accepted, or allowed to hope.

2. A plea to be employed, "for thy servant David's sake"—thy covenant with him, his zeal, his consecration, his afflictions, his service. Good gospel pleading, such as may be used on many occasions.

Verse 11.

1. The divine oath.

2. Its eternal stability.

3. The everlasting Kingship.

Verse 11. (*middle clause*).—Our confidence: "He will not turn from it." He is not a changing God. He foreknew everything. He is able to carry out his purpose. His honour is bound up in it. His oath can never be broken.

Verse 12. Family favour may be perpetual, but the conditions must be observed.

Verse 13.

1. Sovereign choice.

2. Condescending indwelling.

3. Eternal rest.

4. Gracious reason—"I have desired it."

Verse 14.

1. God finding rest in his church.

a) The three persons honoured.

b) The divine nature exercised.

c) Eternal purposes fulfilled.

d) Almighty energies rewarded.

e) Tremendous sacrifices remembered.

f) Glorious attributes extolled.

g) Dearest relationships indulged.

2. This rest enduring for ever.

a) There will always be a church.

b) That church will always be such as God can rest in.

c) That church will therefore be secure on earth.

d) That church will be glorified eternally in heaven.

Verse 15.

1. Blessed provision.

2. Satisfied people—"satisfy her poor."

3. Glorified God—"I will."

4. Happy place—Zion.

Verse 16, 18. Two forms of clothing: salvation and shame, prepared for his priests and his enemies. Which will you wear?

Verse 17. A Lamp ordained for God's Anointed. Being the Substance of Two Sermons, by Ebenezer Erskine. *Works, Vol. 3, pp. 3-41.*

Verses 17-18.

1. The budding horn of growing power.
2. The perpetual lamp of constant brightness.
3. The sordid array of defeated foes.
4. The unfading wreath of glorious sovereignty.

Verse 18.

1. His enemies clothed.
 - a) Who are they? The openly profane. The moral but irreligious. The self righteous. The hypocritical.
 - b) How clothed with shame? In repentance, in disappointment, in remorse, in destruction. Sin detected. Self defeated. Hopes scattered.
 - c) Who clothes them The Lord. He will shame them thoroughly.
2. Himself crowned.
 - a) His crown: his dominion and glory.
 - b) Its flourishing. Glory extending. Subjects increasing. Wealth growing. Foes fearing, etc.

Verse 18. (last clause). The Lord Jesus himself the source, sustenance, and centre of the prosperity of his kingdom.

WORK UPON THE HUNDRED AND THIRTY-SECOND PSALM

In "The Works of John Boys," 1626, folio, pp. 821-5, there is an Exposition of Psalm 132. This is a poor and lean performance.

Psalm 133

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. *A Song of Degrees of David.* We see no reason for depriving David of the authorship of this sparkling sonnet. He knew by experience the bitterness occasioned by divisions in families, and was well prepared to celebrate in choicest Psalmody the blessing of unity for which he sighed. Among the

"songs of degrees", this hymn has certainly attained unto a good degree, and even in common literature it is frequently quoted for its perfume and dew. In this Psalm there is no wry word, all is "sweetness and light",—a notable ascent from Psalm 110 with which the Pilgrims set out. That is full of war and lamentation, but this sings of peace and pleasantness. The visitors to Zion were about to return, and this may have been their hymn of joy because they had seen such union among the tribes who had gathered at the common altar. The previous Psalm, which sings of the covenant, had also revealed the centre of Israel's unity in the Lord's anointed and the promises made to him. No wonder that brethren dwell in unity when God dwells among them, and finds his rest in them. Our translators have given to this Psalm an admirable explanatory heading, "The benefit of the communion of saints." These good men often hit off the meaning of a passage in a few words.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. *Behold.* It is a wonder seldom seen, therefore behold it! It may be seen, for it is the characteristic of real saints,—therefore fail not to inspect it! It is well worthy of admiration; pause and gaze upon it! It will charm you into imitation, therefore note it well! God looks on with approval, therefore consider it with attention. *How good and holy pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!* No one can tell the exceeding excellence of such a condition; and so the Psalmist uses the word "how" twice;—Behold how good! and how pleasant! He does not attempt to measure either the good or the pleasure, but invites us to behold for ourselves. The combination of the two adjectives "good" and "pleasant", is more remarkable than the conjunction of two stars of the first magnitude: for a thing to be "good" is good, but for it also to be pleasant is better. All men love pleasant things, and yet it frequently happens that the pleasure is evil; but here the condition is as good as it is pleasant, as pleasant as it is good, for the same "*how*" is set before each qualifying word.

For *brethren* according to the flesh to dwell together is not always wise; for experience teaches that they are better a little apart, and it is shameful for them to dwell together in disunion. They had much better part in peace like Abraham and Lot, than dwell together in envy like Joseph's brothers. When brethren can and do dwell together *in unity*, then is their communion worthy to be gazed upon and sung of in holy Psalmody. Such sights ought often to be seen among those who are near of kin, for they are brethren, and therefore should be united in heart and aim; they dwell together, and it is for their mutual comfort that there should be no strife; and yet how many families are rent by fierce feuds, and exhibit a spectacle which is neither good nor pleasant!

As to brethren in spirit, they ought to dwell together in church fellowship, and in that fellowship one essential matter is unity. We can dispense with uniformity if we possess unity: oneness of life, truth, and way; oneness in Christ Jesus; oneness of object and spirit—these we must have, or our assemblies will be synagogues of contention rather than churches of Christ. The closer the unity the

better; for the more of the good and the pleasant there will be. Since we are imperfect beings, somewhat of the evil and the unpleasant is sure to intrude; but this will readily be neutralized and easily ejected by the true love of the saints, if it really exists. Christian unity is good in itself, good for ourselves, good for the brethren, good for our converts, good for the outside world; and for certain it is pleasant; for a loving heart must have pleasure and give pleasure in associating with others of like nature. A church united for years in earnest service of the Lord is a well of goodness and joy to all those who dwell round about it.

Verse 2. *It is like the precious ointment upon the head.* In order that we may the better behold brotherly unity David gives us a resemblance, so that as in a glass we may perceive its blessedness. It has a *sweet perfume* about it, comparable to that precious ointment with which the first High Priest was anointed at his ordination. It is a *holy thing*, and so again is like the oil of consecration which was to be used only in the Lord's service. What a sacred thing must brotherly love be when it can be likened to an oil which must never be poured on any man but on the Lord's high priest alone! It is a *diffusive* thing: being poured on his head the fragrant oil flowed down upon Aaron's head, and thence dropped upon his garments till the utmost hem was anointed therewith; and even so doth brotherly love extend its benign power and bless all who are beneath its influence. Hearty concord brings a benediction upon all concerned; its goodness and pleasure are shared in by the lowliest members of the household; even the servants are the better and the happier because of the lovely unity among the members of the family. *It has a special use* about it; for as by the anointing oil Aaron was set apart for the special service of Jehovah, even so those who dwell in love are the better fitted to glorify God in his church. The Lord is not likely to use for his glory those who are devoid of love; they lack the anointing needful to make them priests unto the Lord. *That ran down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard.* This is a chief point of comparison, that as the oil did not remain confined to the place where it first fell, but flowed down the High Priest's hair and bedewed his beard, even so brotherly love descending from the head distils and descends, anointing as it runs, and perfuming all it lights upon. *That went down to the skirts of his garments.* Once set in motion it would not cease from flowing. It might seem as if it were better not to smear his garments with oil, but the sacred unguent could not be restrained, it flowed over his holy robes; even thus does brotherly love not only flow over the hearts upon which it was first poured out, and descend to those who are an inferior part of the mystical body of Christ, but it runs where it is not sought for, asking neither leave nor license to make its way. Christian affection knows no limits of parish, nation, sect, or age. Is the man a believer in Christ? Then he is in the one body, and I must yield him an abiding love. Is he one of the poorest, one of the least spiritual, one of the least lovable? Then he is as the skirts of the garment, and my heart's love must fall even upon him. Brotherly love comes from the head, but falls to the feet. Its way is downward. It "ran down", and it "went down": love for the brethren condescends to men of low estate,

it is not puffed up, but is lowly and meek. This is no small part of its excellence: oil would not anoint if it did not flow down, neither would brotherly love diffuse its blessing if it did not descend.

Verse 3. *As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion.* From the loftier mountains the moisture appears to be wafted to the lesser hills: the dews of Hermon fall on Zion. The Alpine Lebanon ministers to the minor elevation of the city of David; and so does brotherly love descend from the higher to the lower, refreshing and enlivening in its course. Holy concord is as dew, mysteriously blessed, full of life and growth for all plants of grace. It brings with it so much benediction that it is as no common dew, but As that of Hermon which is specially copious, and far reaching. The proper rendering is, "As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion", and this tallies with the figure which has been already used; and sets forth by a second simile the sweet descending diffusiveness of brotherly unity. For there the LORD commanded the blessing, even life for *evermore*. That is, in Zion, or better still, in the place where brotherly love abounds. Where love reigns God reigns. Where love wishes blessing, there God commands the blessing. God has but to command, and it is done. He is so pleased to see his dear children happy in one another that he fails not to make them happy in himself. He gives especially his best blessing of eternal life, for love is life; dwelling together in love we have begun the enjoyments of eternity, and these shall not be taken from us. Let us love for evermore, and we shall live for evermore. This makes Christian brotherhood so good and pleasant; it has Jehovah's blessing resting upon it, and it cannot be otherwise than sacred like "the precious ointment", and heavenly like "the dew of Hermon." O for more of this rare virtue! Not the love which comes and goes, but that which dwells; not that spirit which separates and secludes, but that which dwells together; not that mind which is all for debate and difference, but that which dwells together in unity. Never shall we know the full power of the anointing till we are of one heart and of one spirit; never will the sacred dew of the Spirit descend in all its fulness till we are perfectly joined together in the same mind; never will the covenanted and commanded blessing come forth from the Lord our God till once again we shall have "one Lord, one faith, one baptism." Lord, lead us into this most precious spiritual unity, for thy Son's sake. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. This Psalm is an effusion of holy joy occasioned by the sight of the gathering of Israel as one great household at the yearly feasts...There might likewise be an allusion to the previous jealousies and alienations in the family of Israel, which seemed to be exchanged for mutual concord and affection, on David's accession to the throne of the whole nation.—*Joseph Addison Alexander.*

Verse 1. *Behold how good and how pleasant it is,* etc. There are three things wherein it is very pleasant to behold the people of God joining in one.

1. When they join or are *one in opinion* and judgment, when they all think the same thing, and are of

one mind in the truth.

2. When they join together and are *one in affection*, when they are all of one heart, though possibly they are not all of one mind; or, when they meet in affection, though not in opinion. When David had spoken admiringly of this goodly sight, he spoke declaratively concerning the goodness of it (Ps 133:2): "*It is like the precious ointment upon the head.*" 'Tis so, first, for the sweetness of it; 'tis so, secondly, for the diffusiveness of it (as followeth), "*that ran down even the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments.*"

3. It is a blessed thing to see them joining together in duty, either as duty is considered—First, *in doing that which is good*; or, when, as the apostle's word is (2Co 6:1), they are, among themselves, "workers together" in any good work: we say (to fill up the text), "workers together with God." That's a blessed sight indeed, when we join with God, and God joins with us in his work. It is also a blessed sight when all the ministers of Jesus Christ, and many as members of Jesus Christ, join in any good work, in this especially, to beseech all we have to do with "that they receive not the grace of God in vain." Secondly, *in turning from evil*, and putting iniquity far from them; in praying for the pardon of sin, and making their peace with God. 'Tis a good work to turn away from evil, especially when all who are concerned in it join in it...As to join in sin, and to be brethren in iniquity, is the worst of unions, indeed, a combination against God; so to join as brethren in mourning for sin and repenting of our iniquities is a blessed union, and highly pleasing to God.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 1. *How good and how pleasant it is*, etc. The terms of this praise and commendation, or the particulars whereof it consists, is taken from a twofold qualification.

1. Brotherly concord and the improvement of it in all occasional expressions is a very great good. This is, and will appear to be so in sundry considerations.

As, *First*, in regard of the *Author* and *owner* of it, which is *God himself*, who lays special claim hereunto. Therefore in Scripture we find him to be from hence denominated and entitled. 1Co 14:33. "God is not the author of confusion (or of noisiness), but the author of peace". 2Co 13:11. "The God of peace and love." Peace is called "the peace of God:" Php 4:7. And God is called the "God of peace; "each of which expressions does refer it and reduce it to him, and does thereby advance it. Look, then, how far forth God himself is said to be good, so far forth is this dwelling in unity good also, as it is commanded and owned by him, as it appears thus to be.

Secondly. It is good in the *nature* of it; it is good, as any grace is good. It is good morally. Love is a fruit of the Spirit: Ga 5:22. And so to dwell in love and unity one with another is a goodness reducible thereunto. It is good spiritually; it is not only such a good as is taught by moral philosophy, and practised by the students thereof, but it is taught by the *Holy Ghost himself*, and is a part of the work of regeneration and of the new creature in us, especially if we take it in the full latitude and extent of it, as it becomes us to do.

Thirdly. It is good in the *effects* and *consequences* and *concomitants* of it: it has much good. It is *bonum utile*. A great deal of advantage comes by brethren's dwelling together in unity, especially spiritual advantage, and for the doing and receiving of good.

2. The second qualification is, the sweetness of it, because it is "*pleasant*:" it is not only *bonum utile*, and *bonum honestum*, but it is also *bonum jucundum*; it has a great deal of pleasure in it. Pleasure is such a kind of goodness, especially to some kind of persons, as that they care not almost what they do or part with to obtain it, and all other good besides is nothing to them, if it be devoid of this. Therefore for the further commendation of this fraternal unity to us, there is this also to be considered, that it is "*pleasant*." Thus it is with respect to all sorts of persons whatsoever, that are made sensible of it.

First. It is *pleasant to God*, it is such as is very acceptable to him; it is that which he much delights in, wheresoever he observes it; being himself a God of peace, he does therefore so much the more delight in peaceable Christians, and such as do relate to himself. How much do natural parents rejoice in the agreement of their children, to see them loving and friendly and kind and courteous to one another, oh, it pleases them and joys them at their very heart! and so it is likewise with God to those who are truly his.

Secondly. This brotherly unity is also *pleasant to ourselves*, who accordingly shall have so much the greater pleasure in it and from it.

Thirdly. It is also *pleasing to others*, indeed to all men else besides, that are bystanders and spectators of it. "*Behold, how pleasant it is*", etc. It is pleasant to all beholders: "He that in these things serveth Christ is acceptable to God, and approved of men", says the apostle: Ro 14:18.—*Thomas Horton*, —1673.

Verse 1. Pleasant. It is a pleasant thing for the saints and people of God to agree together; for the same word which is used here for "*pleasant*", is used also in the Hebrew for a harmony of music, such as when they rise to the highest strains of the viol, when the strings are all put in order to make up a harmony; so pleasant is it, such pleasantness is there in the saints' agreement. The same word is used also in the Hebrew for the pleasantness of a corn field. When a field is clothed with corn, though it be cut down, yet it is very pleasant, oh, how pleasant is it; and such is the saints' agreement. The same word in the Psalmist is used also for the sweetness of honey, and of sweet things in opposition to bitter things. And thus you see the pleasantness of it, by its being compared to the harmony of music, to the corn field, to the sweetness of honey, to the precious ointment that ran down Aaron's beard, and to the dew that fell upon Hermort and the hills of Zion: and all this to discover the pleasantness, profitableness, and sweetness of the saints' agreement. It is a pleasant thing to behold the sun, but it is much more pleasant to behold the saints' agreement and unity among themselves.—*William Bridge*.

Verse 1. Brethren. Abraham made this name, "*brethren*", a mediator to keep peace between Lot and him: "Are we not brethren?" saith Abraham. As if he should say, Shall brethren fall out for trifles, like infidels? This was enough to pacify Lot, for Abraham to put him in mind that they were brethren; when he heard the name of brethren, straight his heart yielded, and the strife was ended. So this should be the lawyer to end quarrels between Christians, to call to mind that they are brethren. And they which have spent all at law have wished that they had taken this lawyer, to think, with Lot, whether it were meet for brethren to strive like enemies.—*Henry Smith.*

Verse 1. Brethren. Some critics observe that the Hebrew word for a brother is of near brotherhood or alliance with two other words, whereof the first signifies *one*, and the other *alike* or *together*, to show that "*brethren*" ought to be as *one*, and *alike*, or *together*, which latter is by an elegant *paranomasia* joined with it: "Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for *brethren to dwell together in unity*", or, as we put it in the margin, "*to dwell even together.*" So then, the very word whereby "*brethren*" are expressed notes that there ought to be a *nearness*, a *similitude*, *yea*, a *oneness* (if I may so speak) between them in their affections and actions.—*Joseph Caryl.*

Verse 1. To dwell is a word of residence, and abode, and continuation. There is also pertaining to the love and concord of brethren a perseverance and persistency in it; not only to be together, or to come together, or to meet together for some certain time; but *to dwell* together in unity, this is which is here so extolled and commended unto us. It seems to be no such great matter, nor to carry any such great difficulty in it, for men to command themselves to some expressions of peace and friendship for some short space of time (though there are many now and then who are hardly able to do that); but to hold out in it, and to continue so long, this endurance is almost impossible to them. Yet this is that which is required of them as *Christians* and as "*brethren*" one to another, even to "*dwell together in unity*"; "to follow peace, and love, and concord, and mutual agreement, not only upon some occasional meetings, but all along the whole course of their lives, while they converse and live together.—*Thomas Horton.*

Verse 1. Together in unity. If there be but one God, as God is one, so let them that serve him be one. This is what Christ prayed so heartily for. "That they may be one:" Joh 17:21. Christians should be one, 1. *In judgment.* The apostle exhorts to be all of one mind. 1Co 1:10. How sad is it to see religion wearing a coat of divers colours; to see Christians of so many opinions, and going so many different ways! It is Satan that has sown these tares of division. Mt 13:39. He first divided men from God, and then one man from another. 2. *One in affection.* They should have one heart. "The multitude of them that believed were of one heart and of one soul": Ac 4:32. As in music, though there be several strings of a viol, yet all make one sweet harmony; so, though there are several Christians, yet there should be one sweet harmony of affection among them. There is but one God, and they that serve him should be one. There is nothing that would render the true religion more lovely, or make more

proselytes to it, than to see the professors of it tied together with the heart strings of love. If God be one, let all that profess him be of one mind, and one heart, and thus fulfil Christ's prayer, "that they all may be one."—*Thomas Watson*.

Verse 2. *Precious ointment upon the head.* Though every priest was anointed, yet only the high priest was anointed on the head, and there is a tradition that this rite was omitted after the Captivity, so that there is a special stress on the name of Aaron.—*Neale and Littledale*.

Verse 2. *The precious ointment... that ran down upon the beard... that went down to the skirts of his garments.* Magnificence, misnamed by churls extravagance and waste, is the invariable attribute of all true love. David recognized this truth when he selected the profuse anointing of Aaron with the oil of consecration at his installation into the office of High Priest as a fit emblem of brotherly love. There was waste in that anointing, too, as well as in the one which took place at Bethany. For the oil was not *sprinkled* on the head of Aaron, though that might have been sufficient for the purpose of a mere ceremony. The vessel was emptied on the High Priest's person, so that its contents flowed clown from the head upon the beard, and even to the skirts of the sacerdotal robes. In that very waste lay the point of the resemblance for David. It was a feature that was very likely to strike his mind; for he, too, was a wasteful man in his way. He had loved God in a manner which exposed him to the charge of extravagance. He had danced before the Lord, for example, when the ark was brought up from the house of Obededom to Jerusalem, forgetful of his dignity, exceeding the bounds of decorum, and, as it might seem, without excuse, as a much less hearty demonstration would have served the purpose of a religious solemnity.—*Alexander Balmain Bruce, in "The Training of the Twelve," 1877.*

Verse 2. *The precious ointment...that ran down.* Of the Hebrew perfumes an immense quantity was annually manufactured and consumed, of which we have a very significant indication in the fact that the holy anointing oil of the tabernacle and temple was never made in smaller quantities than 750 ounces of solids compounded with five quarts of oil, and was so profusely employed that when applied to Aaron's head it flowed down over his beard and breast, to the very skirts of his garments.—*Hugh Macmillan, in "The Ministry of Nature," 1871.*

Verse 2. *That ran down...that went down, etc.* Christ's grace is so diffusive of itself, that it conveys holiness to us, "running down from the head to the skirts", to all his members. He was not only anointed himself, but he is our anointer. Therefore it is called "the oil of gladness", because it rejoiceth our hearts, by giving us spiritual gladness, and peace of conscience.—*Thomas Adams*.

Verse 2. *Down upon the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments.* Not the extremity of them, as our version inclines to; for not so great a quantity of oil was poured upon him; nor would it have been decent to have his clothes thus greased from top to bottom; but the upper part of his garment, the top of his coat, on which the beard lay, as Zarchi; the neck or collar of it, as Kimchi and Ben Melech; the hole in which the head went through when it was put on, about

which there was a band, that it might not be rent: Ex 28:32 39:23; where the Septuagint use the same word as here.—*John Gill*.

Verses 2-3. In this prayer and song of the unity of the church, it is note worthy how, commencing with the fundamental idea of "*brethren*", we rise to the realization of the Elder Brother, who is our common anointed High Priest. It is the bond of his priesthood which joins us together as brethren. It is the common anointing which flows down even to the skirts of the garment of our High Priest which marks our being brethren. Whether we dwell north or south, meeting in Zion, and sharing in the blessings of that eternal Priesthood of Christ, we form in reality, and before our Father, but one family—"the whole family in earth and heaven." Our real bond of union consists in the "flowing down", the "running down", or "descending" of the common blessing, which marks the steps in this Psalm of Degrees (Ps 133:2-3). And if "the dew of Hermon" has descended upon "the mountains of Zion", long after the sun has risen shall gladsome fruit appear—in some twenty, in some thirty, and in some a hundred fold.—*Alfred Edersheim*

Verse 3. *As the dew of Hermon*, etc. What we read in the 133rd Psalm of the dew of Hermon descending upon the mountains of Zion", says Van de Velde in his "Travels" (Bd. 1. S. 97), "is now become quite clear to me. Here as I sat at the foot of Hermon, I understood how the water drops which rose from its forest mantled heights, and out of the highest ravines, which are filled the whole year round with snow, after the sun's rays have attenuated them add moistened the atmosphere with them, descend at evening time as a heavy dew upon the lower mountains which lie round about as its spurs. One ought to have seen Hermon with its white golden crown glistening aloft in the blue sky, in order to be able rightly to understand the figure. Nowhere in the whole country is so heavy a dew perceptible as in the districts near to Hermon. To this dew the poet likens brotherly love. This is "*as the dew of Hermon*": of such pristine freshness and thus refreshing, possessing such pristine power and thus quickening, thus born from above (Ps 110:3), and in fact like the dew of Hermon which comes down upon the mountains of Zion—a feature in the picture which is taken from the natural reality; for an abundant dew, when warm days have preceded, might very well be diverted to Jerusalem by the operation of the cold current of air sweeping down from the north over Hermon. We know, indeed, from our own experience how far off a cold air coming from the Alps is perceptible, and produces its effects. The figure of the poet is therefore as true to nature as it is beautiful. When brethren bound together in love also meet together in one place, and, in fact, when brethren of the north unite with brethren in the south in Jerusalem, the city which is the mother of all, at the great Feasts, it is as when the dew of Mount Hermon, which is covered with deep, almost eternal snow, descends upon the bare, unfruitful—and therefore longing for such quickening—mountains round about Zion. In Jerusalem must love and all that is good meet.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

Verse 3. *As the dew of Hermon*, etc. As touching this similitude, I think the prophet useth the

common manner of speaking. For whereas the mountains oftentimes seem to those that behold them afar off, to reach up even unto heaven, the dew which cometh from heaven seemeth to fall from the high mountains unto the hills which are under them. Therefore he saith that the dew descendeth from Hermon unto the mount Sion, because it so seemeth unto those that do behold it afar off.—*Martin Luther*.

Verse 3. *As the dew of Hermon.* The dews of the mists that rose from the watery ravines, or of the clouds that rested on the summit of Hermon, were perpetual witnesses of freshness and coolness—the sources, as it seemed, of all the moisture, which was to the land of Palestine what the fragrant oil was to the garments of the High Priest; what the influence of brotherly love was to the whole community.—*Arthur Penrhyn Stanley (1815-1881), in "Sinai and Palestine."*

Verse 3. *Dew of Hermon.* We had sensible proof at Rasheiya of the copiousness of the "dew of Hermon", spoken of in Ps 133:3, where "Zion" is only another name for the same mountain. Unlike most other mountains which gradually rise from lofty table lands and often at a distance from the sea, Hermon starts at once to the height of nearly ten thousand feet, from a platform scarcely above the sea level. This platform, too—the upper Jordan valley, and marshes of Merom—is for the most part an impenetrable swamp of unknown depth, whence the seething vapour, under the rays of an almost tropical sun, is constantly ascending into the upper atmosphere during the day. The vapour, coming in contact with the snowy sides of the mountain, is rapidly congealed, and is precipitated in the evening in the form of a dew, the most copious we ever experienced. It penetrated everywhere, and saturated everything. The floor of our tent was soaked, our bed was covered with it, our guns were dripping, and dewdrops hung about everywhere. No wonder that the foot of Hermon is clad with orchards and gardens of such marvellous fertility in this land of droughts.—*Henry Baker Tristram, 1867.*

Verse 3. *As the dew of Hermon that descended upon the mountains of Zion.—*

So the dews on Hermon's hill
Which the summer clouds distil,
Floating southward in the night,
Pearly gems on Zion light.

—*William Digby Seymour.*

Verse 3. *There the Lord commanded the blessing.* God commands his blessing where peace is cultivated; by which is meant, that he testifies how much he is pleased with concord amongst men, by showering down blessings upon them. The same sentiment is expressed by Paul in other words (2Co 13:11 Php 4:9), "Live in peace, and the God of peace shall be with you."—*John Calvin.*

Verse 3. *The LORD commanded the blessing.* By a bare word of command he blesseth: "there he commands the blessing", that blessing of blessings, "even life for evermore"; like as it is said, "he

commanded, and they were created": Ps 148:5. So "he commands and we are blessed."—*Thomas Goodwin*.

Verse 3. *The LORD commanded the blessing.* It is an allusion possibly to, great persons, to a general, or an emperor: "Where the word of a king is, there is power." The centurion said, "I say to one soldier, Go, and he goeth, to another, Come, and he cometh; to a third, Do this, and he doth it." So God commandeth one ordinance, "Go and build up such a saint", and it goeth; he saith to another ordinance, "Come, and call home such a sinner", and it doth it; God's words and work go together. Men cannot enable others, or give them power to obey them; they may bid a lame man walk, or a blind man see; but they cannot enable them to walk or see: God with his word giveth strength to do the thing commanded; as in the old, so in the new creation, "He spake, and it was done; he commanded, and it stood fast:" Ps 33:9. But there the Lord commands his blessing, "*even life for evermore.*" The stream of regeneration, or a spiritual life, which shall never cease, but still go forward and increase, till it swell to, and be swallowed up in the ocean of eternal life, "*even life for evermore.*"—*George Swinnock*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Verse 1. Christian unity.

1. Its admirable excellences.
2. The signs of its existence.
3. The causes of its decay.
4. The means of its renewal.

Verse 1. The saints are here contemplated,

1. In their brotherhood.
2. In their concord.
3. In their felicity.—*W. J.*

Verses 1-3. Six blessings which dwell with unity.

1. Goodness.
2. Pleasure.
3. Anointing.
4. Dew.
5. God's blessing.
6. Eternal life.

Verses 1-3.

1. The contemplation: brethren dwelling together in unity.
(a) In a family.

- (b) In a Christian church.
- (c) Brethren of the same denomination.
- (d) Of different denominations.

2. Its commendation.

- (a) Literally: "good and pleasant."
- (b) Figuratively: fragrant as the priestly anointing; fruitful as the dew on Hermon.
- (c) Spiritually, it has a blessing from God, that gives life, and continues for evermore!—G. R.

Verses 1-3. On Christians dwelling together in unity as a church.

1. *Its propriety*, on account of fraternal relationship: "*For brethren.*" The Christian brotherhood is so unique, sacred and lasting, that a lack of unity is a disgrace. They are brethren,

a) Because born of God, who is "the God of peace." Their claim to the brotherhood is dependent upon likeness to Him: Mt 5:9.

b) Because united to Christ, who as elder brother desires unity: Joh 17:20-21. Not to seek it is virtually to disown Him.

c) Because "by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body" (1Co 12:13), wherein unity must be kept: Eph 4:3.

d) Because destined to "dwell together in unity", for ever in heaven; therefore we should aim at it here.

2. *Its peculiar excellency*: both "good and pleasant."

a) Good, in respect of church work and influence; of mutual edification and growth in grace (2Co 13:11); of the success of prayer (Mt 18:19); of recommending the gospel to others.

b) Pleasant, as productive of happiness: as pleasing to God.

3. *Its promotion* and maintenance.

a) Seeking the glory of God unites; in opposition to self honour which divides.

b) Love to Christ as a constraining power unites each to the other as it binds all closely to Christ.

c) Activity in ministering to others, rather than desiring to be ministered unto, binds heart to heart.—J. F.

Verse 2. There must have been special reasons why a priestly anointing should be selected for the comparison, and why that of Aaron, rather than of any other of the high priests. They are these—

1. *The ointment was "holy"*, prepared in accordance with the Divine prescription: Ex 30:23-25. Church union is sacred. It must spring from the love commanded by God; be based on the principles laid down by God; and exist for the ends appointed of God.

2. *The anointing was from God through Moses*, who acted on behalf of God in the matter. Church unity is of the Holy Spirit (1Co 13:13), through Jesus as mediator. Therefore it should be prayed for, and thankfully acknowledged.

3. *By the anointing, Aaron became consecrated*, and officially qualified to act as priest. By unity the Church, as a whole, lives its life of consecration, and effectively ministers in the priesthood assigned it.

4. *The oil was diffusive*; it rested not on Aaron's head, but flowed down to the skirts of his garments. Unity will, in time, make its way from a few to the whole, especially from the leaders in a church to the rest of its members. Hence, it is a personal matter. Each should realize it, and by love and wise conduct diffuse it.—*J. F.*

Verses 2-3. Christian love scatters blessing by the way of coming down: "ran down", "went down", "descended."

1. God to his saints.
2. Saint to saint.
3. Saint to sinner.

Verse 3. The chosen place for blessing. A church; a church united, a church bedewed of the Spirit. What a blessing for the world that there is a commanded place of blessing!

Verse 3. (*first clause*). This should be rendered, "As the dew of Hermon, that cometh down on the mountains of Zion." From the snows upon the lofty Hermon, the moisture raised by the sun is carried in the form of vapour, by the wind towards the lesser elevations of Zion, upon which it falls as a copious dew. Thus, Christian concord in church fellowship—

1. Despises not the little ones, i.e. the mean, poor, and less gifted. It,
 - a) Recognises that God is the Father, and Christ is the Redeemer of all believers alike.
 - b) Acknowledges oneness of faith as the true basis of fellowship; not wealth, social position or talent.
 - c) Believes that the least member is essential to the completeness of Christ's body.
 - d) Realises that everything which renders one in any way superior to another is the gift of God.
2. Distributes of its abundance to the needy: Ac 4:32-37.
 - a) The wealthy to the poor: 1Jo 3:17.
 - b) The learned to the ignorant.
 - c) The joyful to the sorrowing.
 - d) The steadfast to the erring: Jas 5:19.
3. Displays its value more by loving generosity, than by a conspicuous appearance before the world. As Hermon was more valuable to Zion for its dew than for its adornment of the landscape.
 - a) A generous activity exhibits and requires more real grace than showy architecture or ornate worship does.
 - b) Through it, godliness flourishes more than by a vaunted respectability. Zion was fertilized by the dew, not by the grandeur of Hermon.
 - c) By it the heart of Christ is touched and his reward secured: Mr 9:40,42.—*J. F.*

Verse 3. Commanded Mercy. Elsewhere goodness is bestowed, but in Zion it is commanded.

1. Commanded mercy implies that it must necessarily be given.
2. Commanded mercy attends commanded unity.
3. Commanded mercy secures life more abundantly, "life for evermore."—*W. B. H.*

Psalm 134

Exposition

Explanatory Notes and Quaint Sayings

Hints to the Village Preacher

TITLE. *A Song of Degrees.* We have now reached the last of the Gradual Psalms. The Pilgrims are going home, and are singing the last song in their psalter. They leave early in the morning, before the day has fully commenced, for the journey is long for many of them. While yet the night lingers they are on the move. As soon as they are outside the gates they see the guards upon the temple wall, and the lamps shining from the windows of the chambers which surround the sanctuary; therefore, moved by the sight, they chant a farewell to the perpetual attendants upon the holy shrine. Their parting exhortation arouses the priests to pronounce upon them a blessing out of the holy place: this benediction is contained in the third verse. The priests as good as say, "You have desired us to bless the Lord, and now we pray the Lord to bless you."

The Psalm teaches us to pray for those who are continually ministering before the Lord, and it invites all ministers to pronounce benedictions upon their loving and prayerful people.

EXPOSITION

Verse 1. Behold. By this call the pilgrims bespeak the attention of the night watch. They shout to them—Behold! The retiring pilgrims stir up the holy brotherhood of those who are appointed to keep the watch of the house of the Lord. Let them look around them upon the holy place, and everywhere "behold" reasons for sacred praise. Let them look above them at night and magnify him that made heaven and earth, and lighted the one with stars and the other with his love. Let them see to it that their hallelujahs never come to an end. Their departing brethren arouse them with the shrill cry of "Behold!" Behold!—see, take care, be on the watch, diligently mind your work, and incessantly adore and bless Jehovah's name. Bless ye the LORD. Think well of Jehovah, and speak well of him. Adore him with reverence, draw near to him with love, delight in him with exultation. Be not content with praise, such as all his works render to him; but, as his saints, see that ye "bless" him. He blesses you; therefore, be zealous to bless him. The word "bless" is the characteristic word of the Psalm. The first two verses stir us up to bless Jehovah, and in the last verse Jehovah's blessing is invoked upon the

people. Oh to abound in blessing! May *blessed* and *blessing* be the two words which describe our lives. Let others flatter their fellows, or bless their stars, or praise themselves; as for us, we will bless Jehovah, from whom all blessings flow.

All ye servants of the LORD. It is your office to bless him; take care that you lead the way therein. Servants should speak well of their masters. Not one of you should serve him as of compulsion, but all should bless him while you serve him; yea, bless him for permitting you to serve him, fitting you to serve him, and accepting your service. To be a servant of Jehovah is an incalculable honour, a blessing beyond all estimate. To be a servant in his temple, a domestic in his house, is even more a delight and a glory: if those Who are ever with the Lord, and dwell in his own temple, do not bless the Lord, who will? Which by night stand in the house of the LORD. We can well understand how the holy pilgrims half envied those consecrated ones who guarded the temple, and attended to the necessary offices thereof through the hours of night. To the silence and solemnity of night there was added the awful glory of the place where Jehovah had ordained that his worship should be celebrated, blessed were the priests and Levites who were ordained to a service so sublime. That these should bless the Lord throughout their nightly vigils was most fitting: the people would have them mark this, and never fail in the duty. They were not to move about like so many machines, but to put their hearts into all their duties, and worship spiritually in the whole course of their duty. It would be well to watch, but better still to be "watching unto prayer" and praise. When night settles down on a church the Lord has his watchers and holy ones still guarding his truth, and these must not be discouraged, but must bless the Lord even when the darkest hours draw on. Be it ours to cheer them, and lay upon them this charge—to bless the Lord at all times, and let his praise be continually in their mouths.

Verse 2. *Lift up your hands in the sanctuary.* In the holy place they must be busy, full of strength, wide awake, energetic, and moved with holy ardour. Hands, heart, and every other part of their manhood must be upraised, elevated, and consecrated to the adoring service of the Lord. As the angels praise God day without night, so must the angels of the churches be instant in season and out of season. And bless the LORD. This is their main business. They are to bless men by their teaching, but they must yet more bless Jehovah with their worship. Too often men look at public worship only from the side of its usefulness to the people; but the other matter is of even higher importance: we must see to it that the Lord God is adored, extolled, and had in reverence. For a second time the word "bless" is used, and applied to Jehovah. Bless the Lord, O my soul, and let every other soul bless him. There will be no drowsiness about even midnight devotion if the heart is set upon blessing God in Christ Jesus, which is the gospel translation of God in the sanctuary.

Verse 3. This last verse is the answer from the temple to the pilgrims preparing to depart as the day breaks. It is the ancient blessing of the high priest condensed, and poured forth upon each individual pilgrim. The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion. Ye are scattering and going to

your homes one by one; may the benediction come upon you one by one. You have been up to Jehovah's city and temple at his bidding; return each one with such a benediction as only he can give—divine, infinite, effectual, eternal. You are not going away from Jehovah's works or glories, for he made the heaven above you and the earth on which you dwell. He is your Creator, and he can bless you with untold mercies; he can create joy and peace in your hearts, and make for you a new heaven and a new earth. May the Maker of all things make you to abound in blessings. The benediction comes from the City of the Great King, from his appointed ministers, by virtue of his covenant, and so it is said to be "out of Zion." To this day the Lord blesses each one of his people through his church, his gospel, and the ordinances of his house. It is in communion with the saints that we receive untold benisons. May each one of us obtain yet more of the blessing which cometh from the Lord alone. Zion cannot bless us; the holiest ministers can only wish us a blessing; but Jehovah can and will bless each one of his waiting people. So may it be at this good hour. Do we desire it? Let us then bless the Lord ourselves. Let us do it a second time. Then we may confidently hope that the third time we think of blessing we shall find ourselves conscious receivers of it from the Ever blessed One. Amen.

EXPLANATORY NOTES AND QUAIN T SAYINGS

Whole Psalm. It is a beautiful little ode, equally full of sublimity and simplicity. It is commonly supposed to be the work of David. With what admiration should we contemplate the man whose zeal in the cause of religion thus urged him to embrace every opportunity that could occur to him, among the lowest as well as the highest ranks of life, of promoting the praise and glory of his Creator; now composing penitential hymns for his own closet; now leading the temple service in national eulogies of the most sublime pitch to which human language can reach; and now descending to the class of the watchmen and patrol of the temple and the city, and tuning their lips to a reverential utterance of the name and the service of God!—*John Mason Good* (1764-1827), in "*An Historical Outline of the Book of Psalms.*"

Whole Psalm. This Psalm consists of a greeting, Ps 109:1-2, and the reply thereto. The greeting is addressed to those priests and Levites who have the night watch in the Temple; and this antiphon is purposely placed at the end of the collection of Songs of Degrees in order to take the place of a final "beracha" (Blessing). In this sense Luther styles the Psalm *epiphonema superiorum*. ("I take this Psalm to be a conclusion of those things which were spoken of before."—*Luther*). It is also in other respects an appropriate finale.—*Franz Delitzsch*.

Whole Psalm. The last cloud of smoke from the evening sacrifice has mixed with the blue sky, the last note of the evening hymn has died away on the ear. The watch is being set for the night. The twenty-four Levites, the three priests, and the captain of the guard, whose duty it was to keep ward

from sunset to sunrise over the hallowed precincts, are already at their several posts, and the multitude are retiring through the gates, which will soon be shut, to many of them to open no more. But they cannot depart without one last expression of the piety that fills their hearts; and turning to the watchers on tower and battlement, they address them in holy song, in what was at once a brotherly admonition and a touching prayer: *Behold, bless ye LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD. Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.* The pious guard are not unprepared for the appeal, and from their lofty heights, in words that float over the peopled city and down into the quiet valley of the Kidron, like the melody of angels, they respond to each worshipper who thus addressed them with a benedictory farewell: *The LORD bless thee out of Zion, even he who made heaven and earth.*—Robert Nisbet.

Whole Psalm. The tabernacle and temple were served by priests during the night as well as the day. Those priests renewed the altar fire, fed the lamps, and guarded the sacred structure from intrusion and from plunder. The Psalm before us was prepared for the priests who served the sacred place by night. They were in danger of slumbering; and they were in danger of idle reverie. Oh, how much time is wasted in mere reverie—in letting thought wander, and wander, and wander! The priests were in danger, we say, of slumbering, of idle reverie, of vain thoughts, of useless meditation, and of profitless talk: and therefore it is written,—“Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD.” Is it your duty to spend the night in watching? Then spend the night in worship. Do not let the time of watching be idle, wasted time; but when others are slumbering and sleeping, and you are necessarily watchful, sustain the praises of God's house; let there be praise in Zion—still praise by night as well as by day! *Lift up your hands in the sanctuary, and bless the LORD.* We may suppose these words to be addressed to the sacred sentinels, by the head of their course, or by the captain of the guard, or even by the high priest. We can imagine the captain of the guard coming in during the night watches, and saying to the priests who were guarding the temple, *Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD, which by night stand in the house of the LORD.* Or we could imagine the high priest, when the watch was set for the first part of the night, going to the priests who were under his control, and addressing to them these same soul stirring words. Now our text is the response of these sacred sentinels. As they listened to the captain of the guard, or to the high priest, telling them to worship by night in the courts of the Lord—to lift up their hands in the sanctuary, and bless the Lord—they answered him, *The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.* So that here you have brought before you the interesting and instructive subject of mutual benediction—the saints blessing each other.—Samuel Martin, 1817-1878.

Verse 1. The Targum explains the first verse of the Temple watch. "The custom in the Second Temple appears to have been this. After midnight the chief of the doorkeepers took the key of the

inner Temple, and went with some of the priests through the small postern of the Fire Gate. In the inner court this watch divided itself into two companies, each carrying a burning torch; one company turned west, the other east, and so they compassed the court to see whether all were in readiness for the Temple service on the following morning. In the bakehouse, where the *Mincha* ("meat offering") of the High Priest was baked, they met with the cry, 'All well.' Meanwhile the rest of the priests arose, bathed themselves, and put on their garments. They then went into the stone chamber (one half of which was the hall of session of the Sanhedrim), and there, under the superintendence of the officer who gave the watchword, and one of the Sanhedrim, surrounded by the priests clad in their robes of office, their several duties for the coming day were assigned to each of the priests by lot. Lu 1:9."—*J.J. Stewart Perowne*.

Verse 1. Behold. The Psalm begins with the demonstrative adverb Behold setting the matter of their duty before their eyes, for they were to be stimulated to devotion by looking constantly to the Temple. We are to notice the Psalmist's design in urging the duty of praise so earnestly upon them. Many of the Levites, through the tendency which there is in all men to abuse ceremonies, considered that nothing more was necessary than standing idly in the Temple, and thus overlooked the principal part of their duty. The Psalmist would show that merely to keep nightly watch over the Temple, kindle the lamps, and superintend the sacrifices, was of no importance, unless they served God spiritually, and referred all outward ceremonies to that which must be considered the main sacrifice,—the celebration of God's praises. You may think it a very laborious service, as if he had said, to stand at watch in the Temple, while others sleep in their own houses; but the worship which God requires is something more excellent than this, and demands of you to sing his praises before all the people.—*John Calvin*.

Verse 1. Behold. The first word in this verse, "*Behold*", seemeth to point at the reasons which the priests in the Temple had to bless Jehovah; as if it had been said, Behold, the house of God is built, the holy services are appointed, and the Lord hath given you rest from your enemies, that you may serve him acceptably; set about it, therefore, with gratitude and alacrity. We read (1Ch 9:33) that the Levitical singers were "employed in their work day and night"; to the end, doubtless, that the earthly sanctuary might bear some resemblance to that above, where St. John tells us, the redeemed "are before the throne of God, and serve him day and night in his temple": Re 7:15.—*George Horne*.

Verse 1. Behold, bless ye the LORD, all ye servants of the LORD. From the exhortation to the Lord's ministers, learn, that the public worship of God is to be carefully looked unto; and all men, but especially ministers, had need to be stirred up to take heed to themselves, and to the work of God's public worship, when they go about it; for so much doth "*behold*" in this place import.—*David Dickson*.

Verse 1. By night. Even by night the Lord is to be remembered, and his praises are to be

rehearsed.—*Martin Geier*, 1614-1681.

Verse 1. *Stand in the house of the LORD.* The Rabbins say, that the high priest only sat in the sanctuary (as did Eli, 1Sa 1:9); the rest stood, as ready pressed to do their office.—*John Trapp*.

Verse 1. *Which stand in the house of the LORD.* YOU who have now a permanent house, and no longer, like pilgrims, have to dwell in tents.—*Robert Bellarmine*.

Verse 1. *Which stand in the house of the LORD.* Let not this your frequent being in his presence breed in you contempt; as the saying is, "Too much familiarity breeds contempt; "but bless him always, acknowledge, and with reverence praise his excellency.—*John Mayer*, 1653.

Verse 2. *Lift up your hands*, etc. The lifting up of the hands was a gesture in prayer, it was an intimation of their expectation of receiving blessings from the Lord, and it was also an acknowledgment of their having received the same.—*Samuel Eyles Pierce*.

Verse 2. *In the sanctuary.* The Hebrew work signifying *holiness* as well as the *holy place* may here be taken in the former sense, the latter having been sufficiently expressed (Ps 134:1) by "the house of the Lord" ...The priests (which are here spoken to) before their officiating, which is here expressed by *lifting up their hands*, were obliged to wash their hands.—*Henry Hammond*.

Verse 3. *The LORD that made heaven and earth bless thee out of Zion.* He doth not say, the Lord that made the earth bless thee out of heaven; nor, the Lord that made heaven bless thee out of heaven; but "*bless thee out of Zion.*" As if he would teach us that all blessings come as immediately and primarily from heaven, so mediately and secondarily from *Zion*, where the Temple stood. If ever, therefore, we would have blessings outward, inward, private, public, secular, spiritual; if ever we would have blessing in our estate, blessing in our land, blessing in our souls, we must pray for it, and pray for it here, in *Zion*, in God's house: for from the piety there exercised all blessings flow, as from a fountain that can never be drawn dry.—*Abraham Wright*.

Verse 3. *The LORD that made heaven and earth*, etc. The priestly benediction brings God before us in a twofold character. He is described first as the Creator of the universe. He is described, in the second place, as dwelling "in Zion." In the first aspect, he is represented as the God of nature; in the second, as the God of grace. When I contemplate him as the Creator of the universe, there is abundant proof that he *can* bless me. When I contemplate him as dwelling in the Church, there is abundant proof that he *will* bless me. Both of these elements are essential to our faith.—*N. M' michael*.

Verse 3. *The LORD that made heaven and earth*, etc. As the priests were called upon to bless God in behalf of the people, so here they bless the people in behalf of God. Between the verses we may suppose the previous request to be complied with. The priests, having blessed God, turn and bless the people. The obvious allusion to the sacerdotal blessing (Nu 6:23-27), favours the optative construction of this verse, which really includes a prediction—the Lord will bless thee.—*Joseph*

Addison Alexander.

Verse 3. *The LORD bless thee.* All men lie under the curse, till God brings them into the fellowship of his church, and pronounce them blessed by his word, as "*The LORD bless thee*" doth import.—*David Dickson.*

Verse 3. *The LORD bless thee out of Zion.* The Church is the conservator of Divine revelation; the Church is the offerer on earth of true worship; it consists of a company of priests, a royal priesthood, part of whose mission is "to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God by Jesus Christ." The Church is the heritor of the covenants. God's covenants are made with his Church, and his promises are addressed chiefly to his Church. The Church is the scene of special Divine ministrations, God shows himself to his Church as he does not to that which is called the world. It is also the scene of special heavenly influences: and in a sense next to that in which God is said to reside in heaven, the Church is the dwellingplace of the Most High. Now, what is it to be *blessed out of Zion*? It is surely to be blessed with Zion's blessings, and to have Zion's endowments and gifts rendered sources of advantage and profit to us.—*Samuel Martin.*

Verse 3. *Bless thee.* The singular instead of the plural "bless you", because the words are taken from the form used by the High Priest in blessing the people. Nu 6:24.—*J.J. Stewart Perowne.*

Verse 3. *Bless thee.* It is addressed to the church as one person, and to each individual in this united, unit like church.—*Franz Delitzsch.*

HINTS TO THE VILLAGE PREACHER

Whole Psalm. There are two things in this Psalm.

1. Our blessing God: Ps 134:1-2.

a) How? By gratitude, by love, by obedience, by prayer, by praise.

b) Where? "in the house of the Lord", "in the sanctuary."

c) When? Not in the day merely, but at night. Some of old spent the whole night, others part of the night, in the temple, praising God. As Christ spent whole nights in prayer for his people, they should not think it too much occasionally to spend whole nights in praise of him. Evening services should not be neglected on the Sabbath, nor on other days of the week.

2. God blessing us: Ps 134:3.

a) The persons blessed: "bless thee"—every one who blesses him.

b) The condition: "out of Zion." In the fulfilment of religious duties, not in the neglect of them.

c) The blessing itself: of the Lord. They are blessed whom he blesses.—*R.*

Whole Psalm.

1. God—Jehovah—the fountain of blessing.

2. The heavens and the earth, evidence of divine capacity to bless.

3. The church, a channel of blessing.
4. The saints, the means of spreading blessing, through the spirit of blessing.
5. The riches involved in the divine benediction.—*Samuel Martin*.

Whole Psalm.

1. Unique service: temple watching, night sentinelship. 2 Sublime society: the awful things of the sanctuary.
3. Holy uplifting: hands, hearts, eyes.
4. Praise in the darkness heard far up in the light.
5. Response from the stars fulfilling the prayer: "The Creator Lord bless thee."—*W.B.H.*

Verse 1.

1. Night settles on the holy place: dark periods of church story.
2. But God has his guards: Wycliffe and his band watching for the Reformation; Waldenses, etc. Never a night so dark but God is praised and served.
3. Be it night or day, let the Levites fulfil their courses.—*W.B.H.*

Verse 1. The Lord's servants exhorted to be,

1. Devout and joyful in their service. Sing at your work, though it be in the dark.
2. Zealous to employ every season of service aright. "By night", as by day, "bless the Lord."
3. Careful to avoid all hindrances to devotion in their service. When tempted to indolence and drowsiness, say:

"Wake, and lift up thyself, my heart,
 And with the angels bear thy part,
 Who all night long, unwearied, sing
 High praise to the Eternal King." *W.H.J.P.*

Verse 1. Directions for worship.

1. It should be with great care: "Behold."
2. With grateful joy: "Bless ye the Lord."
3. Unanimously: "all ye."
4. With holy reverence, as by "servants of the Lord."
5. With unflagging constancy: "stand by night."

Verse 1. *Ye that stand by night.* The night watchmen of the Lord's house, their value, their obscurity, their danger slumber, their consolation, their dignity, their reward.

Verse 2. Ingredients of worship.

1. Uplifted hands. Energy, courage, prayer, aspiration.
2. Uplifted hearts. Thank, praise, adore, and love the Lord.

Verse 3. The Divine Benediction.

1. From the Creator: ample, new, varied, boundless, enduring—all illustrated by his making heaven and earth.
2. From the Redeemer: blessings most needful, rich, effectual, abiding,—all illustrated and guaranteed by his dwelling among men, purchasing a church, building an abode, revealing his glory, reigning on his throne.